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Delivering Employment Retention and Advancement Services

A Process Study of Iowa's Post-Employment Pilot Program

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Job retention and advancement became issues of intense interest in the years following the implementation of federal and state welfare reforms. Sharply declining caseloads and the urgency associated with time-limited cash assistance have made states aware that helping people find jobs is only the first step in helping them gain self-sufficiency. Promoting job retention and advancement offers the promise of helping families achieve long-term independence from state assistance. Yet, despite several completed and ongoing evaluations in this area, the empirical evidence on how to help clients keep jobs and move on to better ones is still limited.

The state of Iowa made an early commitment to job retention and advancement services based on evaluation results of its welfare program, the Family Investment Program (FIP). These results indicated that FIP had increased employment and earnings among recipients but had not directly resulted in families leaving welfare (Fraker et al., 1998; Fraker and Jacobson, 2000). In an effort to assist employed clients with sustained and progressive employment and facilitate families' exit from cash assistance, the state developed a model for post-employment services. The Post-Employment Pilot (PEP) Program tests that model in three sites across the state and lays the groundwork for future retention and advancement services in Iowa.

This is the final report of the process study of the PEP Program. It examines the decisions made by the three pilot sites about recruitment and referral processes, services, and staffing structures as well as the challenges and successes experienced by the sites during the first 10 months of program operation.

THE POST-EMPLOYMENT PILOT PROGRAM

In October 1998, the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) invited three sites to participate in the Post-Employment Pilot Program: Des Moines County, the paired site of Marshall and Hardin counties, and Pottawattamie County. These sites participated in a year-

long program planning process that included technical assistance from DHS, Iowa Workforce Development (IWD), and Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) but was notable for its lack of state-imposed structure. Because the pilot sites were asked to develop a program in a service area that lacks proven methods, DHS gave the sites considerable latitude to develop local PEP staffing structures, referral and recruitment practices, and services.

KEY FEATURES OF THE POST-EMPLOYMENT PILOT PROGRAM

- **Administrative Rules.** PEP must function according to the administrative rules of the PROMISE JOBS Program and PEP guidelines developed by DHS.
- **Eligibility Criteria.** Employed PROMISE JOBS participants are eligible for PEP services as soon as they are employed (and for 60-day periods of unemployment). There is no time limit on the receipt of PEP services as long as a client is receiving FIP cash assistance.
- **Recruitment Approach.** At two of the three sites, participation in PEP is completely voluntary. The third site requires clients to attend an initial meeting with PEP staff and comply with any PEP activities included in their Family Investment Agreement.
- **Program Services.** PEP's core services (provided at one or more site) include the following: "soft skill" training provided through group workshops, individual counseling and support, a support group, emergency financial assistance, computer training, and job search assistance. Other services that PEP sites have developed, but not fully implemented, include mentoring, job development, employer training, and service referrals.

To guide local planning efforts, the state provided the sites with a broad program framework that places PEP firmly within the administrative structure and rules of FIP's employment and training program, PROMISE JOBS. It also helps ensure that PEP services will complement, not duplicate, existing PROMISE JOBS services. The PROMISE JOBS Program provides substantial pre-job search assistance to FIP recipients, but post-employment contact between clients and PROMISE JOBS workers is generally limited to monitoring of employment. PEP was intended to extend services for PROMISE JOBS clients into the post-employment period. Consistent with this objective, the state mandated that PEP services be available to all employed PROMISE JOBS clients and be offered from the time a client becomes employed, but not before.

Within this framework, the PEP sites designed and operated three local programs with some important differences. Two of the three sites operate fully voluntary programs while the third implemented a quasi-mandatory program. The sites have also made different

staffing decisions, including who would fill PEP positions and how much staff time would be devoted to PEP. Despite these differences, the PEP sites provide almost identical services to their clients. The core services provided through PEP are job-readiness and life skills training, support and counseling, and emergency financial assistance—provided through group workshops and individual case management.

THE PEP PROCESS STUDY

The Iowa Department of Human Services contracted with Mathematica to provide technical assistance to the three PEP sites throughout the program planning period and to conduct an evaluation of the pilot program. This report describes the findings of the process study of the PEP Program's implementation and operation over the 10-month period from October 1999 through July 2000.[1] The study identifies the lessons from the PEP sites' experience and provides information that will assist the state and the local sites with any future development of retention and advancement services in Iowa.

The process study uses data from four sources: (1) site-maintained databases containing information on referred clients and on all client contacts, (2) interviews with staff and administrators during visits to the PEP sites, (3) focus group discussions with PEP participants and nonparticipants who were offered PEP services, and (4) regular telephone contacts with the PEP sites. MPR used data stored in the site-maintained databases to analyze the characteristics of PEP participants and nonparticipants and the patterns of contact with program participants. The three latter components contribute to descriptions of the design, administration, and services of the pilot program as well as to an understanding of the challenges and successes the pilot sites encountered in implementing post-employment services.

KEY STUDY FINDINGS

The analysis of data on the PEP Program's recruitment practices and participation rates, services, and staffing structures has yielded several important findings.

PEP Recruitment and Participation

- ***The main challenge faced by all three pilot sites is low participation.*** From October 1999 through July 2000, the three PEP sites served a total of 95 clients, considerably fewer than projected during the planning process. At the start of program implementation, each site expected to carry a PEP client

[1]The PEP evaluation plan originally called for combining the process study with analysis of key outcomes among program participants. However, due to low participation rates in the program, MPR determined that an accelerated process study would be most helpful to the state and the PEP pilot sites.

caseload of about 40 clients at any point in time; however, each site has a caseload of about 10 to 15 clients.

The PEP experience suggests that marketing any services to working parents is a formidable task. Working parents find it difficult and undesirable to add another commitment to their substantial work and family responsibilities. Most participants in the study's focus group discussions were not initially interested in participating in a post-employment program, regardless of how that program was presented to them, because they felt that they did not have the time. Employed clients are also reluctant to participate in another program after fulfilling FIP work requirements.

It is not clear from the experience of the PEP sites whether mandatory or voluntary programs are more effective in engaging working parents. While the two sites with voluntary PEP programs did have to work harder to convince clients to engage in the program, the site with mandatory enrollment also struggled with low participation rates. This may be due in part to the fact that mandatory programs are more punitive by nature and therefore less appealing to many clients.

- ***Clients participating in PEP have frequent contact with PEP staff, but most of those contacts do not occur in person, and the average length of time that clients spend in the program is relatively short.*** On average, all three sites have contact with engaged clients more than once a week; the average across sites is 4.5 contacts per client per month—a much higher frequency of contact than most retention and advancement programs have been able to achieve. However, the majority of contacts between PEP staff and engaged PEP clients do not occur in person but rather on the telephone or through the mail. In addition, the average client remains involved in PEP for only 3.5 months.

PEP Program Services

- ***The core components of the PEP Program are group activities, which provide relevant training and peer support but may detract from individual case management.*** Taking into consideration evidence that individual case management alone does not result in improved rates of job retention or advancement, the PEP sites developed service structures that combine case management with group activities (Rangarajan and Novak, 1999; Wood and Paulsell, 2000). These group activities provide some tangible services—including "soft-skills" training and, at one site, computer training—as well as peer support.

In practice, the PEP Program's attempt at enhancing case management with group activities has actually made it less likely that clients will receive one-on-one contact with PEP staff. This, in turn, makes it more difficult for caseworkers to build trust with their clients, obtain an accurate assessment (formal or informal) of clients' needs and interests, and link the client to individualized services that will improve their ability to keep a job and advance.

The importance of one-on-one client-caseworker interactions was clear in focus group discussions with PEP participants. Their opinions of the group workshops and other group meetings varied greatly by site and by individual. However, the clients who are most satisfied with the services they receive through the PEP Program are the clients most satisfied with their relationship with their PEP caseworker. Employed clients particularly value a case management approach that is understanding of the challenges they face and emphasizes support and encouragement.

- ***PEP services most directly address the lack of "soft skills" among clients; the services deal less with transportation, child care, and severe personal problems that many clients face.*** Group workshops at all three PEP sites provide training in "soft skills" as well as offer personal support. However, according to both staff and client reports, clients face other formidable challenges to self-sufficiency in the areas of transportation, child care, and personal issues such as mental health conditions and substance abuse. In fact, data presented in this report indicate that PROMISE JOBS clients with more severe barriers are more likely to participate in PEP—perhaps because they have more difficulty in retaining employment and are therefore more interested in the assistance PEP offers.

  Successfully identifying and addressing the barriers that individual clients face in retaining employment and advancing can be complex and require staff training, as well as strong connections to community and government organizations. Staff in both the PEP and the PROMISE JOBS programs feel that their limited knowledge of the local resources available to low-income families makes it difficult for them to provide their clients with consistent and accurate information on these resources. In addition, PEP's reliance on group activities may make it more difficult to develop the trusting client-caseworker relationships that are needed for dealing with these complex and, in some cases, sensitive issues.

PEP Staffing Structures

- ***PEP staff face many challenges in administering the program, including learning new roles and responsibilities and juggling commitments to PEP and other programs.*** The roles and responsibilities of staff in retention

and advancement programs can be dramatically different from those in employment-oriented welfare programs. At all three sites, PEP staff wear many hats, including that of recruiter, case manager, program designer, and mentor. PROMISE JOBS workers who moved into PEP positions brought knowledge of the clientele and administrative procedures but were equally, if not more, unprepared for the unique responsibilities of the PEP Program. Yet, PEP staff received little if any training.

The task of adjusting to these new roles and responsibilities was more difficult for staff responsible for both PROMISE JOBS and PEP caseloads. Creating dedicated PEP staff positions allows staff to focus solely on administering the post-employment program and developing consistent relationships with clients. Finally, changes in staff at two of the pilot sites after program implementation also decreased program focus and stability.

THE FUTURE OF JOB RETENTION AND ADVANCEMENT SERVICES IN IOWA

The PEP Program is still relatively new; however, it is clear from client enrollment patterns that adjustments in program design and/or approach are necessary to address problems of job retention and advancement among PROMISE JOBS participants. The final chapter of this report provides a framework for rethinking job retention and advancement services generally and for refining the existing PEP model. This framework introduces several broader systemic issues related to PEP and its relationship with the existing welfare/employment program. Other important considerations for refining the PEP model are organized around three issues: (1) **targeting—**who should be served? (2) **timing—** when should services begin and end? and (3) **services—**what services help people stay employed and move on to better jobs?

A FRAMEWORK FOR CONTINUING RETENTION AND ADVANCEMENT SERVICES IN IOWA

Systems

- To be cohesive, a program should provide a comprehensive set of services based on clearly defined program goals and supported by consistent and appropriately-trained staff.
- Job retention and advancement services could be provided directly through the PROMISE JOBS Program.
- Linking a job retention and advancement program closely to PROMISE JOBS carries significant trade-offs for the program.

Targeting

- The PEP eligibility criteria could be broadened to include unemployed PROMISE JOBS clients, families no longer receiving FIP cash assistance, or low-income families generally.
- Mandatory enrollment makes recuitment easier, but it also alienates some clients; regardless of the approach taken, rules and requirements should be clearly communicated to clients.
- Not offering services to the entire eligible population, whether intentionally or not, makes recruitment more challenging.

Timing

- Many of the services that have potential to promote job retention and advancement may have more impact if provided before initial employment.
- If services are not available before employment, it is crucial that clients be contacted as soon as possible after employment.
- Clients who lose their jobs while participating in PEP might benefit from an extended period to work with program staff on regaining and maintaining employment.

Services

- Existing PEP service components would be complemented by more “tangible” services that address the formidable barriers that many clients face to sustained and progressively better employment.
- Emphasizing the development of a trusting client-caseworker relationship and developing an assessment and referral process can help staff individualize services.
- Innovative approaches to engaging working parents in retention and advancement programs include making services family-oriented, offering incentives, and involving employers in the provision of services.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO POST-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES IN IOWA

In recent years, welfare reform has swept the nation, establishing a new standard for cash assistance programs. State welfare programs no longer focus solely on benefits distribution but instead are also setting their sights on the higher yet harder-to-achieve goal of family self-sufficiency. Much of this change is the result of the sharp decline in welfare caseloads (nearly 50 percent nationally) that have occurred since the passage of federal welfare reform legislation (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000).

While encouraged by caseload declines, states have also become aware that moving off welfare in the short term is not the same as remaining off welfare for the long term. Historically, about 25 to 40 percent of welfare recipients who gain employment and leave welfare return to welfare within one year due to job loss (Hershey and Pavetti, 1997).[1] For this reason, welfare-to-work programs now place increased emphasis on job retention and advancement services as a means of helping recipients achieve long-term self-sufficiency. The time limits imposed on cash assistance by both federal and state reforms increase the urgency associated with the move to self-sufficiency. At the same time, though, a good job market in most areas, fewer clients, and available funding provide state programs with new flexibility in helping clients retain jobs and move up to better ones.

Although many states are currently experimenting with job retention and advancement services for current and recent welfare recipients, there is little empirical evidence to suggest what works. Evaluations in this area, including the completed Post-Employment Services Demonstration (PESD) and the ongoing Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA), hope to answer three fundamental questions, which relate to: (1) **targeting—**who should be served? (2) **timing—**when should services begin and end? and (3) **services—**what services help people stay employed and move on to better jobs?

The state of Iowa made an early commitment to addressing job retention and advancement and, as such, is a pioneer in seeking answers to these fundamental questions.

[1]Because some individuals do not return to welfare after their job loss, the actual proportion of former recipients who lose their jobs relatively rapidly may be even higher.

Iowa's model for post-employment services[2] has been developed as a component of the state's existing welfare program, the Family Investment Program (FIP). Exhibit I.1 describes the major components of FIP. Briefly, FIP offers low-income Iowans time-limited cash assistance with a generous earnings disregard. To receive FIP, individuals must participate in the program's employment and training component, PROMISE JOBS. However, once clients are employed, client contact with PROMISE JOBS workers becomes infrequent and is generally limited to monitoring of employment status.

An evaluation of Iowa's early experience with welfare reform suggests that the Family Investment Program has succeeded in increasing employment and earnings among welfare recipients (Fraker et al., 1998; Fraker and Jacobson, 2000). Yet, there is no evaluation-based evidence that Iowa's welfare reforms contributed directly to the 46 percent decline in caseloads experienced by the state between September 1993 and October 2000 (Iowa Department of Human Services, 2000). Based on these findings, the state concluded that, while the PROMISE JOBS Program helps welfare clients find jobs, it has not yet succeeded in providing the support and services that will help employed clients achieve long-term independence.

This conclusion motivated the state to design a model for providing post-employment services to FIP recipients and to implement a pilot of that model in three sites across the state. The purpose of the pilot program is to use the experiences, successes, and challenges of the three sites to lay the groundwork for post-employment services in Iowa and to inform possible program expansion. This report documents the decision-making and implementation processes under Iowa's Post-Employment Pilot (PEP) Program. In this chapter, we provide an overview of the PEP Program and describe the methodology and purpose of the evaluation conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR). Exhibit I.2 provides a timeline of the PEP Program and its evaluation.

A. THE POST-EMPLOYMENT PILOT PROGRAM

In October 1998, the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) approached three PROMISE JOBS sites to invite their participation in the PEP Program. The three sites are Des Moines County, the paired counties of Marshall and Hardin, and Pottawattamie County.[3] These sites cover different geographic regions among the state's 99 counties and include variously sized FIP and PROMISE JOBS caseloads. Des Moines County is located in the southeastern part of the state, Marshall and Hardin Counties are in the center of the state, and Pottawattamie County is on the state's western border with Nebraska. Exhibit I.3 describes the population and average FIP and PROMISE JOBS caseloads for the three pilot sites over the period of the evaluation.

[2]Post-employment programs fit into a broader category of job retention and advancement programs, some of which provide services before employment.

[3]All three sites continue to provide PEP services to clients at the time of this report.

EXHIBIT I.1

COMPONENTS OF IOWA'S FAMILY INVESTMENT PROGRAM (FIP)

Time-Limited Assistance	• The length of time a family needs assistance is determined by individual family circumstances, and a negotiated end date is written into the Family Investment Agreement. • The total assistance period can be no longer than the federally prescribed 60 months, with exceptions due to family hardship (criteria developed by the state).
Generous Earnings Disregard	• Twenty percent of gross earnings is disregarded from eligibility and benefit calculations as a work expense deduction. • After other deductions are applied, an additional 50 percent of earned income is disregarded from the benefit calculation only.
Family Investment Agreement (FIA)	• Individuals negotiate a plan with their caseworkers that outlines their goals and responsibilities in working toward self-sufficiency.
Participation in PROMISE JOBS	• All nonexempt individuals must participate in PROMISE JOBS activities, including work, job search, work experience, and some education and training activities. • Exempt individuals include those who are under age 16 and not parents, who are ages 16 to 19 who are not parents and are attending elementary or secondary school or the equivalent level of vocational or technical school on a full-time basis, who are disabled and unable to work, and who are not U.S. citizens. • Intensive services are provided pre-employment. Employed clients are contacted only to provide proof of continued employment.
The Limited Benefit Plan (LBP)	• Families that do not complete and sign an FIA or do not comply with its requirements are considered as choosing the LBP. • The first LBP results in a full cash benefit termination until the individual(s) responsible for FIA activities signs an FIA. • Subsequent instances of noncompliance lead to a minimum of six months' full benefit termination continuing until the individual(s) responsible for FIA activities signs an FIA and completes 20 hours of employment and training activities.

Source: Fraker, T., L. Nixon, J. Jacobson, J., A. Gordon, and T. Martin. "Iowa's Family Investment Program: Two-Year Impacts." Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, December 1998; Fraker, T., and J. Jacobson. "Iowa's Family Investment Program: Impacts During the First 3-1/2 Years of Welfare Reform." Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, May 2000; Iowa Department of Human Services.

EXHIBIT 1.2

PEP PROGRAM AND EVAUATION TIMELINE

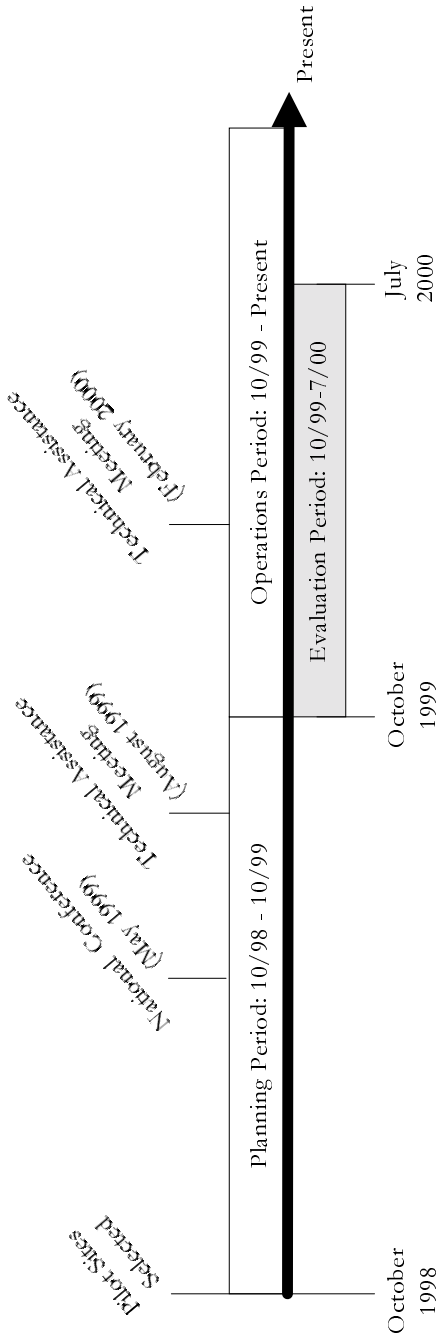


EXHIBIT I.3

POPULATION AND CASELOAD CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POST-EMPLOYMENT PILOT (PEP) SITES IN IOWA

Site	Total County Population (July 1999)				Average Monthly FIP Caseload (September 1999-July 2000)	Average Monthly PROMISE JOBS Caseload (September 1999- July 2000	Average Monthly PROMISE JOBS Participants Who Are Employed (September 1999-July 2000)	
	Total	Percentage White Non-Hispanic	Percentage Black	Percentage Hispanic			Number	Percentage of Total PROMISE JOBS Caseload
Des Moines County	41,955	94%	4%	2%	509	449	270	60%
Marshall and Hardin Counties	56,941	97%	1%	1%	459	400	232	58%
Pottawattamie County	86,425	95%	1%	3%	861	688	319	46%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. "Population Estimates for Counties by Race and Hispanic Origin: July 1, 1999" and Iowa Department of Human Services.

The PEP Program operates within the existing structure of PROMISE JOBS. Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) administers PROMISE JOBS, with program services delivered from local Workforce Development Centers by a combination of IWD employees and the subcontracted staff of various local agencies. The PEP program is administered locally by PROMISE JOBS, and PEP staff are predominantly employees of local community colleges. Exhibit I.4 displays these relationships.

1. Goals of the PEP Program

During the initial meeting with the PEP pilot sites in October 1998, Iowa DHS articulated the broad program objective of facilitating clients' exit from welfare by increasing employment and earnings. Exhibit I.5 presents this objective and the PEP Program's more specific primary and secondary goals, most recently revised in February 2000. The three local sites aim to promote self-sufficiency by helping clients work more hours for higher wages and a longer period of time.

While the sites articulate similar program goals, they vary in the emphasis they place on job retention versus job advancement. For example, one site focuses heavily on personal support and family-based activities to help clients balance work and family responsibilities in order to retain employment, while another actively encourages its clients to find higher-paying jobs.

2. PEP Program Framework

DHS and IWD asked the selected PEP sites to develop and implement post-employment services for PROMISE JOBS participants within a broad framework (see Exhibit I.6). The state's interest in creating a program that would complement, but not duplicate, existing PROMISE JOBS services shaped two important components of the PEP framework: the program eligibility criteria and the service delivery period. Eligibility for PEP extends to employed PROMISE JOBS participants, and the period of service delivery is restricted to the post-employment period—that is, the period following entry into employment.

The period of service delivery is further restricted in two ways. If a PEP client loses his or her job, PEP services (including re-employment assistance) may continue for up to 60 days, at which point the client will be referred back to PROMISE JOBS if he or she is not re-employed. PEP services were also originally restricted to clients receiving FIP cash assistance; however, shortly after implementing PEP, the pilot sites realized that a substantial number of clients would be interested in and benefit from services after leaving FIP. Iowa DHS worked with the sites to establish the agreements necessary for them to access funding

EXHIBIT 1.4

AGENCY RELATIONSHIPS IN ADMINISTERING THE PEP PROGRAM

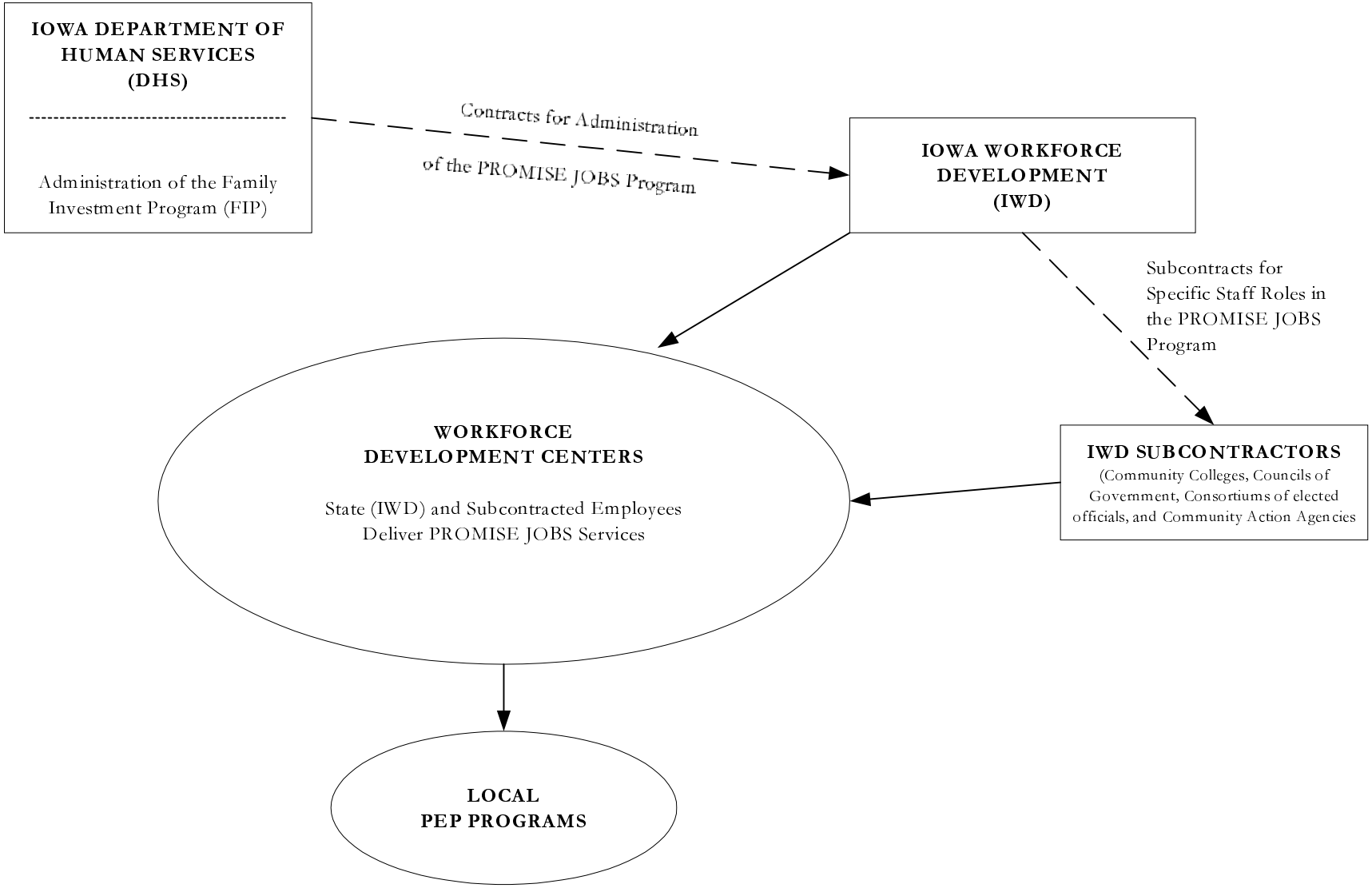


EXHIBIT I.5

GOALS OF THE PEP PROGRAM

Broad Objective

- Promote self-sufficiency and successful exit from welfare

Primary Goals

- Increase clients' weekly hours of employment
- Increase clients' hourly wage over time
- Increase clients' duration of employment

Secondary Goals

- Help clients gain employment with fringe benefits
- Help clients obtain employment that meets their career goals
- Provide clients with soft skill development (e.g., overcoming work-related obstacles, improving self-esteem, time and stress management, etc.)
- Encourage clients' educational advancement
- Reinforce and acknowledge clients' successes and accomplishments
- Help clients with skill development

Source: DHS PEP meeting follow-up information, February 2000.

EXHIBIT I.6

PEP PROGRAM FRAMEWORK AND FUNDING

Program Eligibility	• Employed PROMISE JOBS participants
Period of Service Delivery	• Post-employment • During 60-day periods of unemployment • Clients must receive FIP cash assistance[a] • No limit on the length of time a client may receive services while receiving FIP cash assistance[b]
Governing Rules and Guidelines	• Must function within administrative rules for the PROMISE JOBS Program and Family Self-Sufficiency Grants • PEP guidelines developed by DHS for additional guidance
Funding	• Federal TANF and state funding totaling $187,306 from program implementation in fall 1998 to June 2000 • State FY 2001 budget requests total $197,734

Source: Site visits; Iowa Department of Human Services, "PEP Guidelines," June 2000.

[a]Beginning in the fall of 2000 (after the period of evaluation), PEP programs could serve clients who left FIP cash assistance.

[b]Post-FIP clients can be served for a maximum of 12 months after their departure from FIP.

to provide "post–FIP" services.[4] Since fall 2000, the sites have been able to serve PEP clients after their departure from FIP.

PEP operates within the policy and funding guidelines in place for PROMISE JOBS; the administrative code governing PROMISE JOBS was not changed in any way to accommodate PEP, and there are no administrative rules specific to PEP. However, DHS did develop specific guidelines to help the pilot sites interpret their PEP activities within the context of the rules governing PROMISE JOBS. (See Appendix I for the PEP guidelines.) Throughout the implementation process, the sites actively engaged in discussions with DHS and IWD to address specific questions and concerns about proposed services and their conformity with PROMISE JOBS rules. Exhibit I.7 presents some examples of post-employment activities that are and are not allowed under PROMISE JOBS rules.

EXHIBIT I.7

PEP ACTIVITIES UNDER PROMISE JOBS PROGRAM RULES

Examples of What PEP Can Do

- Provide individual case management
- Provide supportive services such as child care and transportation assistance
- Contract with third parties to provide specified short-term training to PEP participants and participants' employers
- Provide emergency financial assistance to clients in the form of Family Self-Sufficiency Grants to help obtain or maintain employment

Examples of What PEP Cannot Do

- Provide financial incentives for participation in ongoing program activities
- Provide services to an individual that could not reasonably be provided to PROMISE JOBS participants on a larger scale
- Contract with third parties to provide ongoing training to employers of PEP participants

What PEP Must Do

- Include PEP participation in the Family Investment Agreement

Source: Site Visits; Iowa Department of Human Services, "PEP Guidelines," June 2000.

[4]This funding is available through a "post–FIP diversion" program, which was launched at the same time as PEP. Services through this program are available to clients for up to 12 months after they leave FIP and are intended to deter reapplication for cash assistance. None of the three PEP sites pursued this additional funding at the time it was originally offered because they felt that development of a proposal would be too time-consuming.

3. PEP Funding

The PEP Program is funded through a combination of federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds and state funds. Each pilot site received a $50,000 allocation to hire staff and undertake planning activities.[5] The state then asked the sites to submit annual budgets based on their projected expenses for the new program. Exhibit I.6 provides the funding amounts received by the sites through June 2000 and the amounts requested for the state fiscal year 2001 (July 1, 2000, through June 30, 2001). Most of the requested funding is used to pay staff salaries. Other budgeted items include marketing and recruitment materials, workshop materials, and staff training. PEP funds cannot be used to assist or reward clients directly (through subsidized employment or incentives, for example).

PEP-specific funds are indirectly supplemented with funds allocated to related programs. Because PEP is officially part of PROMISE JOBS, the overall PROMISE JOBS budget absorbs the administrative and overhead costs of the local programs. In addition, PEP clients may receive emergency financial assistance through Family Self Sufficiency Grants (FSSG).

4. The Local Planning Process

The planning process for the PEP Program was a unique experience for the pilot sites and the state agencies. Given that PEP is a pilot program in a service area that lacks proven methods, the state specifically encouraged a less formal, more bottom-up approach to program development than is standard. It did not specify the staffing structures, referral and recruitment practices, or types of services for the local programs. As a result, the pilot sites could exercise significant discretion in designing their local programs.

The sites were not, however, left entirely on their own to plan the PEP Program. DHS, IWD, and MPR provided technical assistance throughout the planning and implementation periods. Assistance included reference materials and research reports on job retention and advancement programs and brainstorming and planning exercises. Monthly conference calls were conducted among representatives of the local sites, DHS, IWD, and MPR, and two PEP-specific technical assistance meetings were held in August 1999 and February 2000. Site representatives also attended a conference in May 1999 on retention and advancement, attended by representatives from various state and local programs operating throughout the nation. The conference was organized by MPR for the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The three pilot sites used several other sources of information to guide local design and implementation of the PEP Program, including brainstorming meetings with staff and administrators at the Workforce Development Centers and focus group discussions with PROMISE JOBS clients and local employers. The aim of both the meetings and focus

[5]Only one site accessed close to the full $50,000 during the initial planning period (fall 1998 through June 1999).

group discussions was to develop a general understanding of the challenges faced by employed PROMISE JOBS clients with respect to job retention and advancement and to seek input into the services that the pilot program should provide.

5. PEP Recruitment and Services

The latitude accorded the sites in developing the PEP Program allowed for some site-specific differences in structure and approach. One of the most significant choices made by the sites was whether to design a voluntary or mandatory program. Of the three sites, two have implemented a voluntary program; the third requires that any client offered PEP services must attend an initial meeting with PEP staff. During that meeting, the client may choose whether to participate in PEP; but, once PEP is added to the client's Family Investment Agreement (FIA), participation in PEP activities becomes mandatory. Because of its quasi-mandatory approach, this site was also the only one to employ the formal administrative recruitment methods of PROMISE JOBS. The sites also made varied decisions about the PEP staffing structure, which affected the focus and stability of their programs.

Despite these differences, the PEP sites have developed similar service structures and provide their clients with almost identical services. The core service component of the PEP Program at all three sites is group activities, which provide training in job readiness and life skills. Support and counseling are also offered through individual case management, and economic support is provided through emergency financial assistance. Some sites have also developed employer-based services, such as mentoring and job development, but these services have not been fully implemented. Exhibit I.8 displays the services available through PEP.

Regardless of the design of individual local programs, the main challenge faced by all three pilot sites has been low participation. From October 1999 through July 2000, the three PEP sites served a total of 95 clients, considerably fewer than the number projected during the planning process. Low participation has affected the program's ability to establish the level and continuity of services that its designers had hoped to achieve.

B. THE STUDY OF POST-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The Iowa Department of Human Services contracted with MPR to provide early technical assistance to the three PEP sites and to conduct an evaluation of the pilot program. The program development phase was launched in October 1998, when the three sites were confirmed and planning exercises began at each site. The evaluation officially began one year later, on October 1, 1999, when the sites had developed their core service plans and were ready to begin systematic client intake into PEP. (For the program and evaluation timeline, refer to Exhibit I.2.)

EXHIBIT I.8

SERVICES OFFERED BY THE PEP PROGRAM
(at one or more site)

Method of Delivery	Service
Group Activities	• Job Readiness and Life Skills ("Soft Skills") Training • Support Group • Computer Training
Individual Case Management	• Counseling • Emergency Financial Assistance • Job Search Assistance • Service Referrals
Employer-Based	• Mentoring Program • Employer Training • Job Development

Source: Site visits and site post-employment plans (revised in 2000; see Appendix III).

The initial plans for the evaluation of PEP included a nearly two-year-long outcome and process study. The outcome component would have examined program participants' employment, earnings, and welfare receipt after a prescribed follow-up period; however, low client engagement and participation levels across the three pilot sites made an outcomes study unrealistic. Instead, it was determined that an accelerated schedule for the process component of the study would be most useful to the pilot sites and DHS in making decisions about the direction of their post-employment efforts.

The PEP process study included the following components:

- ***Analysis of Data from a PEP Database.*** MPR developed two data-collection tools—a PEP Referral Form[6] and a PEP database. PROMISE JOBS workers complete referral forms for all eligible PROMISE JOBS clients and pass those forms on to PEP staff. The information provided on the referral form is entered into the PEP database, as are all contacts with

[6]The PEP Referral Form is Exhibit IV.1.

clients who are offered and receive services. Using the data stored in the sites' databases, MPR analyzed the characteristics of PEP participants and nonparticipants and the patterns of contact with program participants.

- ***Site Visits.*** MPR staff conducted two rounds of visits to each of the three pilot sites. The first, during October–December 1999, gathered information on the sites' planning, referral, and recruitment processes. The second, during July–August 2000, focused on program implementation and services.

- ***Focus Groups.*** During the second round of site visits, MPR staff conducted two focus group discussions at each site—one with PEP participants, the other with nonparticipants—to hear the perspectives of PROMISE JOBS clients on PEP recruitment and services. The focus groups, which included from four to 11 participants, were not representative samples of the PROMISE JOBS population eligible for PEP services.

- ***Ongoing Contact with Sites***. During the planning period, all three sites participated in monthly conference calls to discuss their progress in program development as well as any particular issues or questions. After the start of the evaluation, MPR staff conducted periodic formal checks on program implementation and changes but placed more emphasis on frequent, direct, and informal contacts with each site.

Using data generated by the above four study components, this report describes the design, administration, and services of the pilot program and discusses the pilot sites' issues, challenges, and successes in implementing post-employment services. The PEP Program is still relatively new; however, it is clear from client enrollment patterns that adjustments in program design and/or approach are necessary to address problems of job retention and advancement among PROMISE JOBS participants. This process study is intended to identify the lessons from the PEP sites' experience and to provide information that will contribute to the state's future planning process, in continued partnership with the pilot sites, for providing job retention and advancement services.

The remainder of this report describes and assesses the various components of the PEP program operating at the three pilot sites. Chapter II discusses the dynamics of program entry and participation and presents the characteristics of program participants and nonparticipants. Chapter III details the site-specific PEP service components, and Chapter IV provides an assessment of those services. Chapter V explains the staffing structures and staff capabilities at each of the three pilot sites. The final chapter offers a framework for the state as it considers the experiences of the PEP Program and moves forward with its commitment to job retention and advancement services. This framework includes considerations for refining the current structure of PEP as well as for more broadly redesigning the state model for retention and advancement services.

CHAPTER II

PEP RECRUITMENT AND PARTICIPATION

The most challenging aspect of implementation of the PEP Program is client recruitment and engagement. The difficulties faced by the PEP sites became evident soon after program implementation and have not abated. State decisions concerning the definition of eligibility and the period of service delivery limit the pool of clients potentially eligible for local programs. In addition, all three sites have had difficulty in building interest in the program among eligible working parents. Client feedback suggests that much of the difficulty stems from parents' reluctance to spend time attending PEP meetings that might otherwise be spent caring for children, relaxing, or attending to other responsibilities. This challenge is amplified for the two sites operating fully voluntary programs.

This chapter discusses the referral, recruitment, and engagement processes as well as the rates of participation at each pilot site. It also examines the personal and employment characteristics of PROMISE JOBS clients who participate in PEP and those who do not.[1]

A. REFERRAL AND RECRUITMENT PROCESS

The PEP sites have served far fewer clients than anticipated during the planning process. As of July 31, 2000, the three PEP sites engaged a combined total of 95 clients, approximately 12 percent of the total eligible PROMISE JOBS population. While the engagement rate varies slightly across the pilot sites, all three sites have struggled to reach their projected caseload sizes. At the start of program implementation, each site expected to carry a PEP client caseload of about 40 clients at any point; however, each site typically carries a caseload of about 10 to 15 clients.

Across the sites, two main factors have contributed to these program participation figures. First, the total pool of PROMISE JOBS participants who become eligible for PEP services is smaller than projected due to the continuous decline in FIP, and therefore,

[1]Unless otherwise noted, the data presented in this chapter cover the period during which the PEP Program was evaluated—October 1999 through July 2000—but not the entire period of operations. The pilot sites began providing services in August 1999 and continue to provide services at the time of this report.

PROMISE JOBS caseloads. Second, and most critically, the proportion of PROMISE JOBS participants offered PEP services who engage in the program has been significantly lower than hoped. Other site-specific issues also affect participation rates. At one site, all eligible PROMISE JOBS participants have not been referred to PEP. While another site chooses to target services more narrowly than the eligibility criteria and, therefore, does not offer services to all eligibles referred to the program. This section examines the program's eligibility criteria and the pilot sites' processes for referring clients to PEP and offering PEP services. Section B examines program engagement.

1. Eligibility and Targeting Criteria

Eligibility for PEP services, as defined by Iowa Department of Human Services, extends to PROMISE JOBS participants who gained employment after September 1, 1999.[2] Two of the pilot sites adopted the state's definition of eligibility at the start of program implementation while one site continued—until June 2000—to refine its targeting criteria within the state's broader definition of eligibility (see Exhibit II.1).

In Pottawattamie County, PEP was originally intended to focus on job advancement (as opposed to job retention) by targeting clients who had some work history but were stagnant in their current job. The original targeting criteria were directed toward clients with six months of continuous employment. After about three months of program implementation, the county revised the criterion to three months of employment at any time over the previous 12-month period. By the beginning of the fourth quarter of program operation, Pottawattamie removed employment history from its targeting criteria. It deemed the changes in targeting criteria necessary in order to expand the pool of clients eligible for and offered PEP services. By the summer of 2000, all three sites were using a fairly uniform approach to program eligibility; all were recruiting from among the newly employed PROMISE JOBS clients each month, although Pottawattamie County still maintained some additional targeting criteria as outlined in Exhibit II.1.

Data from DHS indicate that the total PROMISE JOBS population eligible for PEP services from September 1999 through July 2000 was 779 individuals. Des Moines County and Pottawattamie County have similarly sized eligible populations at 276 and 328, respectively, while the total eligible population in Marshall and Hardin counties was substantially less at 175 individuals.

[2]Before the start of the evaluation, no date was associated with this eligibility criterion—PEP services could be provided to any employed PROMISE JOBS client. A beginning date of employment was defined for the purposes of the original evaluation plan, which included an analysis of client outcomes. This criterion is less necessary for the process study.

EXHIBIT II.1

PEP PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY AND TARGETING CRITERIA

State-Defined Eligibility

PROMISE JOBS participants who gained employment after September 1, 1999

Site-Defined Targeting Criteria

Des Moines County	**Marshall/Hardin Counties**	**Pottawattamie County**
Same as state eligibility	Same as state eligibility	*October 1-December 15, 1999* PROMISE JOBS clients with continuous employment over the previous six-month period. (Continuous employment includes all months during which a PROMISE JOBS client was working at least one day.) *December 15, 1999-May 31, 2000* Employed PROMISE JOBS participants who • Are not experiencing any barriers that will prevent them from attaining full or increased employment; and, • Whose employment status or recent work history meets one of the following criteria: - Low wages and/or hours that will not enable the client to reach self-sufficiency - Worked at least three months in the last 12 months (at any job) - In a job that is unlikely to lead to advancement or pay increases *June 1, 2000-Present:* Employed PROMISE JOBS participants who meet any one of the following criteria: - Working insufficient hours for the family to reach self-sufficiency - Earning insufficient wages to allow the family to leave FIP - Working in a job with little advancement potential or for an employer who does not provide regular raises and/or promotions or does not offer benefits - A history of multiple job quits or losses

Source: PEP site visits and site post employment plans (revised in 2000; see Appendix III).

2. Referrals to the PEP Programs

On October 1, 1999, the sites initiated use of the Referral Form for PEP Services—developed by MPR—as a systematic method to receive referrals for eligible clients from PROMISE JOBS workers. The form (see Exhibit II.2) provides basic personal, family, and employment background information. Its aim is to assist PEP staff in identifying potential clients and gaining a preliminary understanding of their employment situations and potential needs.

MPR worked with the pilot sites, DHS, and Iowa Workforce Development to develop a "trigger point" for completing the referral form that would identify the entire eligible population—PROMISE JOBS participants who gain employment at any time on or after September 1, 1999. PROMISE JOBS workers were trained in how to complete the form accurately and were instructed to complete the referral form at the same time that they complete the required paperwork for the PROMISE JOBS Program, thereby indicating that a client has gained employment. There is no filtering process that PROMISE JOBS workers are meant to use; rather, all employed PROMISE JOBS participants are intended to be referred for PEP services. Once all eligible clients are referred for services, it is the decision of PEP staff, based on the program's targeting criteria, whether to extend the offer of PEP services to those clients.

Ideally, the number of PROMISE JOBS clients referred to PEP services should be equal to the number of PROMISE JOBS clients eligible for services based on clients' employment date. In fact, such is the case at two of the pilot sites. In Marshall/Hardin counties and in Pottawattamie County, data indicate that 100 percent of the eligible population for PEP was referred to the program through July 2000. Des Moines County appears to have had some difficulty in referring all eligible PROMISE JOBS clients to PEP services. At this site, only 59 percent of the eligible population had a referral form completed and forwarded to PEP staff.[3] It is not clear why the percentage of the eligible, referred population is so much lower in Des Moines County. During our site visits to Des Moines County, PROMISE JOBS and PEP staff expressed their confidence that the referral forms were completed in a timely and comprehensive fashion.

3. PEP Program Recruitment Practices

Not all PROMISE JOBS clients who are referred to PEP are offered PEP services. The total number of referrals across all three pilot sites through the evaluation period is 693 (see Exhibit II.3). Overall, 55 percent of those referrals were offered services. The average across the sites is less meaningful, however, than examining the differences among the sites.

[3]This calculation was made by comparing PROMISE JOBS data on the number of participants who gained employment with PEP data (compiled on site-maintained databases) on the number of clients referred to the PEP Program. The data were available for the period between September 1999 (when employed clients became eligible for PEP) and July 2000.

EXHIBIT II.2

REFERRAL FORM FOR PEP SERVICES

DATE FORM COMPLETED: |___|___| / |___|___| / 19 |___|___| NAME OF PERSON COMPLETING FORM:_____
Month Day Year

COUNTY: ☐ Des Moines ☐ Marshall/Hardin ☐ Pottawattamie

CLIENT ADDRESS, IDENTIFICATION, AND REFERRAL INFORMATION	
1. Name of Client: _____ (First) (Last)	**2. Priority for PEP Services *(optional)*:** ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low
3. Address: _____ _____ _____ (City) (State) (ZIP)	**4. Date of Birth:** |___|___| / |___|___| / 19 |___|___| Month Day Year **5. Phone Number:** (_____) - _____ - _____ Area Code
6. Social Security Number: |___|___|___|-|___|___|-|___|___|___|___|	**7. State ID Number:** |___|___|___|___|___|___|___|___|
ADDITIONAL CLIENT INFORMATION	
8. Number of Children in the Household: |___|___|	**9. Age of Youngest Child in the Household:** |___|___|months or |___|___| years
10. Education Level of Client: ☐ No HS diploma/GED ☐ Completed HS diploma/GED ☐ Some college ☐ Completed college ☐ Some voc./tech. school ☐ Completed voc./tech. school	**11. Primary Means of Transportation for Work:** ☐ Own car ☐ Van pool ☐ Rides with friends or relatives ☐ Walk ☐ Public transportation ☐ Don't know ☐ Other, specify: _____
12. Type of Child Care Arrangements for Youngest Child: ☐ Center-based care ☐ Family/Group child care home ☐ Friend or relative ☐ Not applicable/Don't know	**13. Does the Client Receive a Subsidy for Child Care?** ☐ Yes ☐ Don't know ☐ No
14. Potential Barriers to Job Retention/Advancement: ☐ Learning difficulties/limited English ☐ Transportation ☐ Chronic health problems or physical limitations ☐ Substance abuse problem ☐ Child Care ☐ Child with a disability (mental or physical) ☐ Domestic violence issues ☐ Mental health limitations ☐ Other, specify:_____	
EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION--PRIMARY JOB	
15. Employer:	**16. Job Title:**
17. Date Client Began Working at This Job: |___|___| /19 |___|___| Month Year ☐ Don't know	**18. Is Health Insurance Provided by Employer?** ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know
19. Hours per Week: |___|___| hours ☐ Don't know	**20. Hourly Wage:** $|___|___|. |___|___| ☐ Don't know
OTHER EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION	
21. Is this Client Employed in any Additional Jobs? ☐ Yes ☐ No (if no, skip to question 23) ☐ Don't know	
22. Hours of Work on All Additional Jobs Combined: |___|___| hours ☐ Don't know	
23. How Many Months During the Past 12 Months has the Client Been Employed? |___|___| months ☐ Don't know	

EXHIBIT II.3

PEP PROGRAM REFERRALS AND CLIENTS OFFERED SERVICES

Site	Referrals to PEP	Referrals Offered PEP Services	PEP Offer Rate	Average Time from Referral to Offer of Services (in days)
Des Moines County	163	152	93%	4.6
Marshall and Hardin Counties	174	163	94%	14.7
Pottawattamie County	356	66	19%	33.5
Total for All Sites	693	381	55%	13.5

Source: PEP database for each pilot site.

The sites vary in their approach to targeting clients for PEP services and in how they conduct recruitment with targeted clients. In Des Moines County and Marshall/Hardin counties, virtually all of the PROMISE JOBS clients referred to PEP are offered services at the rates of 93 and 94 percent, respectively (see Exhibit II.3). These sites do not have targeting criteria that further refine the state definition of PEP Program eligibility (as discussed in Section 1). PEP staff at these two sites decided to offer PEP services to the entire eligible population in order to offer equal opportunities to all employed PROMISE JOBS clients and to have the largest possible pool of individuals who could participate in the program. The small number of PROMISE JOBS clients who were not offered services at these sites typically moved off FIP assistance or lost employment before a PEP recruitment contact.

Pottawattamie County has made use of additional targeting criteria within state-defined program eligibility (refer to Exhibit II.1). As a result, PEP staff at this site have not conducted outreach to the entire eligible population but instead have used the referral forms and discussions with PROMISE JOBS workers to identify referred clients who meet the site's targeting criteria. Over the period of evaluation (from October 1, 1999, through July 31, 2000), the site has offered PEP services to 19 percent of the 356 program referrals received—a far lower offer rate than that at the other two sites (see Exhibit II.3).[4]

[4]The number of referrals to the PEP program in Pottawattamie County slightly exceeds the total eligible population presented earlier because of an exemption granted to Pottawattamie in the early period of program operations in order to accommodate their initial targeting criteria.

Because all eligible clients are offered PEP services at the Des Moines and Marshall/Hardin sites, initial decisions about whom to recruit require little time. At these sites, PEP staff contact eligible clients very soon after receipt of the referral form. In Des Moines County, the average number of days between receipt of a referral and the initial recruitment contact is less than five days (see Exhibit II.3); in Marshall/Hardin, the initial recruitment contact occurs in approximately 15 days.

The recruitment process in Pottawattamie County differs from that at the other two sites. Given that the Pottawattamie site makes an additional assessment about client suitability for the PEP Program beyond the broader eligibility standard, it takes longer for PEP staff at Pottawattamie to make an initial contact with a referred client. On average, the time from receipt of a referral to the initial recruitment contact in Pottawattamie County (for those clients who are contacted for PEP services) is about 34 days.

a. Recruitment Approach

The decisions around which referred clients are offered services at the pilot sites are also tied to the sites' approaches to program engagement. In Des Moines County and Marshall/Hardin counties, PEP is a fully voluntary program. PROMISE JOBS clients offered PEP services at these sites must take the initiative both to respond to PEP recruitment efforts and to make the decision to participate in the program. Once a client decides to participate in the program, PEP activities are added to his or her Family Investment Agreement for client accountability (as required by DHS) but can be removed at any time by the client.

In Pottawattamie County, initial consideration of the PEP Program is mandatory for clients offered services. In addition, if a client chooses to participate in PEP and PEP activities are added to his or her FIA, he or she is required to comply with that agreement. Clients targeted for services at Pottawattamie are approached about the program in a manner that is consistent with PROMISE JOBS rules for all required activities. They receive an initial letter that introduces the PEP Program with a PROMISE JOBS "Notice of Appointment" letter, which requires their attendance at a meeting with PEP staff to discuss the program. At the appointment, clients learn that they must either participate in the PEP Program or take other steps to demonstrate their continued efforts to achieve self-sufficiency.

PROMISE JOBS clients offered PEP services in Pottawattamie County are subject to a reduction in their FIP cash assistance if they fail to respond to multiple Notices of Appointment or fail to keep or reschedule an appointment with PEP staff. Once PEP activities are added to a client's FIA, the client can also be penalized for nonparticipation. At the time of MPR's last site visit, one client had entered and one had been referred to the Limited Benefit Plan (LBP) (which eliminates the cash grant) as a consequence of noncompliance with PEP recruitment or participation rules.

b. Recruitment Methods

Site differences in recruitment approaches—the use of targeting criteria and whether client consideration of the program is voluntary or mandatory—influence the type of contacts used for recruitment and the number of recruitment contacts with clients. Exhibit II.4 provides information on the pilot sites' recruitment methods.

Des Moines and Marshall/Hardin Counties. These pilot sites initially send out brochures "advertising" the PEP Program to referred clients. Clients then receive follow-up telephone calls to discuss program services and/or to invite them to an upcoming program activity. In Des Moines County, the vast majority (92 percent) of contacts with clients before program engagement occur through letters, memoranda, and brochures.[5] In Marshall/Hardin, follow-up calls represent a larger portion (22 percent) of all contacts before engagement than in Des Moines (8 percent). In Marshall/Hardin, a part-time administrative support person assists with client follow-up, which may contribute to greater reliance on personal telephone follow-up.

In their recruitment materials, both sites have attempted to distinguish the PEP Program from the PROMISE JOBS Program by developing specialized letterhead and envelopes for PEP. PEP staff want to minimize the possible negative reactions clients may have to PROMISE JOBS correspondence.

The Marshall/Hardin site is the only site that also makes use of a periodic newsletter to referred clients. The newsletter is in some sense a recruitment tool in that it announces upcoming PEP events and encourages readers to contact PEP staff; however, it also provides a service to clients. It contains information about known job openings, provides tips on workplace behavior, informs readers of additional employment resources, and provides a calendar of community events. The newsletter is distributed approximately quarterly and, as is evident from Exhibit II.4, represents a large portion (38 percent) of this site's overall recruitment contacts.

Pottawattamie County. The mandatory nature of Pottawattamie's initial recruitment approach makes its recruitment methods different from those in the other two pilot sites. Pottawattamie's approach is rules-based, with PEP client intake designed as another step in the PROMISE JOBS process. Therefore, recruitment into PEP at Pottawattamie follows a set of PROMISE JOBS procedures that are used when a client is required to renegotiate the

[5]For the purposes of the analyses in this report, recruitment contacts are those that occur before a client's "engagement" in PEP. Section B of this chapter describes the definition of engagement in depth. Briefly, a client is engaged once he or she has had one (two in Pottawattamie County) in-person meeting(s) with PEP staff or received a telephone call(s) that is (are) deemed "service-oriented." All contacts with clients who never engage in the program are considered recruitment contacts.

EXHIBIT II.4

USE OF SPECIFIC METHODS FOR PEP RECRUITMENT

	Recruitment Contacts Using Specific Methods	
	Number	Percent
Des Moines County		
Letter, memo, brochure	496	92
Newsletter	0	0
Telephone	45	8
Face-to-face	0	0
Missing	0	0
Total	541	100
Marshall and Hardin Counties		
Letter, memo, brochure	279	40
Newsletter	269	38
Telephone	154	22
Face-to-face	0	0
Missing	1	0
Total	703	100
Pottawattamie County		
Letter, memo, brochure	123	63
Newsletter	0	0
Telephone	36	18
Face-to-face	36	18
Missing	44	0
Total	239	100
Total for All Sites		
Letter, memo, brochure	898	62
Newsletter	269	19
Telephone	235	16
Face-to-face	36	3
Missing	45	0
Total	1483	100

Source: PEP database for each pilot site.

Note: All analyses for this exhibit exclude a small group of PEP participants at each site who were engaged in services before October 1, 1999. Also, percents exclude contacts with missing data.

components of his or her FIA. As staff describe the process, clients first receive a Notice of Appointment that requires them to meet with PEP staff in order to renegotiate their FIA. They have five days to respond to the first notice before a second notice is sent. Again, clients have five days to respond to the second notice, at which time a supervisory letter is sent explaining that the client must respond to the appointment request or enter the Limited Benefit Plan. After another 10 days without response, a client is referred for an LBP.

Because Pottawattmie requires an initial meeting with a PEP staff member through the Notice of Appointment process, we define "engagement" differently for this site. The first face-to-face contact in Pottawattamie is viewed as a recruitment contact rather than as the point of engagement. Eighteen percent of all contacts before engagement in Pottawattamie County occur through face-to-face meetings (see Exhibit II.4). Staff members also use telephone calls to recruit clients (telephone calls make up 18 percent of all contacts before engagement), but only after they have first heard from clients on their own initiative. In this way, the timing and nature of telephone follow-up calls differs between Pottawattamie and the two other two sites. At the other two sites, calls encourage an initial response from clients by establishing personal contact. Follow-up calls in Pottawattamie County are more likely to result from a client's failure to keep an appointment and are intended to set another time for a meeting.

Another striking difference between the recruitment methods in Pottawattamie County and the other two sites is that, despite Pottawattamie's larger eligible population, the county makes a relatively small number of recruitment-oriented contacts (239 compared with 541 and 703 at the other two sites). The difference is largely attributable to the fact that Pottawattmie uses additional targeting criteria that narrow the eligible population and reduce the number of clients offered PEP services.

Recent Innovations. All three sites have supplemented their direct recruitment efforts aimed at referred clients by undertaking broader recruitment efforts to inform PROMISE JOBS clients, before they gain employment, about the PEP Program. Beginning in spring 2000, PEP staff in Marshall/Hardin began attending PROMISE JOBS orientation sessions, Job Club, and Life Skills workshops to discuss the PEP Program.[6] In addition, the PROMISE JOBS workers are encouraged to discuss PEP and distribute program brochures to clients during meetings that are intended to develop the client's initial FIA. Similarly, the PEP staff member in Des Moines County attends Life Skills classes monthly, and PEP staff members in Pottawattamie County attend Job Club to explain the PEP Program. The PEP staff member in Des Moines also requests PROMISE JOBS workers to inform her when a referred client is in the office so that she can take the opportunity to discuss PEP personally with him or her.

[6]PROMISE JOBS orientation is mandatory for all PROMISE JOBS clients. The majority of PROMISE JOBS clients also participate in Job Club (structured job search) and Life Skills classes (soft-skill development) before employment.

c. Recruitment Messages

The ways that PEP is advertised through recruitment materials and telephone calls also vary across sites. According to staff reports and recruitment materials collected during MPR's site visits, the recruitment message at two of the sites focuses on advancement. One of these sites has gone so far as to rename the program the "Wage Enhancement Group." The following are excerpts from recruitment brochures at both sites:

> "Do you have benefits? Does your employer have health insurance [or] retirement plans…If not, now may be the time to look for a new employer while maintaining your current job."

> "Promise Jobs Counselors understand how difficult it can be to advance in the workplace…Knowing this, the Counselors have pulled together to form PEP (the Wage Enhancement Group) to assist people who have already attained employment to increase chances of higher earning."

The third site also advertises PEP as a way to earn higher wages and advance, though as part of a broader message that encompasses retention, family well-being, and personal health and fitness. The site's brochures announce and describe a set of upcoming workshops with topics ranging from "Self Time" to "Taxes Made Simple" to "Anger—Manage It." (Chapter III provides more information on group workshops at all three sites.)

Self-sufficiency and the five-year life-time limit on cash assistance receipt are also topics that all three sites emphasize during recruitment. One site created a brochure featuring the question "Is time running out for you?" Both PROMISE JOBS and PEP staff promote the PEP Program as an opportunity for clients to work their way off FIP cash assistance and become self-sufficient.

Appendix II provides examples of recruitment materials from all three PEP sites.

B. PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT

It has not been easy for any of the pilot sites to convince referred clients to become engaged in PEP and to remain active in the program. The total number of clients who have been engaged in program services at any level during the period of evaluation—October 1999 through July 2000—is 95 (see Exhibit II.5).

Our analysis may, in fact, overstate the total number of clients engaged in program services. Given the sites' different methods of recruitment and, in turn, different coding methods in the database used to track program recruitment and services, we found it necessary to develop a standard and objective method of defining program engagement. We considered an individual engaged in program services at the time that a contact between PEP staff and the individual met any one of the following criteria:

EXHIBIT II.5

PEP PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT

Site	PROMISE JOBS Clients Offered PEP Services	PROMISE JOBS Clients Ever Engaged in PEP	PEP Engagement Rate
Des Moines County	152	27	18%
Marshall and Hardin Counties	163	37	23%
Pottawattamie County	66	31	47%
Total for All Sites	381	95	25%

Source: PEP database for each pilot site.

- The individual had a face-to-face meeting with the PEP staff at any location, including the Workforce Development Center, the individual's home or job site, or any other public location[7]

- The individual participated in a group workshop or peer support group session

- The individual had at least a 10-minute telephone conversation with a PEP staff member, with some substantive assistance (as reflected by service codes in the database) provided during the call.

For all three sites, the definition of engagement does not require ongoing or consistent participation; individuals are considered engaged in program services even if they had just one substantive contact that meets the above criteria. Chapter III further describes services and highlights the distinction between those clients ever engaged in program services and those who are consistently active.

[7]A slightly modified definition is used for Pottawattamie County; given that the initial meeting with PEP staff at this site is mandatory, that contact is categorized as a recruitment-oriented meeting that takes place before engagement. Thus, in Pottawattmie, the definition of engagement is the *second* contact between the client and PEP staff that meets the above criteria. This modification creates equivalent definitions of engagement across the three sites: engagement is the point when a client *voluntarily* participates in his or her first *substantive* meeting with PEP staff.

1. Program Engagement Rates

Under the definition of engagement described above, the percentage of clients offered PEP services that became engaged in PEP averages 25 percent across the sites (see Exhibit II.5). Again, the story differs across the sites upon closer examination. In Des Moines County and in Marshall/Hardin counties, the engagement rates for services are 18 and 23 percent, respectively and are comparable with another similar voluntary job retention program in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Wood and Paulsell, 1999). In Pottawattamie County, the engagement rate is much higher at 47 percent.

Pottawattamie County has taken a quasi-mandatory approach to recruitment, making the first meeting mandatory, the decision to amend the FIA voluntary, and compliance with FIA requirements mandatory. Mandatory programs commonly experience engagement rates between 50 and 75 percent (Hamilton and Scrivener, 1999). This site's policy may send a mixed message to clients about whether they are actually required to participate in the PEP Program, resulting in an engagement rate that exceeds that of the other two sites but is still below that of most mandatory programs. It may also be that a larger proportion of clients offered services in Pottawattamie County engage in the PEP Program because the program offers services to a much smaller number of clients and program staff can devote more time to recruiting those clients.

2. Contacts and Time Necessary for Program Engagement

On average, clients who do become engaged in PEP do so after relatively few recruitment-oriented contacts. As Exhibit II.6 shows, the average number of contacts made with clients before they engaged in the program ranged from two to five among the three sites. Pottawattamie has the highest average because our modified definition of engagement for the site categorizes more contacts as "before engagement" than at the other two sites.

Interestingly, there is little difference between the average number of recruitment-oriented contacts for engaged clients and for all clients offered PEP services (including those who never become engaged in the program) (see Exhibit II.6). This suggests that a point exists when clients either have a substantive meeting with the PEP worker and become engaged in the program or are no longer actively recruited by the program. No site identified a cut-off point at which it would cease to recruit a client, but the demands on staff may have led to a de facto point after four to five contacts.

The amount of time that elapses between referral and engagement is longer in Pottawattamie County than at the other two sites because Pottawattamie uses the PROMISE JOBS Notice of Appointment process for PEP recruitment (see Exhibit II.6). In both Des Moines and Marshall/Hardin counties, the average time between recruitment and engagement is approximately one and a half months, but in Pottawattamie the recruitment process takes a full month longer. It is the impression of the PEP staff in Pottawattamie

EXHIBIT II.6

NUMBER OF CONTACTS AND ELAPSED TIME UNTIL ENGAGEMENT

Site	Average Number of Recruitment Contacts		Average Time from Referral to Engagement (in days)
	For Engaged PEP Clients	For All Clients Offered Services	
Des Moines County	4	4	43
Marshall and Hardin Counties	2	5	42
Pottawattamie County	5	5	78
Total for All Sites	4	5	54

Source: PEP database for each pilot site.

Note: These analyses exclude a small group of PEP participants in each site who were engaged in services before October 1, 1999.

County that some of the delay is due to clients' familiarity with the Notice of Appointment process and their practice of delaying compliance until the last possible moment. Regardless, clients at all three sites could be receiving services sooner after referral and earlier in the employment period—when they are most vulnerable to losing a job (Strawn and Martinson, 2000

C. CLIENT PERSPECTIVES ON RECRUITMENT AND PARTICIPATION DECISIONS

During the focus group discussions conducted by MPR at each site, PEP participants and nonparticipants (who were offered PEP services) provided their perspectives on both the PEP recruitment process and their decisions regarding whether to participate in the program.

1. Client Reactions to Program Recruitment

Most members of the PEP participant focus groups remember first hearing about the program directly (either in person or by telephone) from a PEP staff member or PROMISE JOBS or Welfare-to-Work counselor. The experience differs for the nonparticipants who had heard of the program, most of whom remember receiving a letter or brochure in the

mail. While the focus groups are not representative samples of the participant and nonparticipant population, they suggest that clients may be more inclined to participate in the program when recruited directly by a caseworker rather than by mail.

Recruitment efforts are not always successful in explaining the broad objective or specific goals of the PEP Program and in differentiating the program from others at the Workforce Development Center. The message received by many focus group participants is that PEP services help clients find better jobs; yet, the primary goals at all three sites are to help clients both retain employment over time and find opportunities for advancement. At two of the sites, focus group members who were offered PEP services but had not participated showed some confusion as to how the PEP Program differed from the PROMISE JOBS or JTPA programs.[8] And, at one site, the focus group discussion suggested that individual involvement in PEP is largely restricted to one service component, such as a support group, and that clients associate more with that component than with the full range of services offered by the PEP Program.

Not all eligible clients are aware of the PEP Program. Among those focus group members who had been offered PEP services (according to the site-maintained databases) but who never participated, about half said that they had heard of the program before the focus group.

2. Client Participation Decisions

Very few of the focus group participants had initially been interested in participating in a post-employment program regardless of how that program was presented to them. The most common reasons for lack of interest were insufficient time and an aversion to participating in another program after fulfilling FIP work requirements.

PEP clients at all three sites, regardless of whether the site had a voluntary or mandatory recruitment approach, described feeling forced or pressured to participate. In one participant's words:

> "I need my car to go to work, so how was I going to get that hundred and something dollars [for repairs] if I didn't sign my name and agree to come to the workshops? So my back was up against the wall."

In Pottawattamie County, where attendance at an initial PEP activity is mandatory, focus group participants were particularly dissatisfied with the requirement to participate in another activity when they already had to fulfill the basic PROMISE JOBS work requirements. Some are even considering removing themselves from the FIP program in

[8]The JTPA program was eliminated on July 1, 2000 with the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act.

order to avoid participating in PEP.[9] Most focus group participants at all three sites believe the program should be made voluntary.

Members of the PEP participant focus groups did provide a variety of reasons for why they chose to participate in the program. Some are attracted by specific workshop topics or services such as financial assistance through Family Self Sufficiency Grants; others are interested in the programs' more general goals of providing support to clients and helping them find better jobs. Supportive services—such as providing food and child care at PEP events—also contribute to some clients' decisions to participate in the program.

The reasons given by members of the nonparticipant focus groups for not becoming involved with PEP included insufficient time, not understanding how the program differed from programs they had participated in before, and not feeling that they needed help at that point. Several clients had the impression that the program's main goal was to help them find a better job, but they were not interested in changing jobs at the time they were recruited. In some cases, clients had what they considered poor experiences with another program, making them less interested in participating in PEP.

D. CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS AND NONPARTICIPANTS

PEP referrals forms (refer to Exhibit II.2) were completed for each member of the eligible population and recorded in databases maintained by the three sites. The forms provide demographic and employment information on all individuals referred to PEP in the evaluation period between October 1, 1999, and July 31, 2000. This section summarizes that information and considers the ways in which participants and nonparticipants differ.

1. Personal Characteristics

The average PEP participant is 32 years old and has 2.2 children, the youngest of whom is 7.3 years old (see Exhibit II.7). Compared with the average nonparticipant, the average participant is three years older, has 0.2 more children, and has a youngest child who is 1.2 years older. It is plausible that parents with older children are more likely to participate in the program because they have more flexibility regarding child care and meeting attendance.

Most PEP participants have at least a high school diploma or a GED, and one in five has begun or completed college or technical school. However, a substantial minority (36 percent) have not completed high school or received a GED. There are no significant differences between PEP participants and nonparticipants with respect to education level.

[9]Staff members at this site report that a not insignificant number of eligible clients have already chosen to remove themselves from the grant rather than add PEP participation to their FIA.

EXHIBIT II.7

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISITICS AT THE TIME OF REFERRAL

	PEP Participants		PEP Nonparticipants	
	N	Value	N	Value
Age (in years)* **				
Younger than 20	3	3%	45	8%
20-29	37	39%	305	51%
30-39	38	40%	195	33%
40 or older	16	17%	52	9%
Don't know/missing	1	—	1	—
Mean age***	94	32	597	29
Number of Children in Household				
1	30	32%	237	40%
2	38	40%	198	33%
3	16	17%	116	20%
4 or more	11	12%	45	8%
Don't know/missing	0	—	2	—
Mean number of children*	95	2.2	596	2.0
Age of Youngest Child in Household (in years)* **				
Younger than 3	16	17%	157	26%
3 to 5	20	21%	179	30%
6 or older	59	62%	260	44%
Don't know/missing	0	—	2	—
Mean age of youngest child**	95	7.3	596	6.1
Education Level				
No High School Diploma or GED	34	36%	185	31%
High School Diploma or GED	42	44%	259	43%
Some college or vocational/technical school	12	13%	110	18%
Completed college or vocational/technical school	7	7%	43	7%
Don't know/missing	0	—	1	—
Sample Size	**95**		**598**	

Source: PEP referral form and PEP databases maintained by each of the three pilot sites: Des Moines County, Marshall and Hardin counties, and Pottawattamie County. Data collected on all individuals referred to the PEP Program between October 1, 1999, and July 31, 2000.

Note: Asterisks following category headers indicate a significant difference in the distribution of individuals within categories between PEP participants and nonparticipants.

*Differences between PEP participants and nonparticipants are significant at the .10 level.
**Differences between PEP participants and nonparticipants are significant at the .05 level.
***Differences between PEP participants and nonparticipants are significant at the .01 level.

In addition to basic demographic information, the PEP referral form asks PROMISE JOBS workers to indicate potential barriers to job retention and advancement that clients may face (see Exhibit II.8). On average, caseworkers did not report high rates of clients with multiple barriers—most PEP participants and nonparticipants have one or fewer barriers to job retention and advancement. However, PEP participants face a greater average number of potential barriers to job retention and advancement than do nonparticipants. Much of this difference stems from the much larger proportion—50 percent compared with 39 percent—of nonparticipants that caseworkers report with no potential barriers.

In addition to facing a higher average number of barriers, PEP participants are significantly more likely than nonparticipants to face certain barriers to job retention and advancement. A larger proportion of PEP participants than nonparticipants are reported as potentially having substance abuse problems, domestic violence issues, mental health limitations, and chronic health problems. This finding indicates that individuals with these barriers may have more difficulty sustaining employment and therefore may be more interested in the services offered by the PEP Program than those who do not face such challenges.

While participants are more likely to face some specific barriers and a greater average number of barriers overall, the two groups share the most prevalent barrier to job retention and advancement: transportation. Twenty-four percent of both participants and nonparticipants face transportation problems that may act as a barrier to job retention and advancement—despite the fact that at least two-thirds of both participants an nonparticipants own cars (see Exhibit II.8). This finding is consistent with focus group discussions in which participants described their largest transportation problem as affording the maintenance and repair of their cars.

2. Job Characteristics

Employment status in the year before referral differs for the average PEP participant and nonparticipant, as do job characteristics at the time of referral. On average, PEP participants were employed more consistently in the year before referral than nonparticipants (see Exhibit II.9). Over the 12 months before referral, participants were employed an average of 7.9 months and nonparticipants an average of 5.3 months.

Much of this difference is the result of Pottawattamie County's original targeting guidelines, under which the program received referrals for all PROMISE JOBS clients who became employed but offered services only to those who had worked continuously for six (and, later, three) months. However, this difference is also observable in Marshall and Hardin counties, where there are no targeting criteria based on duration of employment. One plausible explanation is that individuals are more interested in participating in a program offering help with advancement once they have been consistently employed for a period.

EXHIBIT II.8

POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO WORK AMONG INDIVIDUALS REFERRED TO PEP

	PEP Participants		PEP Nonparticipants	
	N	Value	N	Value
Number of Potential Barriers Faced by Clients*				
None	37	39%	301	50%
1	34	36%	210	35%
2	17	18%	65	11%
3	4	4%	15	3%
4 or more	3	3%	7	1%
Mean number of barriers***	95	.97	598	.69
Potential Barriers Faced by Clients				
Learning difficulties or limited English	6	6%	23	4%
Substance abuse problem**	9	10%	24	4%
Domestic violence issues**	6	6%	14	2%
Transportation	23	24%	143	24%
Child care	9	10%	59	10%
Mental health limitations***	11	12%	26	4%
Chronic health problems or physical limitations**	11	12%	35	6%
Child with a disability (mental or physical)	5	5%	23	4%
Low skills or education[a]	1	1%	15	3%
Legal history[a]	1	1%	13	2%
Lack of work history[a]	0	0%	3	1%
Other	10	11%	36	6%
Primary Means of Transportation to Work				
Own car	59	66%	361	70%
Rides with friends or relatives	14	16%	91	18%
Public transportation	9	10%	31	6%
Walk	5	6%	17	3%
Other	2	2%	18	4%
Don't know/missing	6	—	80	—
Sample Size	**95**	—	**598**	—

Source: PEP referral form and PEP databases maintained by each of the three pilot sites: Des Moines County, Marshall and Hardin counties, and Pottawattamie County. Data collected on all individuals referred to the PEP Program between October 1, 1999, and July 31, 2000.

Notes: Information on barriers to work is based on caseworker knowledge of the participant but not necessarily on any formal assessment process. Asterisks following category headers indicate a significant difference in the distribution of individuals within categories between PEP participants and nonparticipants.

[a]These categories do not appear on the PEP referral form (see Exhibit II.2) but were created from frequent responses in the "other, specify" category.

*Differences between PEP participants and nonparticipants are significant at the .10 level.
**Differences between PEP participants and nonparticipants are significant at the .05 level.
***Differences between PEP participants and nonparticipants are significant at the .01 level.

EXHIBIT II.9

EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIVIDUALS REFERRED TO PEP

	PEP Participants		PEP Nonparticipants	
	N	Value	N	Value
Number of Months Employed in the 12 Months Before Referral* **				
1-3	6	10%	148	49%
4-6	21	35%	45	15%
7-9	8	13%	42	14%
10-12	25	42%	70	23%
Don't know/missing	35	—	293	—
Mean months employed***	60	7.9	305	5.3
Hourly Wage at Time of Referal				
Less than $5.15	4	4%	35	6%
$5.15 to $7	67	74%	371	63%
$7.01 to $9	18	20%	153	26%
$9.01 or more	2	2%	32	5%
Don't know/missing	4	—	7	—
Mean hourly wage**	91	$6.16	591	$6.64
Hours Worked Per Week at Time of Referral **				
Less than 35 hours (part-time)	55	63%	284	48%
35 hours or more (full-time)	33	38%	307	52%
Don't know/missing	7	—	7	—
Mean hours worked*	88	30	591	31.9
Employer-Provided Health Insurance at Time of Referral* **				
Yes	14	18%	149	34%
No	64	82%	294	66%
Don’t know/missing	17	—	155	—
Working More Than One Job at Time of Referral				
Yes	6	6%	18	3%
No	88	94%	518	97%
Don’t know/missing	1	—	62	—
Sample Size	**95**		**598**	

Source: PEP referral form and PEP databases maintained by each of the three pilot sites: Des Moines County, Marshall and Hardin counties, and Pottawattamie County. Data collected on all individuals referred to the PEP Program between October 1, 1999, and July 31, 2000.

Note: Asterisks following category headers indicate a significant difference in the distribution of individuals within categories between PEP participants and nonparticipants.

*Differences between PEP participants and nonparticipants are significant at the .10 level.
**Differences between PEP participants and nonparticipants are significant at the .05 level.
***Differences between PEP participants and nonparticipants are significant at the .01 level.

Despite being employed more consistently in the year before referral, PEP participants are, on average, working in less desirable jobs than nonparticipants. Participants earn a lower average hourly wage ($6.16 compared with $6.64), are less likely to work full time (38 versus 52 percent), and are less likely to have health insurance provided by their employers (18 versus 34 percent). These findings may support the idea that individuals who are in less desirable jobs are more interested in participating in a program with an explicit goal of helping them advance to better positions. Another factor may be that individuals working fewer hours have more time and flexibility to participate in PEP activities.

CHAPTER III

PEP PROGRAM SERVICES

Post-employment programs such as PEP fit into a broader category of job retention and advancement programs that states and localities across the country are designing and implementing. The services those programs use to help clients retain and find more desirable employment are many and varied. Exhibit III.1 presents five main areas of retention and advancement services: personal counseling and support, assistance with resolving personal/family challenges, employment services, economic support, and training.

Taking into consideration research on existing programs and staff knowledge of the needs and interests of the eligible population, each PEP site selected and implemented some of the services shown in Exhibit III.1. The resulting service structures and participation patterns look similar across the pilot sites. The PEP Program offers a core set of services—including "soft-skill" training, intensive case management, and emergency financial assistance—through group activities and individual case management. At any given time, a small group of PEP clients are engaged in the program and receiving one or more of these services. Engaged clients have consistent and frequent contact with PEP staff, but their average tenure in the program is relatively short.

This chapter describes the set of services that comprise the PEP Program and the extent to which participants use those services.

A. PEP SERVICE COMPONENTS

The Post-Employment Plans for all three sites (see Appendix III) call for providing services through a combination of individual case management and group activities. In practice, group activities, which provide "soft-skills" training and peer support, are the primary vehicles for service delivery used at the three PEP sites. In addition to group activities, PEP clients have access to counseling and support as well as to emergency financial assistance through individual case management with PEP staff. Finally, several

EXHIBIT III.1

SERVICES PROVIDED THROUGH STATE AND LOCAL JOB RETENTION AND ADVANCEMENT PROGRAMS

Personal Counseling and Support

- Intensive Case Management
- Information Sharing
- Mentoring
- Support Groups

Assistance with Resolving Personal/Family Challenges

- Service Referrals
- Contingency Planning
- Employee Assistance Programs

Employment Services

- Job Search Assistance/Job Placement
- Career Development/Planning
- Work Experience/Job Development
- Employer Mediation
- Re-Employment Assistance
- Job Coaching

Economic Support

- Incentive Payments
- Emergency Financial Assistance
- In-Kind Services (e.g., gas vouchers or child care referral services)
- Assistance Accessing Work Supports (e.g., child care subsidies and transportation assistance)
- Benefit Resolution
- Earned Income Tax Credit Information

Training

- Job Readiness and Life Skill ("Soft Skill") Training
- Occupational-Skill Training
- Education or On-the-Job Training

Source: Rangarajan, 1998; Rangarajan and Novak, 1999; Strawn and Martinson, 2000; Wood and Paulsell, 2000.

pilot sites have developed services that involve collaboration with local employers. (Exhibit III.2 describes the services implemented by the three PEP sites.)

1. Group Activities

Previous evaluations of job retention and advancement programs suggest that individual case management, which clients desire and appreciate, holds more promise for helping clients retain their jobs and advance into better jobs if paired with "tangible" services (Rangarajan and Novak, 1999; Wood and Paulsell, 2000). With this information in mind, the PEP sites designed group-oriented activities to enhance and complement the PEP services provided through individual case management. Group workshops offered at all three PEP sites provide life and job-readiness skills training, assessment and career planning, and peer support. Individual PEP sites have developed other group services, including a support group, computer classes, and an employer-based lunch workshop.

a. Workshops

Each site offers PEP clients weekly group workshops (organized in five- to 12-week series). The sites have chosen similar topic areas for the group workshops but have made different decisions on staffing, locations and times, and the supports offered to participants at the meetings (Exhibit III.2 briefly presents these choices).

- ***Curriculum.*** The workshops at all three sites emphasize "soft skills." Sessions often provide lessons on basic life skills, such as budgeting or time management, and on job-readiness skills, such as conflict resolution or workplace communication. Staff and client reports indicate that the workshops serve as support groups as well as educational opportunities; they provide a forum for clients to talk with each other and PEP staff about daily events and experiences.

- ***Staffing.*** The sites have taken different approaches to facilitating the workshops. Two of the pilot sites rely heavily on outside speakers to present information at PEP workshops. These speakers include community college employees, community members, and PROMISE JOBS and Welfare-to-Work staff. At the third site, PEP staff conduct all sessions.

- ***Locations and Times.*** When and where PEP workshops are held also varies by site. All three sites have scheduled meetings in the evening so as not to conflict with work hours, and one site offers Saturday sessions as well.[1] One of the sites holds its workshops at the Workforce Development Center while the

[1]The Saturday workshops are advertised widely and open to the general public as well as to the PEP clientele.

EXHIBIT III.2

SERVICES IMPLEMENTED BY THE PEP SITES

Des Moines County	Marshall and Hardin Counties	Pottawattamie County
Service Components (by modes of delivery)		
Group Activities • Soft-Skill Training through Group Workshops • Computer Courses *Individual Case Management* • Counseling • Emergency Grants • Employment Assistance • Service Referrals *Employer-Based Services* • Mentoring • Employer Training • Job Development	*Group Activities* • Soft-Skill Training through Group Workshops • Support Group *Individual Case Management* • Counseling • Emergency Grants • Employment Assistance • Service Referrals *Employer-Based Services* • Job Development	*Group Activities* • Soft-Skill Training through Group Workshops *Individual Case Management* • Counseling • Emergency Grants • Employment Assistance • Service Referrals
Sample Group Workshop Topics		
• Professional Dress • Self Time • Anger—Manage It! • Tax Preparation Made Easy	• Credit Counseling • Balancing Family and Work • Basic Auto Repair • Career Pathways	• Self-Esteem • Aptitude and Interest Assessment • Workin' It Out (conflict resolution) • Auto Maintenance
Staff Providing Services		
• PEP Staff • Outside Speakers	• PEP Staff • PROMISE JOBS/Welfare-to-Work Staff • Outside Speakers	• PEP Staff
Locations Where Services are Provided		
• Workforce Development Center • YMCA • Local Business • Community College	• Workforce Development Center • YMCA • Local Business	• Workforce Development Center
Supports Offered to Participants in Group Activities		
• At group workshops: child care, transportation, dinner, and incentives for participants and children	• At group workshops and support group: child care, transportation, and dinner	• At group workshops: dinner

Source: PEP site visits and site post-employment plans (revised in 2000; see Appendix III).

other two conduct sessions at their respective local YMCAs. According to staff, one reason for holding meetings at the YMCA is that clients are more interested in services that are provided outside the welfare office.

- ***Supports Offered to Participants.*** Another reason that two of the sites have elected to hold workshops at the YMCAs is that participants have access to on-site child care and activities for older children. PEP staff members at these sites also provide transportation to and from the meetings for those clients unable to arrange their own transportation. All three sites serve dinner to participants (and, at sites where child care is offered, to their children) immediately before the workshops.

b. Other Group Activities

Two PEP sites offer other group activities in addition to the workshops. The Des Moines County site offers computer classes and wellness workshops. The PEP staff member at that site organized computer classes after participants in the group workshops expressed an interest in computer training. When in session, computer training is offered one day a week at three different times at the local community college, with community college staff serving as instructors. The classes focus on basic instruction in operating a computer and using software programs. The wellness workshops are held at the YMCA and include physical fitness classes and presentations on health, nutrition, and reducing stress.

The Marshall/Hardin site offers two other group components: a support group for parents and an employer-based lunch workshop. The Parents Advancing in Life (PAL) support group meets at the Workforce Development Center twice a month under the direction of either PEP staff or a PROMISE JOBS worker. Dinner is provided to support group participants, and child care is available one meeting per month. Lunch workshops conducted by PEP or Welfare-to-Work staff are also held each week at a local business where PEP and Welfare-to-Work participants are placed in Work Experience Positions (WEPs). According to clients and staff, all PEP and Welfare-to-Work clients who work at this business location are required to attend the lunch workshops. Like the evening PEP workshops, these day-time workshops emphasize instruction in "soft skills" and helping clients define their career goals.

2. Individual Case Management

The PEP Program aims to help clients by combining group activities with intensive individual case management. At all three sites, PEP staff members are designated as the primary caseworkers for clients once they have engaged in the PEP Program.[2] Case management is generally provided through one-on-one meetings at the Workforce

[2]The exception is clients who are involved in both PEP and WtW at the Des Moines and Marshall/Hardin sites. These clients may work with both PEP and WtW staff, or they may choose to have more contact with one or the other with whom they are more comfortable.

Development Center but also occurs after group workshops and over the telephone. The meetings focus on counseling and support related to work and family or personal issues. (Section B3 provides more information on the topics discussed with PEP clients.)

Individual issues and needs shape the course of case management, but the sites also emphasize different goals when working with clients. Two of the pilot sites focus on helping clients find more desirable jobs while the third focuses on providing assistance with family and personal problems, in addition to job retention and advancement. These differences are consistent with the varied recruitment messages conveyed by the sites (see Chapter II).

In addition to counseling and support, case management is an opportunity for PEP clients to receive economic support, job search assistance, and service referrals.

- ***Economic Support.*** Emergency financial assistance to PEP clients is provided through Family Self-Sufficiency Grants. The grants, a component of the PROMISE JOBS Program, help cover the work-related expenses of clients who are employed or have a viable job opportunity. According to PEP staff and client reports, many PEP clients have received FSSG assistance for payment of utility bills, rent, car repair and purchase, and clothing. This service is provided more frequently at the two sites where PEP staff members are also PROMISE JOBS staff and therefore have FSSG approval authority.

- ***Job Search Assistance.*** PEP staff also assist employed PEP clients who are interested in looking for advancement opportunities. In addition, if a PEP client loses his or her job, the PEP rules allow staff to help with re-employment for up to 60 days before returning the case to a PROMISE JOBS worker. All three sites also provide assessment of career interests and aptitudes during group and individual meetings.

- ***Service Referrals.*** Case management is also an opportunity for PEP staff to help clients gain access to services outside the PEP Program. PEP staff report having provided referrals for basic needs to the Salvation Army, General Relief, food pantries, Section 8 housing, and area churches. They have also referred clients facing specific challenges to area child care providers, mental health counselors, consumer counselors, domestic violence shelters, the GED testing service, medical clinics, substance abuse treatment, vocational rehabilitation, and Head Start. On occasion, PEP staff have called DHS Income Maintenance workers to help PEP clients resolve a difficulty with the receipt of FIP cash assistance or food stamps.

In some cases, PEP staff members are pushing the traditional bounds of casework in order to assist their clients. For instance, PEP staff helped a client retrieve her high school diploma from another locality so that she could pursue further education, assisted clients

with submitting applications for their children to receive YMCA scholarships, and arranged with a community organization to pay for counseling for PEP clients.

3. Employer-Based Services

The pilot sites have also developed some services that involve collaboration with local employers to address problems with employee retention and advancement. However, these services have not been fully implemented and are not central components of the PEP Program. Nonetheless, the PEP sites have developed several types of employer-oriented services:

- ***Employer Training.*** The Des Moines County site conducted employer training in the summer of 1999; representatives of five local businesses attended. The 14-session curriculum included presentations on managing employees, communicating with employees, and developing performance standards. PEP staff in Pottawattamie County planned to offer employer training using the *Managing To Work It Out* curriculum but have been unable to generate sufficient interest among local employers.

- ***Mentoring.*** In collaboration with a local business, the Des Moines County site has implemented a mentoring program. The program pairs new employees in low-skilled positions (but not necessarily on FIP or enrolled in the PEP Program) with a more experienced employee mentor in the same business. The PEP Program and the employer jointly fund the costs of this project. The program has been implemented successfully but does not directly serve PEP clients—as of July 2000, the program involved 22 employees, none of whom was a PEP client.

- ***Job Development.*** Staff in Des Moines and Marshall/Hardin counties have made limited attempts at working with local employers to develop jobs for PEP participants. One of these sites offers PEP clients unpaid transitional employment through PROMISE JOBS Work Experience Positions while another has unsuccessfully attempted to establish a link between PEP clients and a local temporary agency.

B. PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT IN PEP

Together, data collected from the PEP databases and interviews with PEP staff describe the nature of participant involvement in the PEP Program generally and, in a more limited way, participation in individual service components. Overall, the PEP sites have succeeded in motivating a majority of individuals (78 percent across the three sites) engaged in the PEP

EXHIBIT III.3

EXTENT OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN PEP

Site	Number of Clients Ever Engaged in PEP	Engaged Clients Ever Active in PEP[a]	
		Number	Percentage
Des Moines County	27	20	74
Marshall and Hardin Counties	37	32	86
Pottawattamie County	31	22	71
Total for All Sites	95	74	78

Source: PEP database for each site and site visits.

[a]For this analysis, a client was considered "active" if he or she had four or more contacts with PEP staff that occurred in person or during a telephone call that lasted at least 10 minutes and included some provision of services. To be "engaged," a client need have only one (two in Pottawattamie County) contact(s) that meets that definition.

Program to become active participants for some period (see Exhibit III.3).[3] At any given time, PEP staff estimate that between 10 to 15 clients are active in the program.

This section describes the patterns and types of contact with PEP clients after they become engaged in the program. The analyses include all engaged clients—some of whom became active or ongoing participants, others of whom did not. Overall, PEP clients have a notably high level of contact with PEP staff but do not stay involved with the program for a long period. In addition, most contact between PEP staff and clients does not occur in person.

a. Frequency and Duration of Client Participation

Clients engaged in the PEP Program do have regular contact with a PEP staff member. The Post-Employment Plans (see Appendix III) for the Pottawattamie and Marshall/Hardin

[3]For this analysis, we define clients as "ever active" if they had four or more contacts that meet the criteria for an engagement contact (see Chapter II).

sites establish contact goals of one time per week and three times per month, respectively.[4] As Exhibit III.4 shows, the sites have met and surpassed their goals. On average, all three sites have contact with engaged clients more than once a week; the average across sites is 4.5 times per month—a much higher frequency of contact than most retention and advancement programs have been able to achieve. Staff of the Post-Employment Services Demonstration had slightly more than two contacts per month with clients in the first three months after program enrollment; GAPS Initiative staff had just over one contact every six weeks during the first 18 months of the program (Rangarajan and Novak, 1999; Wood and Paulsell, 2000).

EXHIBIT III.4

FREQUENCY AND DURATION OF CLIENT PARTICIPATION IN PEP

Site	Average Monthly Rate of Contact (since engagement)	Average Length of Time in Program (in months)
Des Moines County	4.1	4.2
Marshall and Hardin Counties	4.8	3.5
Pottawattamie County	4.5	2.8
Total for All Sites	4.5	3.5

Source: PEP database for each site and site visits.

Note: These analyses exclude a small group of PEP participants in each site who were engaged in services before October 1, 1999.

PEP staff may be able to maintain their exceptionally high rate of contact because of the relatively small size of PEP caseloads. While the PEP client-caseworker ratio (based on the number of active clients at any given time) never exceeded 20 to 1 at any site, GAPS caseworkers handled caseloads ranging from 60 to over 100, and PESD caseloads commonly surpassed 100 clients (Rangarajan and Novak, 1999; Wood and Paulsell, 2000).

Even though engaged PEP clients have frequent contact with staff, they do not stay involved with the program for long. As of July 31, 2000, clients who were engaged in the PEP Program had been involved for an average of three and one-half months (see Exhibit III.4). In Pottawattamie County, clients were involved for the shortest time, an average of

[4]The Des Moines County plan did not set a quantitative goal because the staff believes that frequency of contact should be determined on a case-by-case basis.

2.8 months; in Marshall and Hardin counties, for 3.5 months; and in Des Moines County, for 4.2 months.[5]

2. Characteristics of Contacts with Engaged PEP Clients

The majority of contacts between PEP staff and engaged PEP clients do not occur in person but rather on the telephone or through the mail. The monthly rate of contact presented in the previous section represents the number of contacts made per month through a variety of modes, including telephone calls, letters, and face-to-face meetings. When the modes of contacts after engagement are examined more closely, they show that the majority of contacts with PEP clients do not occur in face-to-face meetings (see Exhibit III.5). In fact, of all contacts after engagement, 56 percent in Des Moines County, 64 percent in Marshall and Hardin counties, and 59 percent in Pottawattamie County did not occur in person.

The telephone can provide a vehicle for providing both counseling and direct services to clients, but data from the PEP databases and staff reports suggest that many telephone calls with PEP clients are brief and not service-oriented. On average, telephone calls with PEP clients are short (5.6 minutes) relative to all contacts after engagement (28.8 minutes), and PEP staff say that they make many telephone contacts to remind clients of events and to encourage their attendance (see Exhibit III.6). This calculation does include telephone calls that result in no answer or leaving a message. So, while some contacts may be extremely brief, it is possible that others are lengthier and involve counseling and support.

During MPR visits to the pilot sites, PEP staff explained that they depend heavily on telephone contact with clients partially because clients seem less willing (or able) to schedule in-person meetings. Staff at all three sites believe that clients have negative associations with the Workforce Development Center as the welfare office, making them less inclined to meet there. One site was interested in paying for client-caseworker lunch meetings outside the office, but such an activity was not permitted under PROMISE JOBS/PEP rules.

The pilot sites find it equally challenging to stimulate attendance at group sessions, the principal opportunity outside of individual meetings for face-to-face contact with a caseworker. According to staff at all three sites, attendance at group workshops fluctuates between one and seven participants.[6] One of the key components at the Marshall/Hardin

[5]The length of time in the PEP Program was calculated as the time between a client's engagement in the program and the date of the client's last recorded contact. Because data were collected only through July 31, 2000, this variable does not present the full picture for those clients who may have continued to be active in the program after July.

[6]The level of missing data in the group session records in the PEP database is too high to offer exact figures on attendance for all three sites. The information presented here is based on interviews conducted during site visits and regular telephone calls with the sites.

EXHIBIT III.5

USE OF SPECIFIC METHODS FOR CONTACTS WITH PEP CLIENTS

	Contacts after Engagement Using Specific Methods	
	Number	Percentage
Des Moines County		
Letter, memo, brochure	95	20
Newsletter	1	0
Telephone	173	36
Face-to-face	212	44
Missing	1	0
Total	482	100
Marshall and Hardin Counties		
Letter, memo, brochure	105	16
Newsletter	105	16
Telephone	201	31
Face-to-face	228	36
Missing	0	0
Total	639	100
Pottawattamie County		
Letter, memo, brochure	61	19
Newsletter	0	0
Telephone	129	40
Face-to-face	133	41
Missing	61	0
Total	384	100
Total for All Sites		
Letter, memo, brochure	261	18
Newsletter	106	7
Telephone	503	35
Face-to-face	573	40
Missing	62	0
Total	1505	100

Source: PEP database for each pilot site.

Note: Percents exclude contacts with missing data.

EXHIBIT III.6

AVERAGE LENGTH OF CONTACTS WITH PEP CLIENTS (IN MINUTES)

Site	All Contacts	Telephone Contacts
Des Moines County	31.3	7.4
Marshall and Hardin Counties	28.2	3.7
Pottawattamie County	26.5	5.6
Total for All Sites	28.8	5.6

Source: PEP database for each pilot site.

Note: These analyses exclude a small group of PEP participants in each site who were engaged in services before October 1, 1999.

site—the PAL support group—averages two to four clients per meeting. Even when service components are implemented at the request of PEP clients, as in the case of the computer classes in Des Moines County, attendance is still surprisingly low. The PEP coordinator in Des Moines County developed a set of Saturday workshops open to the general public. As many as 40 people, but no more than two PEP clients, attended.

Taken together, the information on participant involvement in PEP suggests that a small group of active PEP participants are in frequent contact with a PEP staff member but that many of those contacts are short and may not be service-oriented. This is not dissimilar from the experience of PESD sites, in which 50 to 75 percent of contacts with clients in the first three months were deemed "service contacts"; the rest were considered general counseling or "keep in touch" contacts (Rangarajan and Novak, 1999).

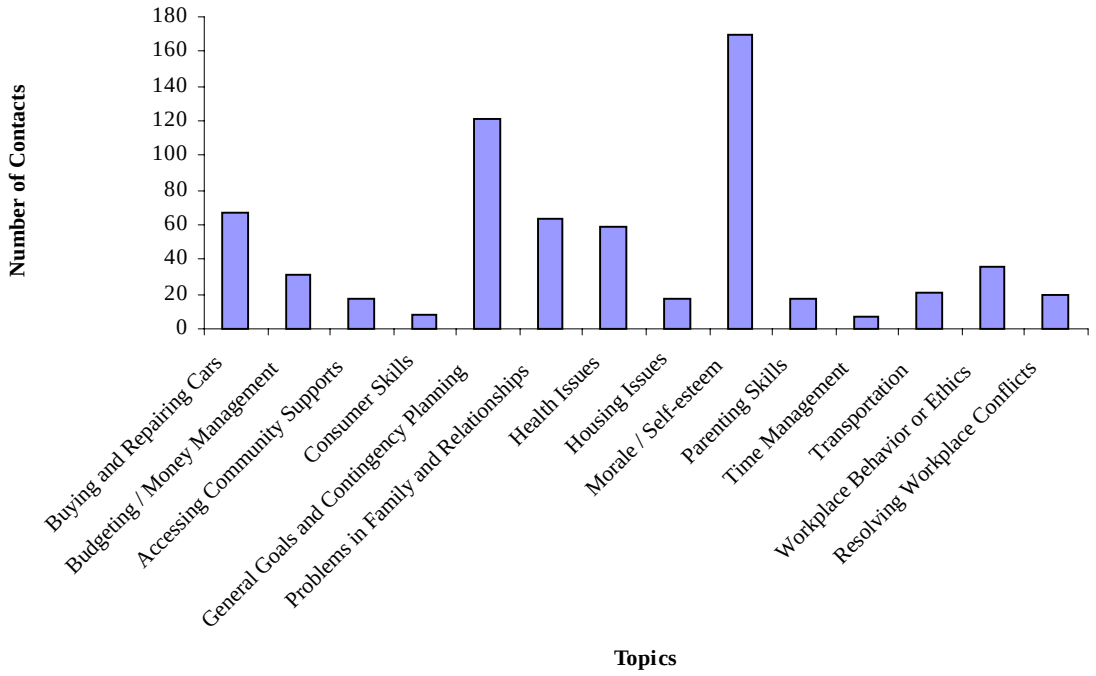
3. Topics Discussed during Contacts

The issues most commonly discussed with PEP participants in individual and group settings reflect the program's emphasis on "soft skills" and problem solving. According to PEP staff, one-on-one discussions with PEP clients generally relate to the client's current work situation, associated difficulties and successes, and goal-setting for advancement. They also cover topics less directly related to employment, such as family and personal problems. As discussed in Section A, the curriculum of all three sites' group workshops focuses on training clients in "soft skills," such as budgeting, car repair, and conflict management. One site also provides a support group for PEP clients that operates with an informal structure and allows participants to discuss whatever employment- or life-related topics they choose.

Exhibit III.7 presents the frequency that topics were discussed by PEP staff in either individual or group meetings.[7] The data are based on service type codes that were entered for about 60 percent of all contacts after engagement for the three sites combined. The most common discussion topics are morale and self-esteem issues, general goals and contingency planning, buying and repairing cars, problems in family and relationships, and health issues.

EXHIBIT III.7

TOPICS DISCUSSED IN INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP MEETINGS WITH PEP CLIENTS



Source: PEP databases maintained by each of the three pilot sites.

[7]Data limitations prevent us from providing this information by client or for individual and group meetings. Instead, we have calculated the number of contacts for which a specific topic code was entered. Group sessions are considered individual contacts for each client who attended. Therefore, depending on attendance at a workshop, a group workshop on health issues might result in as few as one and as many as seven contacts that involved a discussion of health issues.

CHAPTER IV

ASSESSMENT OF PEP SERVICES

The three pilot sites have implemented similar service structures that are based primarily on group activities. The small total number of clients that have ever participated in the PEP Program makes the evaluation of those services particularly challenging. However, the data collected during staff interviews and client focus group discussions offer some evidence of whether PEP provides a new and comprehensive set of services that addresses the needs of employed PROMISE JOBS clients. This chapter assesses PEP service structures with three questions in mind. Does PEP increase the services available to employed clients? Do PEP services address common barriers to work among participants? What are client perspectives on PEP services?

A. DOES PEP INCREASE THE SERVICES AVAILABLE TO EMPLOYED FIP RECIPIENTS?

The PEP Program operates alongside two other programs that offer services to employed FIP recipients: PROMISE JOBS and Welfare-to-Work.[1] In fact, the Department of Human Services' primary motivation for developing PEP was to address gaps in the services available to employed PROMISE JOBS participants not eligible for WtW. This section measures the PEP Program's success in terms of whether it offers unique and previously unavailable services to employed PROMISE JOBS clients. (Exhibit IV.1 provides an overview of the services available to employed FIP recipients through PROMISE JOBS and WtW.)

1. PEP Compared with PROMISE JOBS

As the cornerstone of Iowa's work-oriented welfare program, PROMISE JOBS focuses on helping FIP recipients find jobs. Consistent with this goal and with the large caseloads most PROMISE JOBS workers carry, employed clients who are meeting their FIP work

[1]Many other governmental and community programs offer employment services to low-income Iowans; however, this discussion of whether PEP "adds value" to the previously available services is restricted to the two programs for working FIP recipients that are administered by Iowa Workforce Development Centers.

EXHIBIT IV.1

SERVICES PROVIDED TO EMPLOYED FIP RECIPIENTS THROUGH THE PROMISE JOBS AND WELFARE-TO-WORK PROGRAMS

Available Service	Purpose	Description
PROMISE JOBS Program		
Monitored Employment	To track an employed FIP recipient's compliance with work requirements.	• This is a PROMISE JOBS worker's primary responsibility to his/her employed clients. • Employment is tracked through monthly statements of earnings submitted by the client or informal contact with the client. • Depending on the caseworker, contact with employed clients occurs between once a quarter and once a month.
Family Self-Sufficiency Grants	To provide financial assistance with work-related expenses.	• FIP recipients who are employed or have a viable job opportunity can receive up to $1000 per year for any work-related purpose except for the payment of fines. • Commonly used to pay for a car, car repairs, utility bills, and clothing for work.
Information about Transitional Assistance Programs	To inform clients of services available to low-income families after they become employed and/or move off cash assistance.	• PROMISE JOBS orientation includes information on transitional programs, including the Earned Income Tax Credit, and on receiving transitional benefits like Medicaid and child care subsidies. • Clients may or may not receive ongoing information about transitional assistance after this orientation.
Education and Training	To assist clients interested in pursuing additional schooling.	• PROMISE JOBS clients can pursue an associate's degree program, or take remedial skill or GED classes. • According to staff, clients who are employed rarely pursue this option because they find it difficult to sustain their work effort while in school.
Re-employment	To assist PROMISE JOBS clients who have lost a job with finding another.	• The PROMISE JOBS worker determines whether there is a legitimate reason for unemployment (if not, clients can be referred to the Limited Benefit Plan) and provides job search assistance. • Client can also participate in unpaid, transitional work experience positions at local non-profit organizations in order to gain references.
Welfare-to-Work Program		
Intensive Case Management	To provide support, counseling, and assistance with job search.	• Welfare-to-Work (WtW) caseworkers carry much smaller caseloads than do PROMISE JOBS workers and have more frequent contact with individual clients. • Program goals include helping clients stay employed and find better jobs—so the intensity of case management does not necessarily decrease when a client becomes employed.
Subsidized Employment	To provide transitional employment and work experience.	• Options include work experience positions, in which clients work for a private employer but are employed (for up to 26 weeks) by the local community college, and job creation positions, in which the WtW Program provides up to six weeks of wages when a WtW client is placed in a new position developed by a private employer.

Source: PEP site visits.

requirements receive few services and have infrequent contact with a PROMISE JOBS worker.[2] In addition to monitoring a client's employment status, PROMISE JOBS workers are responsible for approving applications for Family Self-Sufficiency Grants, which provide financial assistance for work-related expenses to PROMISE JOBS clients. Secondary services used much less frequently by employed clients include the provision of information on transitional benefits and assistance to clients who wish to pursue additional education or training. PROMISE JOBS workers report frequency of contact with a typical employed client of between once a quarter and once a month.

PEP offers its clients more frequent contact with a caseworker and more opportunities to receive services designed to promote job retention and advancement. PEP services repeat some job-readiness and life-skills training already offered through PROMISE JOBS, although such services may have a new relevance for clients once they secure employment. In addition, the PEP Program provides (depending on the site) occupational-skills training, peer support, and classes related to family and personal issues.

In principle, the more frequent client-caseworker contact achieved under PEP should lead to more systematic and accurate sharing of information about assistance programs and community resources available to low-income families. In fact, PEP and PROMISE JOBS staff alike confess that their knowledge of government and community services available to low-income families is incomplete, thereby limiting their ability to provide this information to their clients accurately and regularly.

2. PEP Compared with Welfare-to-Work

PEP also operates alongside the federal Welfare-to-Work Program, which provides intensive services to "hard-to-employ" welfare recipients. The core WtW services are intensive case management and subsidized employment. Because the mission of the WtW Program includes assisting clients with job retention and advancement, the services provided by Welfare-to-Work and PEP overlap. Both provide individualized case management and facilitate its delivery through a low client-caseworker ratio. However, one-on-one activities form the foundation for the WtW Program, while the three PEP sites rely on group sessions as the primary vehicle for service delivery.[3] This emphasis on group activities means that the services received by PEP clients will probably be less intensive and less tangible than the services received by WtW clients.

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[2]PROMISE JOBS participants work with their caseworkers to establish and write into their Family Investment Agreement an appropriate level of "full-time" work given their individual capacities. For most, "full-time" is considered to be 30 hours a week of work-related activities.

[3]One reason for this difference is that most WtW participants are mandated to attend one-on-one appointments with WtW staff in order to participate in subsidized employment positions. PEP does not offer subsidized employment and only one PEP site operates a quasi-mandatory program. Furthermore, PEP staff report that clients show less interest in one-on-one meetings than they do in group activities.

Another difference is that, unlike PEP staff, WtW staff have access to "participant dollars"—funding that can be spent directly on assisting or rewarding individuals. WtW staff use the funding for a variety of purposes, including emergency financial assistance and subsidized employment. Under the current administrative rules governing PEP funding, the PEP Program does not enjoy the same flexibility.[4] Until recently, the PEP Program was also limited to serving clients who were receiving FIP cash assistance, while Welfare-to-Work services do not necessarily terminate when a client leaves cash assistance. In fall 2000, the PEP sites began providing services to clients who stop receiving FIP cash assistance after having been referred to PEP. (See Chapter I for more on "post–FIP' services.)

Overall, employed PROMISE JOBS clients who participate in the PEP Program have the opportunity for more regular and intense contact with a caseworker than under the PROMISE JOBS Program, reinforcement of the "soft-skills" training they received pre-employment, and receipt of several services unique to PEP. However, the PEP Program does not provide as intense or tangible services as Welfare-to-Work because PEP relies on group activities and is unable to spend "participant dollars."

B. DO PEP SERVICES ADDRESS COMMON BARRIERS TO WORK AMONG PARTICIPANTS?

While the needs of individual PEP clients may vary, PEP participants as a group face a common set of barriers to job retention and advancement. Data from the PEP referral forms, along with staff interviews and focus group discussions, provide insight into what those barriers are and how well PEP services may be addressing them.

Three types of barriers present the greatest challenge for PEP participants: lack of "soft skills," lack of transportation and/or child care, and severe personal barriers (such as mental health conditions). PEP group activities, which form the foundation of PEP's service structure, focus on addressing the lack of "soft skills" and offering clients personal support; however, PEP services are less able to assist clients with transportation and child care problems or severe personal barriers.

1. Lack of Soft Skills

PEP staff feel strongly that a lack of life and job-readiness skills (commonly referred to as "soft skills" as distinguished from occupational and basic skills) is one of the most formidable barriers preventing PROMISE JOBS clients from retaining a job and advancing to a better one. Often, the staff say that what is perceived as a systemic problem, for

[4]PEP clients in Marshall and Hardin counties have been placed in transitional work experience positions, but they have either been Welfare-to-Work clients as well or their Work Experience Position followed standard PROMISE JOBS rules—that the placement be unpaid and with a nonprofit organization.

example, lack of child care, is at least partially the result of a parent's inability (or self-perceived inability) to solve problems and cope with challenges or crises.

Life and job-readiness skills training is provided to most PROMISE JOBS clients before employment, but PEP staff believe that training in these areas will have more relevance and lasting impact once clients are employed and can relate the lessons to their own work experiences. PEP group activities also offer participants a chance to express their frustrations, share their successes, and derive motivation from interacting with other working parents facing similar life situations. These supports may be especially important post-employment, when clients face many new challenges.

It is difficult to determine whether PEP services are successfully teaching "soft skills" and whether those skills will translate into clients' capability to retain jobs and advance to better ones. Participants at one site did feel that they have learned to address interpersonal conflicts at work in a more professional manner. Some participants at all three sites found classes on various topics—including stress management and professional dress and make-up—to be helpful, while other participants described these same classes as redundant (with PROMISE JOBS training) and unhelpful.

2. Lack of Transportation and/or Child Care

PEP services deal most directly with the lack of "soft skills" and emotional support among participants but do not systematically address the formidable barriers presented by a lack of transportation or child care. The challenges that PEP participants face in finding reliable and affordable child care and transportation are both personal, such as not owning a car, and systemic, such as a lack of child care providers available during nonstandard hours.

Interviews with staff and clients, along with data from the PEP referral forms (see Chapter II), suggest that transportation is one of the most significant challenges for working FIP recipients at all three sites. The majority of PEP participants own cars; however, many do not have licenses, have suspended licenses because of fines, or have cars that are run-down and require frequent maintenance that they cannot always afford. For those who cannot drive their own cars to and from work, dependable, affordable transportation options are scarce. Staff and clients report that the bus systems serving the pilot counties operate with limited routes and schedules that often do not serve low-income neighborhoods or surrounding rural areas. Small cab companies operate at all three sites, but their services are prohibitively expensive for regular use by low-income parents. These challenges are compounded by the fact that the state transportation assistance terminates once a PROMISE JOBS client gains employment.[5]

[5]Although direct cash reimbursement for transportation ends when a client becomes employed, work expense deductions are given from earned income. The Earned Income Deduction is 20 percent of gross earnings and includes taxes, travel, meals, and other work-related expenses. In addition, Iowa provides a Work Incentive Deduction that covers 50 percent of any earnings remaining after the 20 percent deduction.

Despite the availability of child care subsidies for low-income working parents, the lack of child care is also a common challenge to sustained work among PEP participants. Focus group discussions indicate that clients face both a chronic shortage of "specialized child care providers"—those willing to take sick children or work during nonstandard hours—and difficulties in finding trustworthy child care providers. These problems lead many participants to rely on friends or family for child care, even though informal care can be highly unreliable. Focus group participants at all three sites had missed work in order to stay home and care for their children, suggesting that inadequate child care does affect clients' ability to work steadily.

While PEP staff recognize these barriers, their ability to remove or lessen the impact of transportation and child care problems has been limited. PEP staff use FSSG assistance to help clients repair or purchase cars, and two sites provide participants with classes in basic car maintenance.[6] PEP staff are not able to help clients with suspended licenses and fines because FSSG assistance cannot be used to pay fines. The PEP sites offer less assistance related to child care. PEP staff can, and sometimes do, refer clients to child care resource and referral agencies or to specific providers. However, they have not been able to help clients resolve problems with child care subsidies (which, for working clients, are handled by DHS workers).

3. Severe Personal Barriers

Personal barriers such as domestic violence, substance abuse, obesity, and chronic mental or physical health conditions are issues for many PEP participants. Addressing these more severe barriers requires developing a process for assessing clients and referring them to outside organizations for counseling or treatment.

PEP staff are not ignoring clients' problems; in fact, staff at all three sites have referred clients to local agencies for help with the above barriers. Several participants mentioned that staff encouraged them to seek mental health counseling or pursue a GED. However, no site has created a standardized assessment and referral process that would allow PEP staff to identify and address severe personal barriers to job retention and advancement.

C. WHAT ARE CLIENT PERSPECTIVES ON PEP SERVICES?

During focus group discussions conducted at each site, PEP participants gave their frank assessments of the strengths and limitations of PEP services. This section synthesizes

[6]In addition, PEP staff at two of the sites, Des Moines and Marshall/Hardin counties, began providing transportation for participants to PEP meetings. While it does not solve long-term problems with dependable transportation to and from work, participants appreciate this service and it probably increases attendance at meetings.

the opinions of 23 individuals who do not make up a representative sample of all PEP participants. Nonetheless, the group discussions provide rich descriptive information about client perspectives on PEP services. Across the three sites, three common topics emerged.

1. Time Commitment Required by PEP

It is difficult for working parents to add another commitment to their substantial work and family responsibilities. Much of clients' initial ambivalence (and, in some cases, ongoing frustration) toward PEP stems from their difficulty in finding time to meet their commitments to both family and work. About these commitments, one discussant said:

> "They used to say that being a mother was a full-time job, and it still is. It hasn't changed. And now, with the single parents…going out and working, they have [more than a] full-time job taking care of the child, bringing home the money, [and] you know doing all the household chores, too."

In this context, attending a PEP group session or meeting with a PEP caseworker in the evening after a full day of work—instead of spending time with the children, taking care of household responsibilities, or spending precious time alone—is not always appealing or feasible.

2. Value of PEP Group Activities

Participants' opinions of the group workshops and other group meetings vary by site and by individual. For example, participants at one site were particularly pleased with a workshop that focused on professional clothing and make-up, while participants in a workshop on the same topic at another site complained that it was patronizing and irrelevant. Some participants believe that PEP workshops are teaching them how to react professionally to disagreements with coworkers or employers; however, other participants feel that the workshops are an unnecessary repetition of the PROMISE JOBS life skills classes.

Regardless of the site, most participants appreciate the group sessions as an opportunity to socialize, receive support from parents in similar situations, and take a break from parenting and household chores. Participants also appreciate that food is provided before the meeting because it means they do not have to prepare dinner that night.

3. Value of Intensive Case Management

Like participants in post-employment demonstrations outside Iowa, PEP participants find personal counseling and general support to be some of the most helpful and enjoyable services. Clients prefer a case management approach that understands the challenges they face, emphasizes support and encouragement, and targets individual needs and interests.

Clients are most appreciative of program staff whom they experience as supportive and understanding. Many feel they benefit from having someone to talk with about employment and education goals, personal and family problems, and conflicts at work. In fact, participants seem particularly glad to have a relationship with a caseworker who is interested in more than just the individual's work situation and FIP/PROMISE JOBS paperwork.

Some clients, however, are dissatisfied with PEP staff whom they perceive as not understanding their life situation or not attempting to understand their specific needs and interests. Clients at the one site that mandates some participation were displeased with what they saw as a punitive approach to case management in the PEP Program. These participants would like more one-on-one contact with PEP staff and more emotional support from their caseworkers. Some participants at both of the other sites suggested holding workshops more frequently, but they also echoed their counterparts at the first site by calling for more one-on-one client-staff contact.[7]

Overall, the clients who are most satisfied with the services they receive through the PEP Program are those most satisfied with their relationship with their PEP caseworker. A caseworker in such a relationship may be better positioned to gauge the client's preferences and needs and not only identify appropriate services but also strike the right balance for frequency of contact. Clients notice and appreciate when caseworkers make the effort to design services with the individual's specific needs and interests in mind, particularly when the clients have contributed directly to the design process (as clients at one PEP site did).

[7]There appears to be a contradiction between the fact that clients are asking for more one-on-one contact while PEP staff report that it is particularly difficult to motivate clients to schedule and show up for one-on-one meetings. PEP staff have noticed this contradiction as well, commenting that clients often ask for more contact or a particular service but then fail to attend scheduled meetings.

CHAPTER V

PEP STAFFING STRUCTURES

The discretion afforded the PEP sites during the program-planning phase resulted in varied local staffing structures. Each site made decisions about who would provide PEP services, how much staff would be devoted to PEP, and how involved other Workforce Development Center staff would be in the program's administration. These decisions, along with variations in individual skills and experience, shaped the staff's ability to take on new responsibilities and coordinate a program in a relatively new arena.

This chapter provides an overview of the staffing structures at the three pilot sites and considers some effects that staffing decisions have had on the implementation of the PEP Program.

A. STAFFING STRUCTURES

The PEP pilot sites had the flexibility—within the administrative framework of PROMISE JOBS—to create the staffing structures that they believed would best support their program. The three sites chose different staffing models based on how they wanted to structure and fill the PEP staff position(s). They also made varied decisions on whether the positions would be dedicated or shared and to what extent "auxiliary" staff would participate in administering PEP. These choices affect the focus and stability of the PEP Program and the level of its integration with PROMISE JOBS. In addition, significant changes made by two of the sites to their staffing structures following PEP implementation interrupted the coordination of local services. Exhibit V.1 provides an overview of the staffing structures at the three PEP pilot sites.

1. Staffing Models

The pilot sites considered three staffing models as follows:

EXHIBIT V.1

PEP STAFFING STRUCTURES

	Des Moines County	Marshall and Hardin Counties	Pottawattamie County
Staffing Model	*New Staff Model*	*Specialized PROMISE JOBS Worker Model* (originally *New Staff Model)*	*Specialized PROMISE JOBS Worker Model*
Case File Transferred?	No	Yes	Yes
Dedicated or Shared Staff Position	Dedicated	Shared	Shared
Number of PEP Caseworkers	1	1	2
% of Full-Time Equivalent Caseworkers Devoted to PEP	100	40[a]	100[b]
Changes to Staffing Structure During Implementation Period	None	Before 1/00: two program coordinators from outside PROMISE JOBS, one in a dedicated position.	Before 1/00: four PEP staff, working 10 hours per week in addition to full-time PROMISE JOBS hours.

SOURCE: PEP site visits and site post employment plans (revised in 2000; see Appendix III).

[a]The other 60% of the caseworker's time goes to a PROMISE JOBS caseload of approximately 70 clients.
[b]One PEP staff member devotes 30 hours per week, the other 10 hours per week (each working 10 hours more than full-time).

1. **The Continuous Service Model**. PROMISE JOBS workers' responsibilities are redefined to include provision of post-employment services to employed clients on their existing caseload.

2. **The Specialized PROMISE JOBS Worker Model.** Specialized post-employment caseworkers drawn from the ranks of PROMISE JOBS staff manage the cases of employed clients.

3. **The New Staff Model.** New staff hired specifically to provide post-employment services handle cases of employed clients.

The models are the product of two distinct staffing issues: how PEP staff positions are structured in relation to PROMISE JOBS (whether to transfer cases between staff at the point of employment) and who fills PEP positions (PROMISE JOBS staff or new staff). The benefit of the *Continuous Service Model,* in which PROMISE JOBS workers continue working with their employed clients, is that the model's structure facilitates seamless case management throughout the transition into employment. However, none of the three sites chose to implement this model. The sites based their decisions largely on the belief that PROMISE JOBS workers, who commonly carry caseloads exceeding 100 clients, would not have adequate time to provide focused and intensive services to employed clients. Instead, all three sites chose a structure in which PROMISE JOBS workers refer employed clients to specialized post-employment caseworkers.

Two of the sites developed a staffing structure for their local programs based on the *Specialized PROMISE JOBS Worker Model*. From the start, Pottawattamie County chose to place PROMISE JOBS workers in part-time specialized post-employment positions. After several staffing changes, the Marshall/Hardin site also settled on this model. According to staff involved in the planning process at both sites, the decision to use the *Specialized PROMISE JOBS Worker Model* stemmed mostly from the belief that PEP positions should be filled by PROMISE JOBS workers because of their substantial experience in working with the TANF population. The Marshall/Hardin site arrived at this model after first hiring two staff members from outside the Workforce Development Center, both of whom left within three months. The local administrator and PROMISE JOBS staff believe that these staff members felt isolated because they did not have a strong enough connection to PROMISE JOBS. For this reason, in January 2000, a PROMISE JOBS worker assumed part-time responsibility for managing the PEP caseload at the Marshall/Hardin site.

Another reason for filling PEP positions with PROMISE JOBS workers is that, once a client becomes engaged in the PEP Program, his or her paper case file is physically transferred from his or her former PROMISE JOBS counselor to the PEP staff. The transfer is possible because the PEP staff are PROMISE JOBS workers who have been trained in the administrative procedures for maintaining case files. PEP caseworkers taken from the ranks of the PROMISE JOBS Program may also provide some services, such as

Family Self-Sufficiency Grants, more efficiently than new staff because they know the system and have approval authority.

Of the three sites, Des Moines County is the only one to have implemented and maintained a version of the *New Staff Model*. Des Moines transferred into a PEP staff position a former JTPA counselor who had been hired to provide Welfare-to-Work services. While the site did not hire new staff from outside the Workforce Development Center, it did select a staff person with no previous experience with the PROMISE JOBS Program or the TANF population. Like the other sites, Des Moines County did consider filling the PEP position with a PROMISE JOBS staff member. It reasoned, however, that the benefits of hiring staff with more knowledge of the clientele were outweighed by the cost, for example, of replacing and training a PROMISE JOBS worker or creating a shared position between PROMISE JOBS and PEP. Because the PEP staff member in Des Moines County is not also a PROMISE JOBS worker, no actual transfer of case files occurs; instead, this site maintains separate PEP case files.

2. Dedicated or Shared Staff Positions

In addition to deciding who would staff the PEP Program, each site also chose whether to create one full-time dedicated staff position or one or more shared positions whereby staff would devote part of their time to responsibilities outside PEP. In early discussions with the sites, DHS and IWD emphasized the primary advantage of a dedicated staff position—that the PEP staff member would be able to focus time and energy on developing the program without an additional caseload or other responsibilities competing for their attention.

Des Moines County was the only site to design and maintain a single dedicated PEP staff position (see Exhibit V.1). Marshall and Hardin counties initially hired a dedicated PEP staff person from outside, but changes made to the site's staffing structure before the evaluation period resulted in one shared staff position. Since January 2000, PEP in Marshall/Hardin has been staffed by a PROMISE JOBS worker devoting 40 percent of his time to PEP and his remaining time to a PROMISE JOBS caseload. This change resulted in part from the administrator's and other staff's belief that dedicating a staff member made it more difficult to integrate the PEP Program into the existing PROMISE JOBS and Welfare-to-Work programs. Pottawattamie County originally created four shared positions filled by PROMISE JOBS workers who worked 10 hours per week on PEP in addition to their full-time commitment to PROMISE JOBS. Starting in January 2000, Pottawattamie reduced the staff to two PROMISE JOBS workers who devote, respectively, 30 and 10 hours per week. This change did not affect the total number of staff hours devoted to PEP, but it did address concerns that no one staff member was devoting ample time to program administration.

During the planning process, all of the sites seriously considered the benefits of a dedicated position. In fact, one primary issue hindered initial plans at all three sites to move a PROMISE JOBS worker into a full-time PEP position: PROMISE JOBS workers were not interested in making the transition into a full-time position and a new caseload for a program with an uncertain future. At least one administrator was also concerned about the

costs of replacing and training a new PROMISE JOBS worker. It became clear that hiring a full-time PEP staff member would require hiring staff from outside the existing PROMISE JOBS staff, and all three sites had serious concerns about the steep learning curve that a new staff person might face.

These choices have implications for the stability and consistency of the client-caseworker relationship and for PEP services overall. The foundation of individual casework is a trusting and constant relationship between a primary caseworker and a client. In some ways, developing this relationship may be easier at sites with shared positions because many clients are already familiar with PEP staff members as PROMISE JOBS workers. On the other hand, the staff's shared responsibilities and shared titles may make it more difficult to define a distinct and unique post-employment relationship. At the sites with shared positions, clients are less clear on how PEP staff differ from the PROMISE JOBS and Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) staff they have dealt with in the past. Accordingly, clients are more likely to associate these staff members with any negative feelings about the welfare system. The fact that the staffing structures at two of the sites were in flux throughout much of the period of operations also made it more difficult for staff at these sites to develop a broad set of services and an ongoing relationship with clients.

3. Use of Auxiliary Staff and Advisers

All of the primary PEP staff members depend on other staff in the Workforce Development Center or staff from outside organizations to help them administer the PEP Program (see Exhibit V.2). Sources of auxiliary staff and advisers for the pilot programs include the following:

- ***Administrative Staff.*** The Marshall/Hardin site employs an administrative assistant who devotes 50 percent of her time to maintaining the site's database, contacting clients to remind them of PEP events, and completing other administrative duties. At the other two sites, the primary PEP staff person performs all administrative tasks in addition to attending to other responsibilities.

- ***PROMISE JOBS and Welfare-to-Work Staff.*** The extent to which other staff at the Workforce Development Center communicate with PEP staff and participate in the administration of the PEP Program varies significantly between sites. In Pottawattamie County, PROMISE JOBS and Welfare-to-Work staff have almost no involvement in the PEP Program, while in Des Moines County, several PROMISE JOBS workers help the PEP staff develop new services. The program in Marshall and Hardin counties is unique in that PROMISE JOBS and Welfare-to-Work staff members are actively involved in providing PEP services. Several different PROMISE JOBS workers, as well as

EXHIBIT V.2

USE OF AUXILIARY STAFF IN PEP PROGRAMS

	Des Moines County	Marshall and Hardin Counties	Pottawattamie County
Assigned Administrative Position?	No	Yes	No
% of Full-Time Administrative Position Devoted to PEP	0	50	0
Level of Involvement of PROMISE JOBS/WtW Staff in PEP	Moderate	High	Low
Role of Community Advisors	Community Coalition meets monthly to help organize PEP workshops	None	None

Source: PEP site visits and site post employment plans (revised in 2000; see Appendix III).

the PEP staff person, have facilitated one of the main service components of the Marshall/Hardin PEP program, the Parents Advancing in Life support group. PROMISE JOBS workers also lead PEP workshops and introduce PEP during PROMISE JOBS orientation sessions.[1]

- ***Community Advisers.*** In Des Moines County, the PEP staff established a board of advisers called the Community Coalition, which meets monthly. This collection of employers, representatives of community organizations, and staff at the Workforce Development Center has a central role in designing and implementing PEP services. Coalition members help the PEP staff member by planning group sessions, making presentations at workshops, and donating gifts as incentives to PEP clients for attending.

[1]In Des Moines and Marshall/Hardin counties, there is significant overlap between the PEP and WtW caseloads. For instance, clients may attend PEP group activities while also receiving individualized case management and a subsidized employment position through the WtW Program. This is not true in Pottawattamie County, where PEP and WtW staff steer common eligible clients to either one program or the other.

B. STAFF CAPABILITIES

The roles and responsibilities of staff of retention and advancement programs can be quite different from those in employment-oriented welfare programs. Across the three sites, PEP staff members have experienced a variety of successes and challenges in fulfilling those requirements. These experiences are the result not only of staffing structures but also of staff members' skills, temperament, and past experience. The challenge of taking on new roles and responsibilities was compounded for PEP staff by the lack of training that they received.

1. Ability to Manage Time

PEP staff all have some difficulty in allocating time among their responsibilities. For the dedicated PEP staff member in Des Moines County, this difficulty is restricted to occasional struggles to control the amount of time she devotes to administrative tasks. The problem has been even greater in Pottawattamie County, which lacks both a dedicated PEP staff person and an administrative assistant. Additional administrative processes generated by the PEP Program's eligibility criteria (discussed in further detail in Chapter II) also compound the administrative workload of the staff in Pottawattamie County. The primary PEP staff person at Pottawattamie estimates that she devotes as much as 50 percent of her PEP hours to conducting administrative tasks—such as updating the PROMISE JOBS paper files and the PEP database—sometimes to the detriment of client services.

Managing time among different PEP responsibilities is not the only challenge facing PEP staff. At the two sites with shared staff positions, staff members have difficulty managing their time between PEP and PROMISE JOBS tasks. At both the Pottawattamie and Marshall/Hardin sites, the original projected caseload capacity was 30 to 40 cases.[2] After nine months of program implementation, staff and administrators at both sites believe that 20 to 25 clients is an ideal caseload size (given current staffing arrangements). Caseload size is less of an issue in Des Moines County, where the dedicated PEP staff member does not have to divide her time among program commitments.

2. Comfort Level with New Responsibilities/Approach

For all involved, staffing the PEP Program has meant taking on new responsibilities and considering new and innovative approaches to reaching clients and providing services. At the most basic level, the philosophy of post-employment services—to support employed clients in retaining their jobs and moving into better ones—requires that caseworkers wear many hats, including teacher, mentor, and job developer. At several sites, responsibilities even include the caseworker's personally transporting clients to PEP activities. In addition, because clients are fulfilling their work requirements and the program is voluntary in two of

[2]These goals are lower than the caseload sizes in other job retention and advancement programs, which commonly range from 50 to over 100 (Strawn and Martinson, 2000).

the three sites, case management can be less punitive and rules-oriented than in PROMISE JOBS. Many factors, including personal style and background, affect the PEP staff's comfort with this new approach and set of responsibilities. Regardless of background, all staff members have found that the program pushes the boundaries of their job descriptions.

One of the most significant responsibilities of the PEP staff that most are not experienced with is recruitment. PEP staff members face the difficult task of marketing the PEP Program to the eligible population of working parents. Effective marketing involves, first, designing services that meet the needs and interests of the eligible population and, second, developing a creative and flexible approach to advertising those services. The message or service component that attracts one client can be markedly different from what attracts another. Furthermore, the marketing task does not end with a client attending one meeting; ongoing recruitment efforts are often necessary to develop active and consistent participation in PEP activities.

Despite the emphasis on recruitment and other new responsibilities, PEP staff received little, if any, specific training. All staff members were frustrated that they commanded neither the skills nor knowledge to come up with a successful recruitment strategy or to address some of the barriers faced by their clients. One staff member specifically mentioned feeling unprepared for the tasks she was assigned as the PEP staff member; she had expected that more training would be involved. Some individual staff members sought out training independently. At one site, staff members organized a training for themselves using the job retention curriculum *Working It Out;* at another site, the PEP staff person attended several training sessions organized for the Welfare-to-Work staff.

3. Ability to Innovate

Because the PEP Program is truly "experimental"—little is known about what makes a successful post-employment or retention and advancement program—staff responsibilities can involve innovation on a daily basis. Some staff members are more comfortable and successful with innovation than others.

There appears to be some advantage to PEP staff being further "outside the system." At the site where the PEP Program sits most firmly within the administrative framework of PROMISE JOBS, staff members have been more challenged to design new and creative services. While they have considered using some of the same tactics that other sites have found effective—such as holding workshops at a YMCA where childcare can be provided or working directly with employers to develop on-site services—they never brought these plans to fruition.

In contrast, the only dedicated PEP staff person hired from outside PROMISE JOBS has the flexibility and time to attempt untested methods for recruiting and serving clients. For instance, she has used a home visit to enroll one client and has worked to develop connections with community organizations and employers. These differences may indicate that staff members without PROMISE JOBS training and experience come to job retention and advancement services with a less established approach to case management and a greater

openness to developing new strategies. These differences may also suggest that a dedicated staff position allows more time and flexibility for attempting untested methods.

4. Familiarity with TANF Recipients and Ability to Navigate the PROMISE JOBS System

One factor that all three sites considered when designing their staffing structure for the PEP Program was the knowledge of and familiarity with TANF recipients that PROMISE JOBS workers could bring to the program. The experience of the three local sites suggests that existing knowledge of the clientele can be an asset. Most notably, staff members who are also PROMISE JOBS workers were more prepared for dealing with the difficulties associated with interesting the eligible population in the program and addressing clients' barriers to job retention and advancement. Those staff members who had not previously worked with the TANF population have been particularly surprised and discouraged by the set of challenges facing potential participants in the program.

In addition, those PEP staff members who are also PROMISE JOBS workers have certain advantages owing to their familiarity with the PROMISE JOBS Program. The most significant advantage is that they have more direct access to Family Self Sufficiency Grants for PEP clients. These grant funds—designed to provide emergency support to working FIP recipients—are authorized by the PROMISE JOBS worker responsible for the case. In the site where the PEP staff person is not also PROMISE JOBS staff, use of the grant funds requires the additional step of obtaining approval from the original PROMISE JOBS worker.

During the period of operations, all three sites experienced some difficulty with sustaining the necessary level of support and participation of PROMISE JOBS workers. For example, some PROMISE JOBS workers are reluctant to turn over the paper files of their clients who are PEP participants.[3] It might be assumed that PEP staff members who are also PROMISE JOBS staff would be more able to navigate these hurdles; however, the PEP sites with PROMISE JOBS staff in PEP positions each experienced significant difficulties that related to either involving PROMISE JOBS staff in the PEP Program or maintaining open communication between PEP and PROMISE JOBS staff.

[3]This may be due in part to the fact that PROMISE JOBS staff members are not aware of or do not "buy in" to the function of the PEP Program. In addition, they may be hesitant to relinquish responsibility for an employed case—for which they have only to monitor employment—if that case is to be replaced by an unemployed case.

CHAPTER VI

A FRAMEWORK FOR CONTINUING RETENTION AND ADVANCEMENT SERVICES IN IOWA

Previous chapters of this report present detailed findings from the process evaluation of the Post-Employment Pilot Program. These findings shed light on the policy and programmatic choices available to retention and advancement programs and the trade-offs associated with those choices. In this chapter, we want to step back and draw some larger lessons from the experiences of the pilot sites to inform future development of retention and advancement services in Iowa. This framework offers opportunities for both refining the current structure of PEP and for redesigning the state's approach to job retention and advancement more broadly.

The first section of this chapter presents three overarching systemic issues revealed by this study, all of which have broad implications for continuing and strengthening post-employment services in Iowa. The remaining sections are organized around three core questions that states hope to answer through the evaluations of nascent retention and advancement programs. As described in Chapter I, these questions relate to **targeting** (who should be served?), **timing** (when should services begin and end?), and **services** (what services help people stay employed and move on to better jobs?).

A. SYSTEMS: HOW TO CREATE A COHESIVE PROGRAM AND DEFINE ITS PLACE AMONG EXISTING SERVICES?

The findings presented in this paper point to three broader systemic issues that will influence the success of PEP or any future retention and advancement program in Iowa. First, the importance of developing a cohesive program structure that consistently connects back to the program's goals; second, the opportunities to provide retention and advancement services through the PROMISE JOBS Program; and third, the trade-offs inherent in linking a job retention and advancement program to the existing welfare system.

- ***To be cohesive, a program should provide a comprehensive set of services based on clearly defined program goals and supported by consistent and appropriately trained staff.***

Clearly defined program goals are the foundation upon which any job retention and advancement program should be built. All three PEP sites struggled throughout the implementation and operation of the program to define clear goals and communicate those goals to clients consistently. The broad objective and goals of the PEP Program are uniform across the sites; however, the priority placed on individual goals and the messages sent to clients vary, to the point, at times, of being contradictory. PEP's goals are all worthy and, in some cases, it may be appropriate to emphasize different goals with different clients. However, to avoid confusion, goals need to be clearly and narrowly defined and staff should be trained to determine what goals to emphasize with individual clients. Goals are also more useful when they are quantifiable and measure staff, as well as client, performance.

One of the most important decisions that should stem from program goals is that of what services to offer clients. Each service offered through a job retention and advancement program should be reasonably expected to promote one or more specific program goal. PEP services do connect to several secondary goals established by the pilot sites (most directly to providing clients with "soft skill" development); however, there are many opportunities to make PEP services more comprehensive and closely linked to the program goals.

The cohesiveness of a retention and advancement program is also affected by staffing structures and training. The PEP sites without dedicated program staff have had more difficulty building a broad set of services responsive to the needs of clients. Also, changes in staffing structures during program operations interrupted the flow of services and increased the challenge of establishing a client-caseworker connection. Finally, most staff of welfare programs have little experience providing retention and advancement services to employed clients on a voluntary basis. Hiring decisions should take into account the different responsibilities associated with a program of this type—for instance recruitment, mentoring, and job development—and the personality characteristics that will suit the less-supervised, less-structured, and more demanding environment of an experimental program. Staff would also benefit from initial and ongoing training on techniques related to recruitment, case management, assessment, and working with employers and community organizations.

- ***Job retention and advancement services could be provided directly through the PROMISE JOBS Program.***

The PEP Program has been designed as a distinct program within the same administrative rules of PROMISE JOBS. For this reason, many of the services being provided through PEP—and many job retention and advancement services in general—could be provided directly through the PROMISE JOBS program. For instance, participation in PEP, rather than monitored employment, could be established as the last step on a client's FIA. The PEP sites had the option of using a *Continuous Service Model* for

their PEP staffing structure, in which PROMISE JOBS workers would provide post-, as well as pre-, employment services to their clients. None of the sites elected this approach because they felt PROMISE JOBS workers did not have the time to provide the intensive case management that post-employment services might require.

However, this model has a substantial advantage in that it offers seamless job retention and advancement services to clients—from the time that they begin looking for a job through their transition to employment. This allows a client-caseworker relationship to develop without interruption, which can be crucial to a program's success at identifying and addressing the issues that may prevent a client from retaining employment and advancing. This approach would require careful consideration of the caseload sizes and administrative requirements placed on PROMISE JOBS workers, as well as the training that staff would need to meet the different responsibilities of a job retention and advancement specialist.

- ***Closely linking a job retention and advancement program to PROMISE JOBS involves significant trade-offs for the program.***

Open communication between staff of related programs and collaboration on the development of post-employment services from initial planning through ongoing program operations more firmly integrates PEP with PROMISE JOBS, providing support to PEP staff members and sending a stronger message to clients about the value of the PEP Program. Also, PROMISE JOBS workers who fill PEP staff positions bring helpful knowledge of the TANF recipient population and of the PROMISE JOBS administrative structure to the program. Because PEP is intended to be an extension of PROMISE JOBS, it is important that PROMISE JOBS staff be knowledgeable about PEP services, and that PEP staff view their day-to-day efforts as being closely connected to the goals and operations of PROMISE JOBS.

However, these positive aspects of linking PEP to PROMISE JOBS are counterbalanced by the stigma associated with PROMISE JOBS as part of the welfare system. The power of this stigma is one of the main reasons why many retention and advancement programs contract services out to private or non-profit organizations (Rangarajan 1998). Contracting with another organization or hiring staff from outside the welfare office may benefit the program in another way as well. Many job retention programs have found that the requirements of their staff are quite different from that of a traditional caseworker (Strawn and Martinson 2000). For instance, service components like job development and employer-based mentoring may benefit from staff with experience in the private sector and/or the ability to foster relationships with employers.

If a job retention and advancement program is to be closely connected to the existing welfare program, there are steps that can be taken to diminish that connection in the eyes of the client. Some of the pilot sites have tried to distinguish PEP from PROMISE JOBS by locating group activities outside the Workforce Development Center and using stationary and envelopes for recruitment that do not show the PROMISE JOBS logo. Other options include providing individual case management at a client's home or in public locations and

offering services that clients are less likely to view as related to welfare—such as employer-based services like mentoring, job coaching, and on-the-job training. Finally, the more relevant and tangible the program services are, the more likely the program is to be seen as unique and immune to the stigma of welfare.

B. TARGETING: WHO SHOULD BE SERVED?

The choices made by DHS, IWD, and the individual sites about whom the PEP Program serves and whether participation in the program is considered mandatory or voluntary affect the size, reach, and appearance of the three local programs.

- ***The PEP eligibility criteria could be broadened to include unemployed PROMISE JOBS clients, families no longer receiving FIP, or low-income families generally.***

The current state-defined eligibility criteria for PEP are consistent with the goal of providing post-employment services to clients involved in the PROMISE JOBS Program. However, research on the factors that influence employment retention and advancement suggest that services may be more successful in promoting these areas if they begin before employment. These services may also be useful to a much broader population, such as former FIP recipients or low-income families. One of three PEP sites offered selected services to the general public, as well as PEP clients, and found considerable interest among low-income parents in mentoring and classes oriented toward issues like health and parenting skills.

Considerations about changing the eligibility criteria should be made with the goals of the program, as well as budgetary and policy constraints, in mind. Expanding the PEP eligible population to include PROMISE JOBS clients who are not employed would require careful consideration of how staffing, case management roles, and services would be coordinated between the PROMISE JOBS and PEP programs. Enlarging the eligible population may necessitate other changes to staffing structures as well. PEP staff members, particularly those in shared PEP/PROMISE JOBS positions, have felt overwhelmed at times with fulfilling their responsibilities to the PEP Program. If the program is to support larger caseloads over time, it may be important to dedicate more caseworker time to PEP, hire more support staff, and/or streamline administrative procedures.

- ***Mandatory enrollment makes it easier to recruit, but this approach also alienates some clients; regardless of the approach, a clear message of the rules and requirements should be communicated to clients.***

In the experience of the PEP Program (and other welfare/employment programs), a mandatory approach to recruitment makes it easier to induce eligible clients to participate in program activities. This advantage is very appealing to those PEP staff that are currently

operating fully voluntary programs because it is these staff that are experiencing the greatest difficulty in engaging eligible clients.

However, there are also drawbacks to a mandatory approach. For one, the processes required to monitor compliance and respond to non-compliance make it more burdensome administratively. Clients also view mandatory programs for individuals who are already fulfilling work requirements as unfair. In addition, because they are more rules-based and punitive than voluntary programs, mandatory programs have more difficulty offering the understanding and the personalized counseling and support that many participants in job retention and advancement programs say they value. Finally, programs that rely on participation requirements may not have as much incentive to develop one of the most effective recruitment tools—a comprehensive set of tangible services.

In order to make choices about participation in a program, eligible clients need to understand what the rules are and what is at stake. Therefore, the message about whether the program, or components of the program, is mandatory or voluntary should be clear and consistent. Clients say that the earlier they are made aware of impending requirements or available services, the less resistant they will be to them.

- ***Not offering services to the entire eligible population, intentionally or not, makes recruitment more challenging.***

Local job retention and advancement sites may wish to narrow the program's eligible population using targeting criteria. This is a reasonable and common approach to efficiently using program resources. In fact, data presented in this report on the barriers faced by participants and nonparticipants suggest that program resources might be more effectively spent if PEP services were targeted to "hard-to-employ" clients or those already in low paying jobs. However, this study also suggests that when a program faces an already small eligible population, targeting criteria may be too restrictive, resulting in insufficient program eligibles and participants. Also, targeting introduces caseworker subjectivity into the process of offering services, which can be particularly problematic in the context of a mandatory program because clients may question why they have different requirements than their peers.[1]

It is also important that the process for referring clients be straightforward so that the eligible pool is not inadvertently narrowed. In the PEP system, this requires a high level of "buy-in" from PROMISE JOBS workers who complete the referral forms.

[1]Targeting services locally to clients most interested and in need of services may be more feasible if the pool of clients eligible for PEP were enlarged to include unemployed PROMISE JOBS clients, families no longer receiving FIP, or low-income families generally.

C. TIMING: WHEN SHOULD SERVICES BEGIN AND END?

The original period of service delivery for PEP clients was quite limited—starting with employment and ending at the point when clients moved off FIP cash assistance. Changes made during program operation now allow the sites to continue providing services to clients as long as they are employed, regardless of FIP status. However, post-employment is not the only period during which services could be effective in helping clients to keep jobs and find better ones. Additional promising intervention points include before employment and during subsequent periods of unemployment.

- ***Many of the services that have potential to promote job retention and advancement may have more impact if provided before initial employment.***

Pre-employment services are increasingly being offered through job retention and advancement programs because starting out in better jobs—those in non-service sectors, as well as higher wages and employer-provided benefits—is linked to both sustaining and advancing in employment. Also, there is growing evidence that job placement and the first three to six months of employment are critical to long-term retention and advancement (Strawn and Martinson 2000). By intervening earlier, case managers can help match clients with jobs that are appropriate to their interests and have the most potential for retention and advancement. Also, the stronger the client-caseworker relationship is when the client becomes employed, the more that caseworker may be able to provide support during the critical initial period of employment.

Pre-employment services could include many of the components currently offered by the PEP Program, but also new components like occupational skills training, transitional employment, or assessment and referral for personal and family problems. These services could be provided by enhancing the Life Skills and Job Club components of PROMISE JOBS to include some of the group session topics offered through the PEP Program. Alternatively, unemployed PROMISE JOBS clients could be allowed to participate in PEP group activities, while maintaining their primary case management relationship with a PROMISE JOBS worker. A more radical approach might be to train PROMISE JOBS workers to provide job retention and advancement services to their current caseloads. This would allow PROMISE JOBS workers to work intensively with clients on job placement, soft skills, and resolving personal and family issues before clients become employed.

- ***If services are not available before employment, it is crucial to contact clients as soon as possible after employment.***

The initial period of employment has come to be viewed as a critical intervention point for job retention services. Helping newly employed clients traverse pitfalls in the transition from joblessness to employment can improve their chances of remaining employed in the longer term. Some of the services that may be most helpful during this transition include:

establishing child care and transportation contingency plans, linking clients to services for family and personal problems, and addressing gaps in job readiness and occupational skills.

The time between a client's employment and contact with the PEP Program can and should be shortened. Administrative procedures through which PROMISE JOBS workers learn of a client's employment can take up to a month. At one of the PEP sites, it takes an average of another month for the first recruitment contact to be made with the client. These delays mean that PEP services are not always available to clients when they could most benefit from them. While it may be difficult to avoid some administrative delays, local sites could reduce the time it takes for PEP referral forms to be completed and for clients to be offered PEP services.

- ***Clients who lose their jobs while participating in PEP might benefit from an extended period of time to work with program staff on regaining and maintaining employment.***

Issues concerning the timing of post-employment services encompass not only when services should begin but also when they should end. It is common for job retention and advancement programs to set a limit on the length of time that clients can receive services. The PEP Program has no such limit as long as the client stays employed and receives FIP cash assistance. The assumption underlying this policy is that promoting job retention and advancement may require working with a client over time to develop a plan for, and address any barriers to, long-term advancement.

However, current state guidelines limit the amount of time that clients who lose their jobs can continue to receive PEP services. Sixty days after the loss of employment, a client's case file is removed from the authority of his or her PEP counselor and returned to his or her original PROMISE JOBS worker. This policy is impractical because clients who lose their jobs while participating in PEP may be the most in need of assistance to overcome whatever challenges are hindering their ability to sustain employment. Removal of the limit on how long PEP staff can work with these clients would allow staff to provide them with more re-employment services. Also, it would prevent cases from being shuffled back and forth between PEP and PROMISE JOBS workers, which can be confusing for the client and reduce the chances of developing a trusting client-caseworker relationship.

D. SERVICES: WHAT SERVICES WILL HELP KEEP PEOPLE EMPLOYED AND MOVE THEM ON TO BETTER JOBS?

The PEP sites developed a service strategy that combines training in life and job readiness skills with support and counseling provided through individual case management. However, an emphasis on group activities has limited the amount of one-on-one contact between clients and PEP staff; this, in turn, has made it difficult for the program to provide "tangible," personalized services that address some of the more significant issues faced by clients. Our findings also suggest the importance of using innovative approaches—such as

involving employers in the provision of services—to the success of a retention and advancement program.

- ***Existing PEP service components could be complemented by more tangible services that address the formidable barriers to sustained and progressively better employment.***

Evaluations of post-employment programs in other states have indicated that, although clients value individual counseling and support, case management alone does not directly improve clients' ability to stay in a job and become self sufficient (Rangarajan and Novak 1999). In addition, clients are more likely to be satisfied by a program and perceive it as useful if they are provided "tangible" services (Wood and Paulsell 2000). The PEP sites had this finding in mind when they developed group activities as the core component of their service structure and a vehicle for providing direct services in addition to support and counseling.

However, the emphasis on group activities in the PEP service structure has supplanted, rather than enhanced, regular case management. This, in turn, has decreased the likelihood that PEP clients receive tangible services other than the "soft skill" training they receive during group workshops. According to the data presented in this report, there are several common barriers among the PEP eligible population that may require more intensive one-on-one contact in order to address. Both staff and clients report that problems with transportation and child care are common and lead to absenteeism and job loss. Individual difficulties in these areas are compounded by insufficient community infrastructure for public transportation and "specialized" child care. Severe personal problems like substance abuse and mental health conditions are also common among eligible PEP clients.

There are many opportunities for strengthening the PEP service structure with tangible services that target these and other barriers. Examples include: in-kind benefits, such as bus tokens or a van service; employment-based services, like job coaching or mentoring; and assistance with family and personal challenges through contingency planning or employee-assistance programs. Under existing PROMISE JOBS rules, the PEP Program could also encourage more clients to pursue post-secondary education programs that might lead to jobs with better pay and benefits. It is important to note that providing more tangible services may require additional investments in staff time, in conducting staff training, and in building relationships between staff and other community and governmental agencies.

- ***Developing trusting client-caseworker relationships as well as an assessment and referral process can help staff individualize services.***

Enhancing case management with tangible services may actually require more, not less, individual casework. Clients and staff alike recognize the extent to which needs and interests vary among individuals. Establishing a strong client-caseworker relationship is one of the surest ways to accurately assess the challenges and strengths of each client and determine the

most helpful role for the program. Group activities, while an appropriate mode for conducting training, may not provide the best avenue for building this individual relationship.

Services can also be made more personalized and concrete by developing systematic approaches to assessment and referral. Caseworkers may already know, or be interested in learning, how to recognize certain "red flags" that suggest a client faces a problem like domestic violence, a learning disability, or substance abuse. In addition, some short and easy to administer screening and assessment tools have been developed to identify these, and other, barriers to work (Derr et al. 2000; Kirby and Anderson 2000; Thompson and Mikelson 2001).

The information gleaned from assessment is most useful if it is paired with a process for linking clients to appropriate services. The development of a referral process for services outside the Workforce Development Center has tremendous potential to help clients, but it requires developing collaborative services and training with other community organizations and governmental agencies. Finally, it is not always feasible for the available governmental and community resources to address all the barriers that clients face. Given this, strong client-caseworker relationships are also important because they provide support and assistance to help clients maintain employment in spite of family and personal challenges.

- ***Innovative approaches to engaging working parents in retention and advancement programs include making services family-oriented, offering incentives, and involving employers in service provision.***

The pilot sites all struggle with marketing PEP services to parents juggling already substantial time commitments and responsibilities. A recent how-to guide for job retention and advancement programs suggests some steps that programs can take to make services more appealing to working parents, including offering flexible, non-standard hours for program activities, removing logistical barriers to participation like lack of child care and/or transportation, and involving the whole family in services (Strawn and Martinson 2000). This last issue appears particularly important—members of the focus groups conducted for this study said that they are less likely to participate in a program if they perceive it as reducing the time they have to spend with their children or fulfill family responsibilities. All of the PEP sites have tried one or more of these strategies, but have not always been successful at implementing them or applying them systematically to all clients.

Two other promising strategies for increasing interest in retention and advancement services are offering financial incentives and involving employers in the provision of services. While both of these approaches hold promise for helping clients, they also require careful planning and administration. If used strategically, incentives can provide an enticement for clients to attend an activity or reach a milestone; however, care should be taken not to use incentives to compensate for a lack of services that clients find relevant or helpful. Also, relationships between client, caseworker, and employer can be complex and require substantial time and energy to develop. It is also important when involving

employers in the provision of services to gauge the extent to which each client wants the program to intervene in her employment situation.

The PEP program has been a rich learning experience for Iowa DHS, the pilot sites, and the participating clients. While the pilot program has not provided clear answers to how best to deliver retention and advancement services to working clients, it has shed light on the structural issues and programmatic choices to consider when attempting to improve these services. Much can be gleaned from the experience of the pilot counties as Iowa considers its next steps toward helping low-income parents keep jobs and find better ones.

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APPENDIX I

POST-EMPLOYMENT PILOT (PEP) GUIDELINES

The Iowa Department of Human Services
June 2000

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1. The general purpose of the post-employment pilots is to provide assistance to employed participants by removing barriers to retaining employment and by developing skills necessary for job retention and career advancement.

2. Post-employment will serve employed PROMISE JOBS participants as well as those participants transitioning off FIP after gaining employment. Specifically, post-employment services can be provided to the following groups: current employed PROMISE JOBS participants referred to the program; those referred to the program who have left FIP by the time of recruitment (still must be employed); and active post-employment participants that move off FIP. (More specific county eligibility requirements can be instituted within these general parameters.)

3. As PEP services are offered to current as well as former FIP participants, there will be different rules governing the services provided through PEP. The services provided to current FIP participants are governed by the rules of PROMISE JOBS and/or Family Self-Sufficiency Grants (FSSG) and services offered to former FIP participants are governed by post-FIP rules. However, all services offered through PEP should be allowed under each of these sets of rules; thus all the services provided to PEP participants will be consistent – regardless of their FIP status.

4. The PEP services must be provided to current and former FIP participants who are currently employed. However, a PEP participant who loses employment is still eligible to receive PEP services for sixty days if it is reasonable to believe the services shall lead to re-employment. After sixty days, the participant should be referred to PROMISE JOBS. (If a PEP participant is not currently on FIP, any post-FIP services or payments provided must meet the post-FIP rules stating, "Post-FIP diversion assistance shall assist candidate families to stabilize or enhance their employment situation, or help them

obtain more reliable or sustainable employment to reduce or eliminate "at risk" factors which threaten the return of the family to FIP.")

5. As the post-employment pilots are considered to be an extension of PROMISE JOBS, individuals who are currently on FIP and participating in PEP must include the PEP activities in their Family Investment Agreement (FIA). The specificity of the FIAs can be determined by each pilot county. In addition, as with all activities in the FIA, the activities should be a mutual agreement between the participant and the PROMISE JOBS worker. Therefore, if the participant does not fulfill the standard procedure for fulfilling or revising the FIA, he/she will be subject to LBP. Former FIP participants will not have an FIA. PEP staff can choose to pursue an informal plan with former FIP participants if they are agreeable, but there cannot be any specific measures of accountability or resulting consequence from the State or the PEP staff.

6. As with all counties, the PEP staff can provide immediate and short-term monetary support to PEP participants if it is believed this assistance will lead the participants to maintain employment or move off FIP (if current FIP recipients). The payments made under this service provision will be governed by the FSSG plan (and acceptable under the post-FIP rules) and will be consistent for both current and former FIP participants.

7. Specific Funding Issues

   When serving participants currently on FIP, counties should maintain the general budget guidelines for administering PROMISE JOBS services. When serving former FIP participants, counties should maintain the general budget guidelines described in the post-FIP rules and in accordance with the post-FIP Contract.

   In each county, the PEP staff must take the appropriate steps to cost allocate the expenses from the post-employment and post-FIP budgets. For example, if a workshop is held with 2 former FIP participants and 8 current FIP participants, 20% of the expenses associated with this workshop should be allocated from post-FIP funding and 80% from post-employment funding. These expenses would include printing costs, food costs, etc. as well as the staff time associated with planning and having the workshop. Each county has the discretion to determine the most appropriate mechanism for cost allocating and billing these dollars from the appropriate funding source.

   PEP staff should consider any individual receiving a post-FIP payment as an <u>active</u> participant in the post-employment program.

   DHS has approved the use of PEP funds for contracting with a third party to offer a mentoring and coaching skills training program to supervisors of local businesses. The conditions for this training are as follows:

a) Written documentation is developed to indicate that the business currently employs FIP participants and is committed to employing FIP participants in the future.

b) This is a one-time training and should not be perceived as an on-going training program.

8. As necessary to complete the evaluation, PEP counties will be required to cooperate with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., including completing the Referral Form for PEP Services forms and using an Access database to track the services and participants involved with the PEP pilots.

Appendix II

PEP Recruitment Materials

Designed by PEP Staff

PEP

The Wage Enhancement Group

Promise Jobs Counselors understand how difficult it can be to advance in the workplace and adjust to juggling work and family when there's not enough hours in the day to accomplish everything you feel needs to be done. Knowing this, the Counselors have pulled together to form PEP (the Wage Enhancement Group) to assist people who have already attained employment to increase chances of higher earning.

Some of the things you can look forward to when becoming part of this group are as follows:

1. Strategies that fit you personally to make more money.

2. P.A.L. (Parents Advancing in Life) get together.

3. Fun nights for the whole family.

4. Career development workshops.

5. Free meals when you attend any PEP function.

6. Rides to any PEP function if needed.

Please feel to call David Kolbe or your Promise Jobs Counselor at 515-754-1400 or 1-800-284-4838 for information.

NEED MORE MONEY?

PEP

IF YOUR CURRENT JOB DOESN'T ALLOW YOU TO EARN ENOUGH INCOME TO MEET YOUR FAMILY'S NEEDS - - - - YOU MAY FIND HELP THROUGH OUR NEW PROGRAM.

CALL:

BEV 242-2103
or
BETTY 242-2122

WANT A BETTER JOB

PEP

CAN YOU ADVANCE AT YOUR CURRENT JOB?

DO YOU GET RAISES ?

DO YOU NEED MORE HOURS ?

POST EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU !

WORKSHOPS TO HELP YOU ---- SUCCEED IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE AND CAREER

LEARN HOW TO DEAL WITH THAT DIFFICULT CO-WORKER OR SUPERVISOR

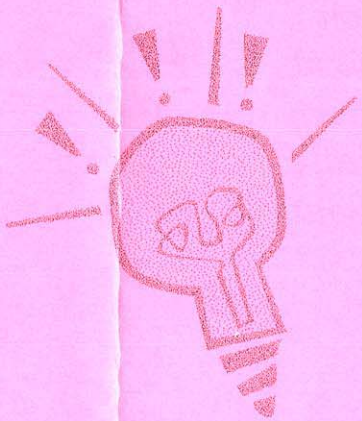
MANAGING WORK LIFE AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

DO YOU HAVE BENEFITS?

PEP

DOES YOUR EMPLOYER HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE, - - RETIREMENT PLANS. AND OTHER BENEFITS?

If not, now may be the time to look for a new employer while maintaining your CURRENT JOB.



POST EMPLOYMENT CAN HELP YOU

THE POST EMPLOYMET PROGRAM IS A GREAT IDEA !

CALL TODAY
242-2103

POST EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOPS

All workshops are from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the YW/YMCA unless otherwise noted.

January 12 – RESOLUTION SOLUTION
Difficult to stick to those New Year's resolutions, especially when involving body image? This session will provide helpful hints on how to make the commitment and be successful! Wear comfortable clothing.

January 26 – PURGE PAPER PILE UP
Junk mail, bills, ads, letters, statements, envelopes, receipts, inserts. Overcome paper overload with 5 easy steps.

February 02 – LOVE LANGUAGES
Learn about the five love languages and how this knowledge can improve your relationship with your significant other, children, co-workers & friends.

February 09 – REAL COLORS
Determine your color-key and understand the characteristics that drive your behavior, motives & desires and cause you to feel good about yourself and be successful.

February 16 – RESILIENCY TRAINING
Learn coping skills and problem solving methods to help you in all aspects of life.

February 23 – WEIGHT LIFTING
Learn the basics of safe weight lifting and how it can reduce stress and enhance self-esteem.

DINNER served at each workshop!
DOOR PRIZES at each workshop!
PRIZES for each child who attends!
Everyone who attends all 6 workshops in their entirety will receive a bonus gift!

APPENDIX III

PEP SITES' POST EMPLOYMENT PLANS

Developed by Staff and Administrators at the PEP Sites

POST-EMPLOYMENT PLAN FOR DES MOINES COUNTY

GOALS

Primary

Increase work hours per week.
Increase hourly wage over time.
Increase duration of employment.

Secondary

- Soft skill development
  - Improve work ethic – family support
  - Overcome "work related" obstacles
  - Improve self-esteem/pride
  - Remove negative thinking patterns
  - Improve coping skills
  - Prioritize life issues
- Improve skill development
  - Increase computer skills
  - Increase basic skills
- Encourage educational accomplishments
- Reinforce successes/ Acknowledge accomplishments
- Employment meeting career goals

TARGET POPULATION

FIP recipients who have obtained employment on or after September 1, 1999 are eligible. This population was selected because it includes all eligible FIP recipients, meets the study guidelines and offers the largest possible pool of individuals for recruitment.

RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

Brochures describing PEP and bearing the Southeastern Community College logo will be sent to all eligible referrals immediately upon receipt of the referral form and recruitment letters will follow each brochure within a week. In addition to the letter, workshop flyers and participant testimonials will be included with the recruitment material. Letters will briefly describe PEP services and extend an invitation to "sample" any workshop. The letter states appointments will be made to meet individual schedules and can be "held in the participant's home" if the participant prefers. Special PEP letterhead (in color) will be used. Phone calls to encourage participation will be made to individuals with phones. "PEP coordinator and current PEP participants will attend Life Skills classes monthly to introduce PEP to potential referrals." "Nice to meet you" cards will be sent to individuals after meeting PEP coordinator. When possible, "PJ workers will call PEP coordinator when a PEP referral is in the office" so PEP can be explained to potential participant face-to-face. Referrals are contacted on an on-going basis in hopes of eventual participation.

STAFFING

One full time staff position has been dedicated to coordinate the PEP program. This includes participant recruitment, development of recruitment materials, data entry, case management, chairperson of community coalition meetings, coordinating & recruiting for employer-based training, coordinating corporate mentoring pilot, weekly training of mentors/mentees in corporate mentoring pilot, planning weekly participant workshops, soliciting contributions for children's & adult incentives, coordinating participant computer classes and collaborating with other agencies to access participant services not available through PEP.

Approximately 20% clerical time is dedicated to PEP. This includes all support staff functions such as mailings, reception & telephone duties and taking & typing minutes from PEP meetings.

Approximately 10% administrative time is dedicated to PEP. This includes all duties typically associated with program administration.

COMMUNITY COALITION

The coalition is comprised of representatives from business & industry and community organizations and is designed to guide and support the PEP program. The committee meets on a monthly basis at the Workforce Center. Members also serve as occasional workshop presenters. Future plans include adding one or more PEP participants to the coalition.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PROGRAMS

Referral forms are completed by Promise Jobs & Welfare-to-Work staff and submitted to PEP coordinator. PJ and WtW staff keep the case files, PEP staff uses the PEP database to track participants. PEP staff will be responsible for regular contact with participants. "PEP & WtW staff will meet jointly with shared participants on a monthly basis." PEP & PJ staff will meet jointly with participants on an as needed basis. PJ, WtW & PEP staff will use e-mail to share participant information. PEP staff notifies PJ staff when a referral agrees to participate in PEP and a new FIA is written to include PEP. When possible, PEP & PJ staff meet together with participant to write and sign FIA.

SERVICES OFFERED

Case Management – PEP staff will be responsible for regular contact with participants. This may be weekly or monthly depending upon individual needs. "PEP & WtW staff will meet monthly with shared participants." PEP & PJ staff will meet together with participants on an as needed basis. Contact includes phone, written & face-to-face meetings (group or individual). "Home visits" will be included in case management. All

participant needs will be addressed as needed so case management may work toward all primary and secondary goals i.e. increasing work hours, hourly wage, employment duration, soft skill development, skill development, educational accomplishments, career goals & personal issues.

Workshops – Weekly workshops will be held from 6-8 PM at the YMCA. Each evening workshop offers an adult session and a children's session. Childcare is provided for children under 4 years old (children 4 & over attend a workshop). A meal is provided at each workshop, everyone eats together during the first 30 minutes and then separate for the sessions. Families come back together during the last 30 minutes of the evening. Every child receives a prize at the end of each workshop and there is a drawing for a door prize for the parents each week (all prizes are donated). Examples of door prizes include: $20 or $25 gift certificates to Wal-Mart, Target, Hy-Vee, local restaurants, family bowling parties & YMCA passes. Workshop topics include:

You're The Mayor, They're The Council
Professional Dress
Team Building
Resolution Solution
Love Languages
Resiliency Training
Tax Preparation Made Easy
Consumer Credit
Self Time
Hairstyles That Work
Plan Your Holidays
Purge Paper Pile Up
Real Colors
Weight Lifting
Anger – Manage It!
Relationships

"Saturday Workshops" - Beginning in April, a collaborative effort with PEP and New Horizons Family Resource Center. Monthly workshops will be offered at the YMCA from 1-4 PM. PEP services will be introduced and briefly explained as another means of informing potential participants about the program. Three separate topics will be offered for 1 hour each. Participants may choose to attend 1, 2, or all 3 sessions. Childcare will be provided and food will be available for all 3 sessions. A licensed counselor has been contracted to facilitate the April session (paid by New Horizons). Other sessions currently in the planning stages. Workshop topics include:

"How to Score Points with Your Parents" (parents & children attend this workshop)
"Who Am I? – Re-Discover Your Dreams"
"How to Effectively Deal with Your Child's School"

The workshops address all primary and secondary goals either directly or indirectly.

"Computer Classes" - Computer classes will be held at SCC in the computer lab beginning Monday, March 27 and will continue every Monday through June. The classes will be offered at 3 different times to accommodate different work schedules: 10-11:30 AM, 3-4:30 PM, & 5-6:30 PM. The class is designed for the beginning computer user. Each student will have his or her own computer. Most of the class will be hands-on lessons rather than lecture. Students will learn how to use a mouse, use menus and dialogue boxes, start

programs, switch between programs, copy, move, delete & recover files, internet surfing & how to customize their computer screen. This service works towards skill building and self-esteem building directly and should impact job duration, hourly wage & hours worked per week indirectly.

Employer-Based Training – Training is contracted through SCC and is currently held on Thursday mornings from 8-11 AM. Training is offered to front-line supervisors in businesses that are committed to employing FIP recipients now and/or in the future. The intent is to teach leadership, management and mentoring skills to immediate supervisors of FIP recipients, thereby increasing job performance, job advancement opportunities and job retention of FIP recipients. In this manner FIP recipients are not "singled out" as needing additional assistance, rather, all employees will potentially benefit from the improved management/mentoring skills of their supervisors. Curriculum from the Vital Learning Corporation's Supervision Series and Principles of Adult Mentoring is used for this training. In addition, actual work situations are discussed and resolutions sought using principles from the curriculum and group processing & problem-solving techniques (no names are used). Following is a list of the 13 modules offered:

Fundamental Skills of Managing People
Dealing with Conflicts
Using Positive Discipline
Preparing for Change
Coaching for Improved Performance
Performance Assessment
Assigning Tasks Effectively
Fundamental Skills of Communicating
Dealing with Employee Complaints
Improving Employee Work Habits
Developing Performance Standards
Delegating Effectively
Communicating with Your Manager

This services addresses the primary goals of increased job duration, hours per week & hourly wage and the secondary goals of soft skill development, reinforcing successes/accomplishments and meeting career goals.

Corporate Mentoring Pilot – This is a collaborative effort between the Iowa Volunteer Mentor Program, PEP & Winegard Company. Liz Weinstein serves as the consultant for this project. A committee comprised of Winegard employees, PEP coordinator, PEP participant, Manpower, SCC Trainer and the consultant are working together to organize an efficient and effective mentor support delivery system that meets the needs of FIP recipients as well as all entry level employees. A program coordinator will match new hires with permanent Winegard employees on the first day of employment. Mentors will give individualized assistance, provide training, help with acceptance of and in new work culture, help improve skills and support career development. "PEP coordinator will conduct mini-training sessions with mentor & mentee twice per month at the worksite." These sessions will utilize the "30 Ways to Shine" curriculum and will include job retention and job advancement strategies and techniques. This service helps with all primary and secondary goals.

Economic Support – These services will be paid through FSSG or Post-FIP. Current FSSG rules will be followed and Post-FIP will be consistent with FSSG rules. Post-FIP recipients who receive a cash payment will be ineligible for FIP for a period of time as stated in the formula in rule #441-47.65(6) – diversion amount divided by (payment standard for the family size) x 2. PEP staff will notify DHS when a post-FIP payment is made to an individual. Payments allowable under this component include:

- Car insurance
- Car repairs
- Car purchases
- Uniforms
- Deposits (phone, electric, rent, etc.)
- Work clothes
- Professional licensing fees
- Tools required for the job
- Relocation expenses
- Child care
- Phone charges
- Transportation

POST-EMPLOYMENT PLAN FOR MARSHALL/HARDIN COUNTIES

1) Program Goals

   a) The primary goals for PEP will be the following:
      - Increase hours per week
      - Increase hourly wage over time
      - Increase duration of employment

   b) Secondary goals for PEP
      - Employment with benefits
      - Employment meeting career goals
      - Soft skill development
      - Improve skill development

2) Target Population

   a) The target population in Marshall/Hardin counties will be all employed FIP recipients.

   b) This population was selected as we feel everyone should be offered the same benefits in our counties and this population will give SDR 06 the largest possible universe from which to recruit PEP participants. Due to being the smallest region among the 3 Iowa pilot sites we feel this will benefit our participation and program development.

3) Recruitment Procedures

   a) SDR 06 plans to contact employed FIP recipients as soon as we are notified of their employment. If they contact us when they become employed we will recruit them at that time. If we hear of their employment from DHS we will fill out the PEP referral form and contact them at that time. Our plan is to send a referral letter with a newly designed recruitment brochure. The referral letter will be accompanied by a personal phone call from PEP staff to invite them to a monthly orientation session or to attend PEP activities immediately. The frequency of contacts will consist of 8 minimum of five contacts by mail and three contacts by phone over a 3 month time period.

   b) SDR 06 will take the following steps to encourage participation:

      - Clients will be contacted at the following times during their Promise Jobs eligibility. They will be given information on PEP during Promise Jobs

orientation, while signing an FIA with their Promise Jobs counselor, during Job Club and Life Skills and during Welfare-to-Work orientation.

- During orientation Dave Kolbe will be explaining the PEP program and providing a flyer to each person in attendance. The additional Promise Jobs Counselors will be explaining PEP and handing out flyers while developing FIAs with their participants. Dave Kolbe will be attending the last day of Job Club and Life Skills to explain PEP and hand out flyers and brochures.

- Testimonials from current PEP participants will be used in our new recruitment brochure that is in the final stage of development.

- The focus of PEP will shift from job and personal growth to emphasizing additional disposable income and wage advancement. We feel participants may show a greater interest in PEP based upon interviews done by Jen Beck with the Consumer Leadership Group and our current PEP participants if they feel it will result in additional income and an increased standard of living. For these reasons we have changed the name from PEP to The Wage Enhancement Group.

- The letterhead of PEP will not include any reference to Promise Jobs or the Workforce Development Center and will include reference to wage advancement, increased income and extra dollars for their family.

c) In addition to contacting employed FIP participants for individual recruitment, we will be sending an invitation to non-PEP participants to attend a monthly focus group. At this meeting we will attempt to recruit PEP participants as well as get ideas on how to more effectively serve participants and increase participation.

4) Staffing

a) The PEP program will consist of two individuals to be responsible for operation of the program.

- Dave Kolbe will be assigned to PEP on a one-half time basis and to Promise Jobs on a one-half time basis.

- Kris Elm will be assigned to PEP for a total of 20 hours per week.

b) Dave Kolbe will be the program coordinator. His responsibilities will include the following activities:

- Provide individual case management services to all PEP participants.
- Coordinate purchase and use of all materials used in the PEP program.

- Facilitate group activities for PEP participants at the Workforce Center, at community organizations and at participant's workplace.

- Facilitate monthly orientation sessions to disseminate information to new PEP referrals.

- Coordinate PEP program integration with the Promise Jobs and Welfare-to-Work staff.

- Design PEP delivery to participants and oversee any change in services deemed necessary to improve effectiveness of the PEP program.

- Contact and secure workshop facilitators to present various topics to PEP participants

- Coordinates all Post-FIP diversion activities.

- Coordinate outreach and recruitment efforts for PEP program.

c) Kris Elm will be the program assistant. Her responsibilities will include the following activities:

- Operation of PEP database and generation of all related information.

- Assist in outreach and recruitment of PEP participants

- Develop monthly PEP newsletter.

- Coordinate meals for PEP activities.

- Record tracking information on participant's PEP contacts and employment and/or FIP status.

- Contact participants to inform them of upcoming PEP activities.

5) Relationship to Promise Jobs and Welfare-to-Work. PEP will be integrated with both Promise Jobs and Welfare-to-Work. Dave Kolbe will be responsible for both Promise Jobs and PEP in Hardin Co. and PEP and a limited caseload in Marshall Co. The remaining two P.J. counselors in Marshall Co. have been involved in the plan development and recruitment planning process for the revised PEP plan. PJ counselors will work with participants to develop an FIA, fill out referral forms, and if the participant agrees to join PEP the PJ case file will be transferred to Dave Kolbe. He will then be the primary PJ counselor for all PEP participants recognizing the fact that they

may have reason to contact their original PJ or WTW counselor. If the participant is uncertain about joining PEP the referral form will generate the development of a PEP file and PEP staff will start the recruitment process. PEP staff will be responsible for regular contact with PEP participants and will try to provide as much individual case management as possible. The Welfare-to-Work coordinator will work directly with PEP staff to recruit PJ participants that are employed through Welfare-to-Work. The Welfare-to-Work coordinator will also work with employers to permit PEP workshops on location where several PEP participants are employed.

a) Services offered and description of each.

- Case management – Individual counseling will be provided to PEP participants by Dave Kolbe and will focus on wage advancement strategies.

- PEP staff, at a minimum, will contact each participant three times a month. They will be contacted via the newsletter and receive an invitation to the orientation workshops. They will also be contacted by phone as a reminder to attend the monthly workshops. The expectation of these contacts is to remind participants of upcoming events and to handle specific issues as they arise.

- Job development – PEP staff will work with employers to transition PEP participants from their current employment to employment that will result in self-sufficiency. OJT services will be the responsibility of Dave Kolbe and Kris Elm. Job development will consist of contacting employers on a one-on-one basis to identify potential positions and explain program services.

- Workshops – These will be scheduled monthly in combination with orientation sessions. PEP staff hopes this will increase attendance at orientation and provide valuable information at the same time. Topics will include credit counseling, financial freedom (Information on W-5's, credit card debt, bankruptcy laws, etc.), balancing family and work/school, time/stress management, dealing with anger, basic auto repair, family fun night, career pathways, job advancement and retention, personal enrichment (wellness, coping skills, relationship building, etc.). These workshops will be conducted by qualified professional from the Marshalltown community.

- Bi-weekly peer group – Group will focus on workplace problem solving, behaviors, family issues and friendship building.

- PEP workshops at employer's location – PEP workshops will be conducted on site when there is more than one PEP participant employed at that location. PEP workshops on location will focus on a centralized topic each week. These topics will be covered by videos and followed by group discussion. Topics will

range from workplace behavior to appropriate attendance to workplace ethics, etc.

- PEP newsletter – Newsletter is mailed monthly to all employed P.J. participants explaining PEP services, providing the most up-to-date local job openings and including articles on job advancement, retention and soft skill building.

- Support service payments – All PEP participants are eligible to receive child care and transportation payments to attend PEP activities. These payments will be made through the Promise Jobs payment system or through Post FIP Diversion funds. Meals will also be provided to participants at PEP activities.

- Economic support – PEP participants are eligible to receive economic assistance through FSSG funds up to $1000 per year. They also will be eligible to receive post-FIP diversion funds for up to 12 months after they have left the FIP program. These post-FIP funds will be limited to the cost categories that are allowable with FSSG funds. In SDR 06 we provide FSSG assistance for everything but fines for DUI and drug-related offenses. Post-FIP diversion services will also include all of the aforementioned services. These funds will be accessed through a 28E agreement with the Marshall/Hardin DHS cluster.

b) The PEP services are intended to work toward the following goal(s):

- Case management – all primary and secondary goals established at our 02/01/00 meeting.

- Job development – increase hours per week and wage per hour.

- Workshops – duration of employment, hourly wage, over time, soft skill development.

- Peer group – all primary and secondary goals.

- PEP newsletter – increase hours per week, increase hourly wage, over time, employment with benefits, soft skill development.

- Support service payments – these payments will allow PEP participants to attend PEP activities that will help attain any of the primary and secondary goals.

- Economic support – these services will target increase duration of employment and employment with benefits as these families have already met the income standard to remove them from FIP.

c) We are in negotiation with the YMCA of Marshalltown to use their facility to hold some of our PEP meetings. Due to space limitations it will not be possible to hold

all PEP meetings there. We are also exploring the idea of securing a family membership to the YMCA for all PEP families. This would hopefully help in the recruitment process as well as promote personal and family wellness.

POST-EMPLOYMENT PLAN FOR POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY

I. PROJECT

The primary goals of the Pottawattamie County Post Employment project are to work with PROMISE JOBS participants to:

- Increase hours of work to 40 hours a week, if possible
- Increase hourly wages
- Increase the duration of employment which will help increase wages, hours and develop good references and work history.

The Post Employment Project (PEP) also has a number of secondary goals, which we hope to achieve in Pottawattamie County. One of these is to help individuals find and keep employment that offers benefits, especially insurance. We plan to help participants explore careers which may interest them as well as careers that have a strong potential for advancement.

PEP will assist participants in developing those skills that are needed to resolve work issues (improving work ethics and resolving work place conflicts), to manage work and family, to develop a support system (when at all possible with family), to gain pride in accomplishments and to gain increased self esteem (by understanding past behavior/thinking patterns). Participants will learn to prioritize work and family issues and to recognize what can be done to resolve conflicts which inevitably arise for working parents.

Participants will be encouraged to complete GED when needed, and to consider short-term education/training programs to increase the hard skills needed to advance in careers.

II. TARGET POPULATION

The project will target those individuals who are employed and who meet any one of the following criteria:

a) working insufficient hours for the family to reach self-sufficiency; or

b) earning insufficient wages to allow the family to leave FIP; or

c) working in a job with little advancement potential or for an employer who does not provide regular raises and/or promotions, or does not offer benefits; or

d) have a history of multiple job quits or being terminated from jobs.

The above criteria were selected because program staff believe these factors are indicative of those who are likely to discontinue working or to remain in jobs with little advancement potential. We hope to give participants opportunities to secure employment that offers a career ladder to better wages, more stable employment and benefits.

III. RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

The primary method of recruiting participants for PEP will be through the PROMISE JOBS case managers. When PROMISE JOBS clients become employed, the case managers will complete a PEP referral form. Post Employment staff will review the information on the form to determine eligibility for services. If an individual meets the target population guidelines, a PEP staff person will meet with the PROMISE JOBS case manager to decide if PEP services are appropriate. If so, the PROMISE JOBS worker will send the participant a letter to inform her/him of the opportunity to become involved in the project. The PEP Specialist will then follow-up with a PEP recruitment letter and PROMISE JOBS Notice of Appointment to schedule a meeting to discuss the project. At that meeting, the project benefits and requirements are presented to the participant. If the participant chooses to take part in the project, the Family Investment Agreement is renegotiated to include PEP services and the casefile is transferred to a PEP Specialist for case management services.

Project benefits are strongly promoted in all written and oral communications with prospective participants. Pizza and soft drinks are offered during the PEP orientation and snacks are available during many of the group meetings. Although meetings are located at the IWD office, they are held in the evenings and efforts are made to create a casual and supportive atmosphere.

IV. STAFFING

There are two PROMISE JOBS Specialists assigned part-time to the Post Employment Project. Bev Machmueller spends 30 hours a week on PEP duties. Her responsibilities include: recruiting, facilitating classes, completing data entry, and serving as case manager to 75% of the participants in PEP. She will also be developing relationships with employers and other agencies that will benefit the participants.

Betty League works 10 hours each week with the project. She assists with recruitment, co-facilitates classes, and provides case management to 25% of the participants in PEP.

V. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PROGRAMS

In Pottawattamie County, PEP is just one of the services available to PROMISE JOBS participants to help them achieve self-sufficiency. As described in the Recruitment Procedures section of this plan, the participant case file is transferred to a PEP Specialist when the Family Investment Agreement is renegotiated to include PEP activities. All PROMISE JOBS case management responsibilities lie with the PEP Specialist when that

occurs. The PEP staff maintain regular contact with the participant, provide services and track progress.

Normally PROMISE JOBS clients are referred to the Welfare to Work (WtW) Program before they find employment. Because of the intensive case management available through Welfare to Work, participants in that program are not usually referred to PEP. However, when both the WtW and PEP specialist agree that PEP services may be of value in helping the participant reach self-sufficiency, both programs will be included in the Family Investment Agreement. Two separate case files are maintained and careful coordination of services is critical to avoid duplication of effort and participant confusion. The staffs of the two programs communicate regarding the needs of the participant and the participant is able to contact either staff member to address concerns or problems.

VI. SERVICES OFFERED

The three main services available through the Pottawattamie County Post Employment Project are: 1) Intensive case management with weekly contact, at a minimum, 2) Weekly workshops/support groups to address job retention and advancement issues, and 3) Employer-based job retention training for both participants and supervisors (these classes have not yet begun).

Both staff members are responsible for case management of individuals they have recruited. The staff member who develops the FIA will help the individual determine what services are needed for them, however, participation in the workshops/support groups is strongly encouraged. These workshops are held once a week (scheduled day and time is decided at Orientation) and meet for 1 ½ - 2 hours. During this time individuals are able to develop a peer support system and will have time to discuss individual issues with their PEP worker.

Workshops that are currently offered are:

- ***Self Esteem:*** Four sessions aimed at helping individuals learn about how self esteem is developed and how we can increase it to feel more comfortable with taking risks. (Both staff co-facilitate)

- ***CAPS COPS COPES:*** An aptitude, interest and values inventory designed to help individuals recognize their strengths and abilities. Assessment results are discussed with the participants individually and the information is used in career planning. (Both staff)

- ***Workin' It Out*** - A program which deals with issues that arise at the job site. It also addresses job retention issues and gives individuals the tools needed to resolve work related conflicts. It is an interactive program with role-playing and observation/problem solving opportunities. This 12 session program is effective in addressing the real issues of job retention. (Both staff)

- ***Developing a Family Budget:*** This money management workshop helps clients realize where money is spent and how to make ends meet by making some hard choices. A month before this session begins participants will be given a journal so that they can track where they currently spend money. Staff will work with this both in groups and individually.. (Both staff)

- ***Automobile Awareness:*** An overview of how cars operate and what can be done to help prevent major breakdowns. General mechanical knowledge is shared so that when participants do need to take a car to a shop for repairs they have an idea of what the mechanic may be telling them. Checks car owners can perform themselves are also covered.

In addition to these Post-Employment Services, the traditional PROMISE JOBS activities and services are available throughout participation and can be utilized as needed. Components likely to be used include: High school completion/GED, short term training to develop specific job skills, Individual Job Search, and transportation and Child Care assistance.

All of the PEP services are intended to address the project goals of increasing participants' hours, wages and duration of employment.

In addition to the PEP services offered to FIP participants, we will provide services to these eligible families as they transition off the FIP grant. Specifically, post-employment services will be offered to the following groups: current employed PROMISE JOBS participants referred to the program; those referred to the program who have left FIP by the time of recruitment (still must be employed); and active post-employment participants that move off FIP (for up to 12 months). Individuals must be considered active in the overall post-employment program to be provided economic support services (through post-FIP funding) after leaving FIP. The post-FIP funds will be used to provide the PEP services described in this plan. Other post-FIP activities and services that will be available are short-term classroom training and economic support services such as child care, transportation, rent or utility payments and car repairs. These payments will follow the guidelines described in the Region 13 Family Self-sufficiency Grants policies, with no family receiving more than $1000 of post-FIP assistance in a twelve month period.

Participants who receive post-FIP cash payments will be ineligible for FIP for a period of time. This time period is calculated by dividing the post-FIP payment by the maximum daily amount of FIP for which the family is eligible.