

IMPLEMENTATION AND RELATIVE IMPACTS OF TWO JOB SEARCH ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

THE JOB SEARCH ASSISTANCE STRATEGIES EVALUATION



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Overview

This report describes the implementation and impact study findings from an evaluation of the relative effectiveness of two approaches to providing job search assistance to cash assistance recipients in Sacramento County, California. From 2016 to 2018, the Sacramento County’s Department of Human Assistance operated two job search assistance programs for cash assistance recipients who were required to work: **Standard Job Club** and **Fast Track Job Club**. While cash assistance recipients in both programs were generally expected to participate in job search activities or search for work for 35 hours per week, recipients in the Standard Job Club participated in three weeks of instruction on job search and soft skills in a group setting followed by five weeks of daily on-site supervised job search. In contrast, in the Fast Track Job Club program, recipients participated in three-and-a-half days of group job search assistance, followed by seven weeks of independent job search with weekly on-site meetings. Participation in both programs was required, and recipients faced a sanction, in the form of a grant reduction, if they did not comply.

Using a rigorous research design, the study did not find a difference in employment rates, earnings, or the receipt of public assistance during the six month follow-up period. While participation in job search assistance services was high for both groups, compared to the Fast Track Job Club, those assigned to the Standard Job Club participated more frequently in group and one-on-one job search activities. In spite of the more rigorous participation requirement of the Standard Job Club, the sanction rates were the same for the two programs and it did not affect employment or public assistance outcomes.

Primary Research Questions

Implementation Research Questions for Each JSA Program

- What is the institutional and community context for delivering job search assistance to cash assistance recipients?
- What elements were intended to be part of the program model?
- What intervention was actually implemented? Did it differ from plans or expectations and in what ways?

Impact Research Questions for the Standard Job Club versus the Fast Track Job Club

- Does the receipt of job search assistance differ between the Standard Job Club and Fast Track Job Club groups? Specifically, are there differences in the level and duration of job search assistance, types of services received, and use of job search tools?
- Are there differences in the employment, earnings, and time to employment between the Standard Job Club and Fast Track Job Club groups? (This is the study’s confirmatory outcome.)
- Are there differences in sanction rates and public benefit receipt between the Standard Job Club and Fast Track Job Club groups, specifically cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and payments from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)?

- Are there differences between the Standard Job Club and Fast Track Job Club groups for other outcomes such as job quality (e.g., hourly wage, work-related benefits, regularity of hours), motivation to search for a job, and factors that affect ability to work?

Purpose

The TANF program provides cash assistance to low-income families with children, as well as employment-related services to help them become self-sufficient. Balancing the provision of cash assistance with individual responsibility, TANF requires recipients of cash assistance to participate in a specified set of work activities as a condition of benefit receipt, including job search assistance (JSA).

There is strong evidence that JSA services are effective in increasing employment, but the impacts are modest. Many low-income individuals struggle to find and keep jobs, and families remain poor despite the assistance provided. However, JSA can be implemented in different ways—for example, in group classes, one-on-one, or in self-directed activities—and there is little evidence regarding which ways are more effective. To assess the relative effectiveness of the two different job search assistance programs in Sacramento County, California, this evaluation uses an experimental design that randomly assigns job-ready cash assistance recipients to the Standard Job Club or Fast Track Job Club program and compares their employment and public assistance outcomes.

Key Findings and Highlights

Implementation Study Findings

- Both the Standard and the Fast Track Job Club operated as designed during the study period. As intended, the Standard Job Club program provided a greater level of assistance with workplace behaviors and soft skills compared to Fast Track, but the programs similarly emphasized providing assistance with job search skills.
- Staff for both the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs monitored attendance according to each program’s specific requirements, but provided multiple opportunities for cash assistance recipients to fulfill the commitment.

Impacts on Receipt of JSA Services

- Recipients in each Job Club participated in job search activities at relatively high rates. However, those in the Standard Job Club received assistance more frequently—both group and one-on-one settings.
- More recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club received assistance with learning appropriate workplace behaviors and soft skills, but there was no difference in the receipt of instruction on job search skills.

Impact Study Findings

- There was no detectable impact on employment in the second quarter after random assignment (the study’s confirmatory outcome)—for the Standard Job Club compared to the Fast Track Job Club. In addition, we did not detect an increase in earnings.
- Though the participation requirement for the Standard Job Club was more demanding, it did not result in a higher level of sanctions compared to the Fast Track Job Club.

- There was no detectable difference in the receipt of CalWORKs and SNAP benefits for the Standard Job Club compared to the Fast Track Job Club.
- Recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club reported more favorable characteristics in their current or most recent job compared to those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club.

Methods

The JSA evaluation of the Sacramento County’s job search assistance programs includes parents receiving support from TANF (known as CalWORKs in California). The evaluation includes both an implementation study to examine the design and operation of the two programs and an impact study using an experimental design to measure differences in employment and public assistance outcomes.

The evaluation randomly assigned 493 cash assistance recipients to Standard and Fast Track Job Club programs. The evaluation uses several types of data, including the data from the National Directory of New Hires, administrative data from Sacramento County on cash assistance and SNAP benefit receipt, and a survey administered to study participants approximately six months after random assignment. The evaluation also included site visits and a staff survey to document program implementation and operations.

Executive Summary

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a federal block grant that funds states to operate programs providing both cash assistance to low-income families with children and employment-related services to help those families become self-sufficient. Balancing the provision of cash assistance with individual responsibility, TANF requires states to engage a target share of cash assistance recipients in a specified set of work activities as a condition of benefit receipt, including job search assistance (JSA).

This report presents results for Sacramento, California, in the multi-site **Job Search Assistance (JSA) Strategies Evaluation**, an implementation and impact study of JSA strategies for applicants and recipients of cash assistance. The JSA evaluation in Sacramento County examines the relative impacts of two approaches of providing job search assistance to recipients. Designed and operated by the Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance (DHA), the two JSA programs—**Standard Job Club** and **Fast Track Job Club**—target cash assistance recipients who are required to work, as defined by the TANF statute.

Lasting eight weeks, each program generally requires 35 hours of participation in job search activities per week, but the programs differ in the content and frequency of the job search assistance provided:

- **Standard Job Club** requires *three weeks* of group classroom instruction on job search and workplace behavior skills and up to *five weeks* of supervised job search, with *daily* one-on-one job search assistance from program staff.
- **Fast Track Job Club** requires *three-and-a-half days* of group classroom instruction job search skills and up to *seven weeks* of independent job search, with *weekly* one-on-one job search assistance from program staff.

Both job search programs are provided once recipients are approved (or redetermined eligible as part of an annual review) for cash assistance, through California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), the state's TANF program. After approval, cash assistance recipients attend an assessment, are determined work mandatory, and are referred to job search assistance. Recipients who do not comply with the participation requirements may be sanctioned and have their cash assistance grant reduced.

With the goal of understanding the effectiveness of different approaches to providing job search assistance, particularly as part of cash assistance programs, the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE), at the Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, sponsored this evaluation in Sacramento County. Abt Associates, in partnership with Mathematica Policy Research, conducted the study as part of its larger JSA evaluation.

Program Context: Cash Assistance Programs in Sacramento County

California provides cash assistance to eligible families with children through its CalWORKs program, up to a 48-month lifetime limit. Those who are not exempt from work requirements (e.g., for being incapacitated due to health problems) are required to participate in specific work-related activities, such that the state meets the federal work participation rate. As the TANF statute requires, California established a state policy for sanctions for noncompliance with work requirements. In California the

cash assistance grant is reduced by the amount received by the adult household member who is not in compliance (the grant amount for children in the household is not affected by noncompliance).

Within federal and state guidance, California gives individual counties flexibility in operating the CalWORKs programs, including the provision of employment services. In Sacramento County, the cash assistance programs and related employment service programs are developed and operated by DHA. Prior to the evaluation, in order to assist recipients in seeking employment, most cash recipients determined to be “work mandatory” were required to participate in a job search assistance program that provided group class instruction on job search followed by a job search that was overseen by a staff member.

DHA’s interest in participating in the JSA evaluation stemmed from an interest in improving its existing approach for preparing cash assistance recipients for work. Over time the county’s nine CalWORKs offices that provided the job assistance had altered and adjusted the general structure of the program, so that it varied across offices in both content and frequency. For example, in some offices the group classes lasted four weeks, in others it lasted two weeks. The job search assistance offered across the county also varied in the extent to which it provided (1) job search skills, such as how to fill out a job application or interviewing techniques; and (2) workplace behaviors and soft skills that help people succeed in the workplace as well as in their job search.

When the JSA evaluation was launched, Sacramento County had already been considering alternatives to improve its existing job search assistance program, so the evaluation was an opportunity to test the relative effectiveness of two variations of the program. In 2015, DHA developed two job search assistance programs for the JSA evaluation, both drawing elements from its existing program.

DHA designed both programs to provide job search skills, but Standard Job Club, with its extended group class, aimed to provide additional assistance on the workplace behaviors and soft skills. The Standard Job Club also required more frequent interaction with program staff, with daily rather than weekly in-person meetings. Each Job Club also employed a job developer whose primary role was to help recipients make connections with employers and search for and identify potential job opportunities. Exhibit ES-1 shows the key elements of each program.

Exhibit ES-1. Comparison of Key Elements of the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs

Element	Standard Job Club	Fast Track Job Club
Participation requirement	Three weeks of daily attendance (40 hours/week, 5 days/week: 120 hours total) Five weeks of supervised job search with daily one-on-one meetings with staff	Three-and-a-half days of daily attendance (28 hours total) Seven weeks of independent job search with weekly one-on-one meetings with staff
Job search assistance services provided	Week 1: Group instruction on workplace behaviors and soft skills Weeks 2 and 3: Group instruction on both job search and workplace skills Weeks 5 through 8: Supervised job search, requiring daily attendance at the CalWORKs office, including access to job developers	Week 1, Days 1 to 3: Group instruction on job search skills Week 1, Day 4: One-on-one meetings and activities with staff Weeks 2 through 8: Independent job search, with weekly required meetings at the CalWORKs office, including access to job developers
Consequences for noncompliance	Sanction; partial grant reduction	Sanction; partial grant reduction

Source: Site visits and regular communication between study team and program staff.

The JSA Evaluation in Sacramento County: Theory and Research Design

Sacramento County DHA chose to rigorously test the relative effectiveness of the Standard and Fast Track Job Club programs through the JSA Strategies Evaluation. The theory of change motivating the research design for the evaluation is described below.

Theory of Change

At the outset of the evaluation, it was not clear to the program designers at DHA, or to the study team, whether the Standard Job Club or the Fast Track Job Club would produce better employment and/or public assistance outcomes.

On the one hand, **Standard Job Club** could be expected to increase the receipt of job search assistance services and development of job search and workplace behavior skills compared to Fast Track. If so, Standard Job Club would as a result increase employment and earnings and reduce public benefit receipt. However, because of the Standard Job Club’s more demanding participation requirement, that additional time and requirements might induce cash assistance recipients to participate only sporadically or to drop out of the program without finding a job. If so, these recipients could be sanctioned and have their cash assistance reduced due to noncompliance. As a result, public benefit receipt could decrease without necessarily increasing employment and earnings compared to the Fast Track Job Club.

On the other hand, because this study targeted cash assistance recipients who are work mandatory (and determined to be capable of working), recipients assigned to the **Fast Track Job Club** might already possess the skills and knowledge to be as effective or possibly more effective than those assigned to the Standard Job Club at finding employment on their own, with or without participating in job search services. Those assigned to the Standard program also might be more likely to take lower-paying jobs they found through the program to avoid the participation requirement, whereas those in the Fast Track Job Club might spend more time looking for jobs that better matched their qualifications (and were

potentially higher paying). In addition, if compliance rates are lower among those in the Fast Track Job Club than for those in the Standard Job Club, then those in Fast Track could receive more JSA services on average, through weekly meetings with program staff and voluntary use of staff and other job search assistance resources than could those in the Standard Job Club.

In this case, the Fast Track Job Club could result in superior employment and public assistance outcomes, or outcomes at least comparable, to the Standard Job Club outcomes. As a result, the Fast Track Job Club would seem preferable to the Standard Job Club, given the former's presumably lower individual burden and lower staff costs, likely resulting in cost reduction (costs are not examined in this study).

JSA Evaluation Design

The study uses a random assignment research design to compare the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs. For the evaluation, eight DHA offices operated either the Standard or Fast Track Job Club between 2016 and 2018 (one office did not participate in the study). After being determined work mandatory and consenting to the study, CalWORKs recipients were randomly assigned to one of the two Job Clubs and referred to a DHA office providing that program type. DHA staff randomly assigned 493 cash assistance recipients evenly between the Standard and the Fast Track Job Clubs.

The evaluation includes both an **implementation study** to examine program design and operation and an **impact study** to examine how the two programs changed outcomes. Specifically, the impact study measures “differential impacts”—differences in outcomes between recipients assigned to either of the two program groups.¹ The evaluation pre-selected **employment in the second quarter after random assignment** as the confirmatory outcome—that is, a significant difference in this outcome between the groups identifies one program as more effective than the other.

Reported differential impacts on other outcomes, such as earnings and receipt of cash assistance and food assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), are exploratory. Exploratory outcomes are intended to provide additional information on possible impacts, aid in interpretation of the confirmatory finding, and generate hypotheses for future research.

The impact evaluation also examines differential impacts on the content and frequency of job search assistance received by those assigned to the Standard and Fast Track programs. The sample size for the evaluation is lower than was anticipated when the study was designed due to a smaller number of CalWORKs recipients being determined work mandatory and consenting to the study than expected. This sample size limits the study's ability to detect all but large impacts.

The evaluation uses several types of data. A form completed by recipients at study enrollment provides baseline information on their demographic characteristics, education, and employment history. The National Directory of New Hires provides employment and earnings data. DHA administrative data provide information on CalWORKs and SNAP benefit receipt. A six month study participant follow-up

¹ Random assignment ensures that the two groups will be alike in their observed and unobserved characteristics, ensuring that any systematic differences in their outcomes can be attributed to the differences in program requirements and access to program services.

survey provides information on other outcomes not available in the National Directory of New Hires or in program administrative data. Finally, the evaluation draws on onsite interviews with program staff and an online staff survey.

Implementation Study Findings

Findings from the implementation study are summarized below.

- ***The cash assistance recipients served through either Job Club program were a disadvantaged group.***

The CalWORKs recipients in the study had low education levels, limited work history, and high past use of public benefit programs. About one-third had a high school diploma or GED; about one-quarter had neither, just some high school. While two-thirds had worked during the year prior to entering the study, earnings were low averaging about \$6,800 over the year. Consistent with recipients' limited earnings, previous reliance on government income support was high, with about 70 percent reporting receiving cash assistance through CalWORKs in the four to 12 months prior to study enrollment (and not reflecting their current spell of cash assistance) and more than three quarters receiving SNAP.

- ***Both the Standard and the Fast Track Job Club operated largely as designed during the study period. As intended, the Standard Job Club provided a greater level of assistance with workplace behaviors and soft skills compared to Fast Track, but the programs similarly emphasized providing assistance with job search skills.***

Based on the interviews conducted for the study, the offices implemented their Job Club programs as designed, following the prescribed group activities and using the established curricula. Staff also closely adhered to the requirement that recipients meet daily or weekly, at the program office, as specified by each program's design.

Based on the staff interviews and survey, the Standard Job Club placed more emphasis on workplace behaviors and soft skills compared with Fast Track. The Standard Job Club's three-week group class was designed to develop recipients' workplace skills as well as their job search skills, and its staff—more than Fast Track staff—reported on the survey that topics such as “handling stress and anxiety in the workplace” and “balancing work and family responsibilities” were emphasized. This emphasis extended to the one-on-one interactions between recipients and staff.

In contrast, staff from both Job Clubs reported that they have a strong emphasis on building job search skills, such as developing resumes and filing applications. In both programs, topics in this area were frequently covered by staff in group sessions and in one-one meetings.

- ***More than Fast Track Job Club staff, Standard Job Club staff reported that they provided assistance that was tailored to individual needs, particularly the job development services.***

Staff of the Standard Job Club—with its longer group class and daily rather than weekly attendance expected at the CalWORKs offices—reported more often than did Fast Track staff having opportunity to get to know recipients, help them address barriers, and support their individual job search goals and plans. During interviews, staff from the Standard Job Club more frequently reported meeting with and

providing one-on-one support to recipients than did staff from the Fast Track Job Club. In addition, the Standard Job Club's longer group workshop sessions made time available for facilitators and other staff to provide customized assistance based on recipients' individual circumstances.

Similarly, though recipients in both Job Clubs had access to a strong set of job development services, staff reported that recipients in the Standard Job Club had used these services more often. Because these recipients were in the office more frequently, they were more likely to hear about new opportunities in a timely way. Moreover, because of that more frequent attendance, job developers became more attuned to those recipients' interests and abilities, and thus were better equipped to find an appropriate job match.

- ***Staff for both the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs monitored attendance according to each program's specific requirements, but provided multiple chances for recipients to fulfill the commitment.***

To ensure that CalWORKs recipients assigned to either the Standard or Fast Track Job Club complied with program requirements, staff tracked each recipient's attendance in the required activities and imposed sanctions if the recipient did not comply. For CalWORKs recipients who are sanctioned, the family's cash benefit was reduced for the adult recipient. Staff from both Job Clubs monitored whether recipients (1) attended the Job Club to which they were assigned at all; and (2) if they did, whether they met the specific requirements of the program. For both Job Clubs, staff reported that the sanctions typically were initiated only after recipients had several chances to comply with program requirements, and typically only after a recipient had more than three unexcused or non-verifiable absences. If the noncompliance continued, the sanction process was initiated. However, the recipient was allowed a final chance to comply by agreeing to a compliance plan.

Impacts on Receipt of JSA Services

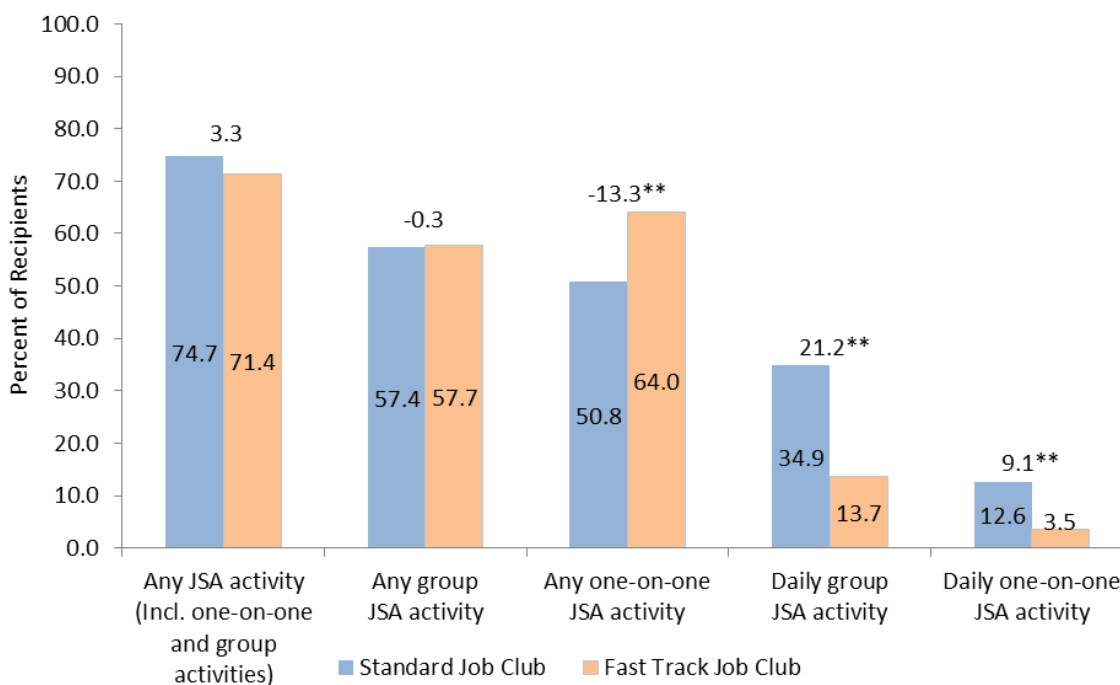
Differences in the content and frequency of job search services received could affect employment and public assistance receipt. This section describes participation in job search assistance and other employment-focused activities during the early weeks after random assignment. Results here are primarily based on the six month study participant follow-up survey.

- ***Recipients in each Job Club participated in job search activities at relatively high rates. However, those in the Standard Job Club received assistance more frequently— in both group and one-on-one settings.***

As shown on Exhibit ES-2 below, among both groups, recipients commonly attended job search assistance (which included participation in group and one-on-one sessions), with more than 70 percent of those randomly assigned to either group participating. The high levels for both groups are not surprising given that both Job Clubs primarily required participation in job search assistance services. There were no differences between the two programs in participation levels for other activities, such as occupational classes or unpaid work experience, and participation rates in these activities were low (11 percent or less). In addition, there was no difference in the number of hours recipients participated in job search assistance activities across the two groups (not shown).

As shown also on Exhibit ES-2, those recipients assigned to either Job Club participated in group job search classes at equal rates overall (about 57 percent). Consistent with the two program models, those assigned to the Standard Job Club were more likely to report participating in the group sessions daily than were those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club (35 percent versus 14 percent). In addition, likely because of the shorter duration of the group class, those in the Fast Track Job Club were more likely to receive job search assistance through a one-on-one meeting with staff (64 percent versus 51 percent), but those in the Standard Job Club attended one-on-one meetings more often. Specifically, recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club were more likely than those in the Fast Track Job Club to meet one-on-one with a staff person daily (13 percent versus 4 percent). However, those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club were more likely than those in the Standard Job Club to meet once per week (not shown; 33 percent versus 21 percent).

Exhibit ES-2. Impacts on Receipt of Job Search Assistance



Source: Six Month Follow-up Survey.

Sample: Sample includes 240 (120 Standard Job Club; 120 Fast Track Job Club) survey respondents. Sample sizes vary for outcomes due to item nonresponse.

Notes: Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

- More recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club received assistance with learning appropriate workplace behaviors and soft skills, but there was no difference in the receipt of instruction on job search skills.***

Reflecting the extended curriculum of the Standard Job Club group class, recipients were more likely to report receiving workplace behaviors and soft skills instruction, compared to those in the Fast Track Job Club. However, there were no differences between the groups in the receipt of specific job search skills instruction such as filling out a job application or developing a resume. There is also some evidence of

better job matching in the Standard Job Club, potentially from the increased use of job developers. Among recipients who applied for a job (a non-experimental comparison), those assigned to the Standard Job Club were more likely to report that “knowing the employer was looking for someone with my skills and experience” affected their decision to apply. Those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club were more likely to report they felt like they “needed to take anything I could get.”

Impacts on Employment, Earnings, and Public Assistance Receipt

This section examines the differential impact of the Standard Job Club compared to the Fast Track Job Club on employment levels and earnings based on data from the National Directory of New Hires, study participant self-reports from the six month follow-up survey, and public benefits receipt (including the imposition of sanctions) using administrative records from DHA.

- *With respect to the study’s confirmatory outcome—employment in the second quarter after random assignment—there were no differences for the Standard Job Club compared to the Fast Track Job Club. In addition, we did not detect an increase in earnings.*

In the second quarter after random assignment, 56 percent of those assigned to either the Standard or Fast Track Job Club were employed (Exhibit ES-3). That is, we do not detect a difference in the employment rate between the two groups in the second quarter. Thus, with respect to the confirmatory outcome—measured by earnings in the second quarter after random assignment—the evaluation does not identify one program as more effective than the other.

Exhibit ES-3. Impacts on Employment and Earnings



Source: National Directory of New Hires.

Sample: Sample includes 479 individuals (240 Standard Job Club, 239 Fast Track Job Club) with two quarters of outcome data.

Notes: Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Average cumulative earnings during the six month (two quarters) follow-up period were approximately \$4,500 for those assigned to the Standard Job Club and approximately \$4,350 for those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club (Exhibit ES-3). The difference of roughly \$150 is not distinguishable from zero. Among recipients who worked, earnings averaged approximately \$6,600 over the six month period (not shown). It is important to note that because the sample size is relatively small, the estimates are imprecise. As a result, we are not able to rule out the possibility that smaller, but still substantively important differences in employment rates and earnings exist.

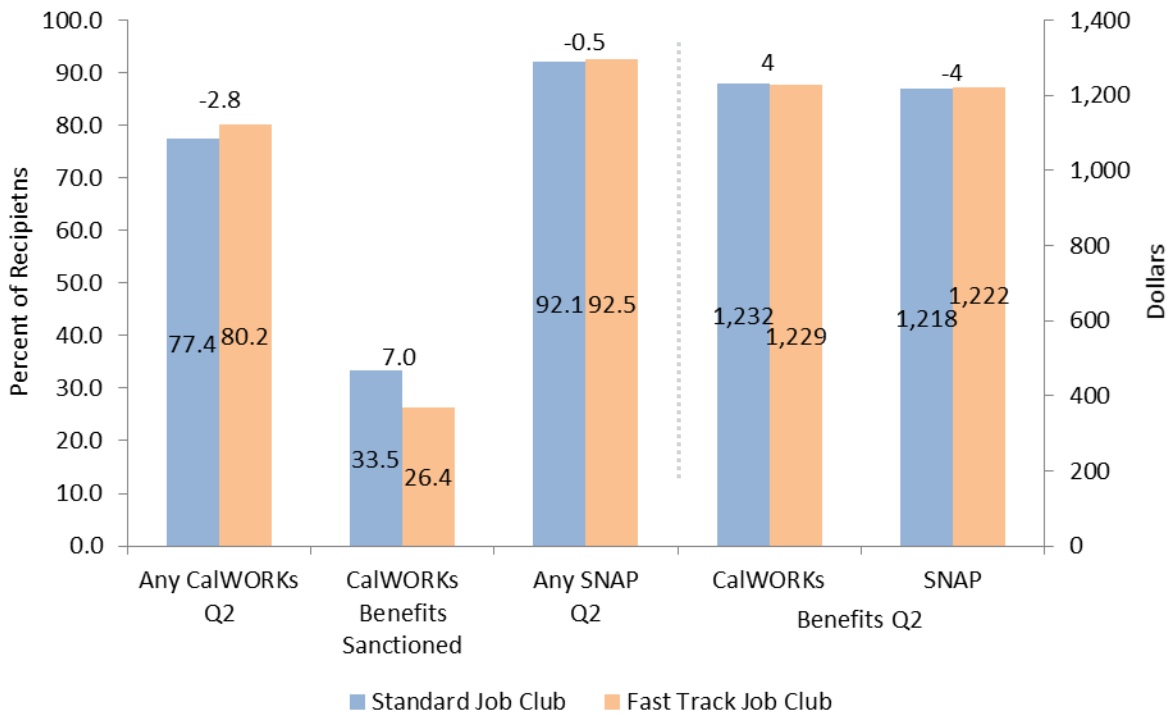
- ***Though the participation requirement for the Standard Job Club was more demanding, it did not result in a higher level of sanctions compared to the Fast Track Job Club.***

As shown on Exhibit ES-4, DHA administrative data analyzed for the study indicate the two groups were sanctioned at similar rates. Between one-quarter and one-third of recipients assigned to either the Standard or the Fast Track Job Club were sanctioned at some point during the study's six month follow-up period, and the difference in rates of sanction between the two groups was not statistically significant. Moreover, the sanction levels were the same for the two Job Clubs among those who did not show up for any activity as well as among those who attended but did not meet the specific program's requirements (not shown). This suggests that staff were tracking and enforcing the requirements of each program, and but that the more rigorous participation requirement in the Standard Job Club did not result in more sanctions.

- ***There is no difference in the receipt of CalWORKs and SNAP benefits for the Standard Job Club compared to the Fast Track Job Club.***

As shown on Exhibit ES-4, rates of CalWORKs receipt were high for both the Standard and the Fast Track Job Clubs in the second quarter after random assignment, with no difference between the two: more than 80 percent of recipients received CalWORKs benefits in the second quarter following random assignment. The Standard Job Club also did not result in reductions in the level of CalWORKs benefits compared to Fast Track, with benefits valued at approximately \$1,230 in the second quarter for both groups, indicating that the Standard Job Club's more rigorous participation requirements did not serve as deterrent (sometimes known as the hassle factor) to recipients' staying on cash assistance compared with the Fast Track Job Club. The high CalWORKs benefit receipt rate, even though more than half of recipients were working (see Exhibit ES-3), is likely due to CalWORKs grant levels and income eligibility rules that allow recipients to remain on assistance while their earnings are low. Overall, given the lack of impacts on employment, earnings, and sanction rates, it is not surprising that receipt of CalWORKs benefits did not differ between the Standard and the Fast Track Job Club.

Exhibit ES-4. Impacts on Sanctions and CalWORKs and SNAP Receipt



Source: Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance Administrative Records.
 Sample: Sample includes 431 (220 Standard Job Club; 211 Fast Track Job Club) individuals with administrative records.
 Notes: Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

As was the case with CalWORKs cash assistance benefits, SNAP receipt or benefit amounts in the second quarter following random assignment did not differ for recipients assigned to the Standard versus the Fast Track Job Club (ES-4). For both groups, we find similarly high rates of SNAP benefit receipt, in excess of 90 percent, during the second quarter after random assignment. Recipients in either group received approximately \$1,220 in SNAP benefits during this quarter. Again, given their employment levels, many CalWORKs recipients likely received SNAP benefits in addition to their earnings.

- ***Recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club reported more favorable characteristics in their current or most recent job compared to those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club.***

There is some evidence suggesting that recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club had more favorable job characteristics: they were more likely to obtain jobs with higher hourly wages and paid holidays and sick days than were recipients assigned to Fast Track. Those assigned to the Standard Job Club were more likely to earn an hourly wage greater than \$15 per hour than were those assigned to Fast Track (18 percent versus eight percent). At the same time, those assigned to Fast Track were more likely to earn an hourly wage of \$10–\$13 per hour than were those assigned to the Standard Job Club (40 percent versus 22 percent). This indicates a segment of those assigned to the Standard Job Club group were able to increase their earnings.

Despite these results, we detected no overall difference in the average hourly wage between Standard Job Club and Fast Track Job Club members. Those assigned to the Standard Job Club who had worked since random assignment earned an average of \$15.28 per hour, whereas those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club earned an average of \$13.71 per hour (a non-experimental comparison), and the difference is not statistically significant. (Experimental impacts of wages that include all sample members were also not statistically significant). Along with lack of impacts on earnings discussed above, the results here indicate the higher wages observed in the distribution of wages for those assigned to the Standard Job Club were too small to affect overall earnings.

Conclusions

There is a considerable interest at the federal, state, and local levels in the effects of job search assistance services and participation requirements on employment and public assistance outcomes for recipients of cash assistance and other public benefits such as SNAP. The Sacramento County JSA evaluation results have a number of implications for policymakers and program administrators to consider.

- ***The two Job Clubs were well implemented and resulted in differences in service receipt, but they did not affect labor market outcomes or benefit receipt outcomes.***

Participation in job search assistance services was high for both groups. Those assigned to the Standard Job Club participated more frequently in group and one-on-one job search activities compared to those in Fast Track, and those in the Standard Job Club received more assistance with workplace behaviors and soft skills. However, insomuch as the goal of rigorous work requirements is to improve employment outcomes, this did not occur in Sacramento County. While the impact estimates are imprecise due to small sample sizes, the study did not find a difference in employment rates (the study's confirmatory outcome) or in earnings during the six month follow-up period.

In addition, the more burdensome participation requirement of the Standard Job Club did not affect recipients' public benefit receipt. The overall participation levels in program activities and sanction rates were similar across the two Job Club programs. Moreover, the public assistance receipt rates and amounts were the same for the two programs, indicating the Standard Job Club's more rigorous requirements did not deter recipients from remaining on assistance. We note that work requirements as part of public benefit programs sometimes have goals beyond improving employment and reducing public benefit receipt, such as establishing a *quid pro quo* for benefits.

- ***The operational costs of the Standard Job Club are likely higher than that of the Fast Track, but this additional cost did not result in a change in employment, earnings, or public assistance outcomes.***

This study did not specifically estimate program costs, but the intensive Standard Job Club required more staff time—including group facilitators and job developers—and thus was likely more expensive to operate than the Fast Track Job Club. However, the additional investment to operate the Standard Job Club did not result in better economic outcomes. It is possible that certain subgroups of CalWORKs recipients benefited from the Standard Job Club, for example, those with more limited work histories. If so, that would indicate it is appropriate to target these more intensive services to more disadvantaged

recipients. This study was unable to address the issue due to limited sample sizes; however, this is an area for further consideration and research.

- *Many cash assistance recipients are working, but their earnings remained low and receipt of public assistance high.*

Even though they met the requirements for being mandated to work under California’s TANF rules, recipients served through the Job Club programs in Sacramento County were a disadvantaged group. They experienced high levels of unemployment and benefit receipt throughout the follow-up period: close to half were not working, more than 80 percent received CalWORKs benefits, and more than 95 percent received SNAP six months after program enrollment. Even among those who worked, cumulative earnings over the six month follow-up period were just about \$6,600, on average, and the hourly wage was about \$14 per hour for both groups. Though these results may not be surprising given the disadvantaged nature of those served by the Job Clubs, inasmuch as the goal of the CalWORKs program is to improve workers’ earnings trajectories so they are no longer dependent on public assistance, other strategies may be needed.

Overall, this study of job search assistance services in Sacramento County, California, provides new, rigorous experimental evidence on the differential effects of two approaches to job search assistance for cash assistance recipients —one approach requiring a three-week group class and five weeks of daily attendance in a program office, the other requiring a three-and-a-half day class followed by weekly check-ins for seven weeks. Overall, no differences in employment, earnings, or public benefit receipt were observed. The study highlights some of the challenges short-term job search interventions face in moving cash assistance recipients to work, particularly to jobs that will improve their overall economic well-being.

1. Introduction

Established by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is intended to foster economic security and stability for low-income families with children. Through a block grant, TANF provides funds to states to operate programs that provide monthly cash assistance payments to low-income families with children, as well as a wide range of services that address the program’s four broad purposes.²

Balancing the provision of cash assistance with individual responsibility, TANF requires states to engage a target share of cash assistance recipients in a specified set of work activities as a condition of benefit receipt. These TANF work activities typically include some type of *job search assistance* (JSA) intended to help parents who receive cash assistance transition quickly to work.

There is strong evidence that JSA services are effective in increasing employment, but the impacts are modest and short-term (Klerman et al., 2012). Some low-income individuals struggle to find and keep jobs, and many families remain poor despite the assistance provided (Hendra and Hamilton, 2015). Moreover, JSA services are provided in different ways—for example, in group classes, one-on-one, in self-directed activities—and also with varying levels of duration and intensity, but there is little evidence regarding which approaches are more effective. In addition, much of what research exists is dated (some of it prior to enactment of the TANF program) and so does not reflect new or emerging practices in the field (such as the use of online tools).

This report presents evaluation results for Sacramento County, California, in the multi-site **Job Search Assistance Strategies Evaluation**, an implementation and impact study of job search assistance strategies for TANF cash assistance recipients. The JSA evaluation is sponsored by the Office of Planning,

Key Features of the JSA Evaluation in Sacramento County, CA

- Included recipients of cash assistance through CalWORKs (California’s TANF program) who were required to work.
- Conducted in eight CalWORKs offices in Sacramento County.
- Cash assistance recipients were randomly assigned to one of two JSA programs:
 - **Standard Job Club**, where recipients participated in three weeks of instruction on job search and workplace behaviors and soft skills in a group setting, followed by five weeks of daily on-site supervised job search; or
 - **Fast Track Job Club**, where recipients participated in three-and-a-half days of group job search assistance, followed by seven weeks of independent job search with weekly on-site meetings.
- The evaluation measured “differential impacts”—differences in outcomes between recipients assigned to the two program in terms of types of job search assistance received, employment and earnings, and public benefit receipt.

² TANF has four broad purposes: (1) provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; (2) end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; (3) prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and (4) encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. In creating TANF, the Act repealed the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, which had previously provided cash assistance to needy families.

Research, and Evaluation (OPRE), within the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The JSA evaluation in Sacramento County provides rigorous evidence on the relative impacts of two approaches that vary in the amount and content of the job search assistance provided to cash assistance recipients. Designed and operated by the Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance (DHA), the two JSA programs target cash assistance recipients who are required to work, as defined by California’s TANF program.³ Both programs last eight weeks and during that period generally require 35 hours of participation in job search activities per week, but the programs differ in the content and frequency of the job search assistance provided.

- **Standard Job Club** requires:
 - *three weeks of group classroom instruction, consisting of one week of instruction on workplace behaviors and soft skills designed to help individuals succeed in the workplace, such as communication and time and stress management, and two weeks of instruction on job search skills such as resume development, filing applications, interview techniques, and other job readiness skills; and*
 - *up to five weeks of supervised job search, with **daily** one-on-one job search assistance from program staff.*
- **Fast Track Job Club** requires:
 - *three-and-a-half days of group classroom instruction primarily focused on job search skills; and*
 - *up to seven weeks of independent job search, with **weekly** one-on-one job search assistance from program staff.*

Both job search programs are provided once recipients are approved (or redetermined eligible as part of an annual review) for cash assistance, through California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), the state’s TANF program. After approval, cash assistance recipients attend an assessment, are determined work mandatory, and are referred to job search assistance. Recipients who do not comply with the participation requirements may have their cash assistance grant reduced.

Conducted between 2016 and 2018, the JSA evaluation in Sacramento County includes both an **implementation study** to examine program design and operation and an **impact study** using a random assignment research design. The impact study measures “differential impacts”—differences in outcomes between recipients assigned to each of the two program groups (Standard versus Fast Track) related to employment, earnings, public benefit receipt (i.e., cash assistance, food assistance to low-income individuals through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)), and other outcomes over a

³ Individuals can be exempted from the work requirements (and are not required to participate) if they are ill or incapacitated; caring for an infant under 12 months or an ill or incapacitated family member; pregnant and medically unable to work, and age 60 or older.

six month follow-up period.⁴ The impact study also examines differential impacts on the types and duration of job search assistance received by individuals assigned to the two groups.

The remainder of this chapter summarizes findings from the research literature on job search assistance, describes the broader JSA evaluation in greater detail, and provides a roadmap to the rest of the report.

1.1. The Research and Policy Context

The JSA evaluation is designed to build on and strengthen the research evidence on effective strategies to help people find employment. Employment is critical in providing economic stability, but for some—particularly low-income and low-skilled individuals—employment is both hard to get and keep.

Employment is typically preceded by some form of job search, which could continue after an individual has found an initial job. *Job search assistance* programs—short-term, relatively low-intensity and low-cost programs to help job seekers find jobs—are a component of many government-funded assistance programs, including TANF and Unemployment Insurance. JSA programs tend to focus on helping job seekers find a job more quickly than they would on their own, or on helping them find a better job (one with higher pay, benefits, job security, and stable work hours) than they would on their own, or both.

Job search assistance programs typically can affect a job seeker’s job search through two mechanisms: assistance and enforcement.

- The assistance mechanism helps job seekers find jobs, both directly and by teaching the skills and motivation required for job search. Activities aligned with the assistance mechanism include group training in job search skills (identifying job openings, preparing a resume, completing job applications, practicing interview skills), one-on-one help with a job search, and maintaining motivation in the face of rejection.
- The enforcement mechanism aims to encourage job seekers to search more intensively and to document their job search activities more carefully than they might on their own, because those who do not risk having their benefits reduced or eliminated. Enforcement can also induce recipients to drop out of the JSA program (and forgo cash assistance) without necessarily finding a job if they are unable or unmotivated to fulfill its requirements. Activities aligned with this mechanism include requiring individuals to maintain regular program attendance and to keep job search logs that staff monitor and use to verify job seeker contacts with employers.

Given these dual mechanisms, depending on how they are structured, government-funded JSA programs could have potentially different effects on job seekers’ behaviors. For example, because of the benefits paid by income support programs, job seekers receiving benefits might choose to search less intensively and to accept fewer job offers than they otherwise would in order to continue receiving the support. In contrast, JSA programs may encourage job seekers to search more intensively for work and/or to accept offers for jobs they might otherwise refuse in order to speed entry into employment and reduce the need for income support.

⁴ The study is not designed to measure the impact of either JSA program compared to no job search assistance. Doing that comparison would require an unserved control group as a third experimental arm. Thus, the research presented here can guide policy on how to provide JSA, but not on whether JSA is beneficial overall.

Despite the crucial role of job search for individuals finding and sustaining employment, limited research has been conducted on the effectiveness of different job search assistance program models and the various components or activities that comprise them. Moreover, much of the literature is now several decades old, and the labor market has changed since then, particularly for disadvantaged workers. That said, earlier research has shown several things (as reviewed in Klerman, 2012):

- Job search assistance is effective at speeding entry to work.
- The impacts from job search assistance are modest. Though some cash assistance recipients find jobs through JSA programs, others find jobs without the programs.
- JSA does not appear to increase the quality of jobs people obtain; jobs are usually not “better” in the sense described above, and they often do not last long.
- The main effect of the requirements to participate in job search activities or face a reduction or loss of income support benefits for failing to do so appears to be reductions in cash assistance payments; the effect on earnings is weaker.

Overall, as described in the next section, the JSA evaluation presents an important opportunity to build on this body of evidence on the effects on various job search assistance strategies on job seekers’ employment and public assistance outcomes and whether improved approaches can be identified. Specifically, this evaluation tests the impact of a structured and time-intensive job search assistance three-week class followed by daily one-on-one assistance (i.e., Standard Job Club) compared to a short three-and-a-half day job search assistance program followed by primarily self-directed job search (i.e., Fast Track Job Club).

1.2. The JSA Evaluation

The JSA evaluation is being conducted in five sites, each examining a different approach to providing job search assistance to help cash assistance applicants and/or recipients transition to work. As described below, the evaluation is designed to provide information both about the relative effectiveness of various job search assistance approaches (through impact studies) and about the operation of promising job search programs (through implementation studies).

1.2.1. Five Study Sites

In two sites—**Ramsey County, Minnesota**, and **Westchester County, New York**—the JSA evaluation is conducting implementation studies only, documenting operation of a promising approach and drawing lessons for program administrators.⁵ These implementation studies are based primarily on site visits by the study team. There are no differential impact studies for these two sites.

JSA Evaluation Sites

Implementation Studies Only

- Ramsey County, Minnesota
- Westchester County, New York

Impact and Implementation Studies

- New York City
- Genesee and Wayne Counties, Michigan
- Sacramento County, California

⁵ The Ramsey County Implementation Study Report is available at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/jsa_implementation_report_ramsey_county_final4_508.pdf Other JSA evaluation reports were not available at the time this report was published.

In three other sites, the JSA evaluation is conducting impact and implementation studies—**New York City; Genesee and Wayne Counties, Michigan; and Sacramento County, California** (this report). Similar to the evaluation in Sacramento County, the JSA evaluation in New York City examines the relative effectiveness of more- and less-rigorous participation requirements for cash assistance applicants. The JSA evaluation in Michigan examines the effects of a goal-oriented coaching approach in moving cash assistance recipients to work. Chapter 3 provides information on the evaluation design and data sources for the JSA evaluation in Sacramento County.

1.2.2. Random Assignment Study Design

A critical element of the JSA evaluation design is random assignment. The evaluation’s impact study randomly assigns eligible TANF cash assistance applicants and/or recipients to one of two job search assistance approaches available at that study site. The evaluation then measures each program’s subsequent outcomes in terms of employment and benefit receipt.

Random assignment strives to create two groups equivalent in terms of their observed and unobserved characteristics, thus ensuring that any systematic differences between the two programs’ outcomes reflect the relative effectiveness of the two programs’ services (these differences being their “differential impacts”). Random assignment also rules out differences in labor market and non-JSA policy environments as a cause for any differences, because both are identical for the two random assignment groups.

1.2.3. Outcomes of Interest

Across the impact sites, the key outcome for which the JSA evaluation estimates effects is *employment* during the study period. The study also estimates effects on the amount and content of *job search services received, earnings, public benefit receipt, job characteristics*, and other outcomes. The JSA impact study analyzes these outcomes for approximately six months after program entry using administrative data on employment, earnings, and public benefit receipt and a follow-up survey of study participants for data on other outcomes.

1.3. Structure of This Report

The rest of the report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 describes the program environment and context for the JSA evaluation in Sacramento County. This chapter also describes the service delivery structure of its Standard Job Club and Fast Track Job Club programs.
- Chapter 3 describes the study’s design and methodology, including the theory of change for the two programs and the evaluation’s research questions. The chapter then describes the overall research design, the analytic methods used to estimate impacts for the study, and the data sources.
- Chapter 4 describes the operation of and services provided by the Standard and Fast Track Job Club. The chapter includes a description of the administrative structure and staffing for both programs, discusses the design and key differences between the two programs, and concludes with findings from the implementation study on how the programs operated during the study period.

- Chapter 5 reports the differential impacts on service receipt and types of job search assistance received based on data from the participant follow-up survey. The chapter describes findings on the level and duration of job search assistance received, along with the frequency, mode, and content of job search assistance services received by individuals assigned to the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs. The chapter also describes some details of job search, including use of different online job search “tools,” number of contacts with employers, and factors that affected decisions to apply for jobs.
- Chapter 6 reports analyses of the relative effectiveness of the Standard Job Club and Fast Track Job Clubs terms of their impacts on employment and earnings, public benefit-related outcomes, and the characteristics of the jobs individuals took.
- Chapter 7 provides conclusions from the study.

The appendices provide additional information about the analytic approach (Appendix A), and expanded impacts for Chapter 5 and 6 (Appendices B and C, respectively).

2. Program Environment and Structure of JSA in Sacramento County

This chapter describes the program environment and context for the JSA evaluation in Sacramento County and the service delivery structure of its Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs. First, the chapter reviews the local demographic and economic conditions in Sacramento County during the evaluation's time frame. Second, the chapter provides an overview of the CalWORKs program, whose recipients are the focus of the JSA evaluation. Next, the chapter provides a description of the service delivery structure of the job search assistance and other employment-related services provided by CalWORKs. This includes a description of Sacramento County's Department of Human Assistance (DHA), which administers its cash assistance program. Finally, the chapter describes DHA's impetus for and objectives in participating in the JSA evaluation to test the relative effectiveness of the two approaches.

2.1. Demographic and Economic Environment

The demographic and economic environment in which the Standard Job Club and Fast Track Job Club operate is important for understanding their implementation and impact. Sacramento County is located in northern California, one of 58 counties in the state and the eighth largest. Sacramento County includes the city of Sacramento, the state capitol.

Sacramento County is home to a moderate number of low-income individuals and families. As shown on Exhibit 2-1, the population of Sacramento County during 2012-2016 averaged nearly 1.5 million people, with a median family income comparable to that of the United States overall (\$67,305 and \$67,871, respectively). The percentage of families living in poverty, 20 percent, was slightly higher than the U.S. average of 17 percent. The proportion of Sacramento County families receiving cash assistance (six percent) was double the U.S. rate (three percent), whereas the proportion receiving SNAP benefits was similar (12 percent and 13 percent, respectively). The proportion of the county's residents spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs was comparable to the national average (55 percent versus 51 percent), but homeownership was lower (55 percent in Sacramento County versus 64 percent nationally).

Sacramento County residents are demographically diverse. Compared to the U.S. population, relatively large proportions of residents in Sacramento County identified as "Other race, non-Latino" (31 percent versus 14 percent nationally) or as Latino (23 percent versus 17 percent). A smaller proportion of residents in Sacramento County identified as White, non-Latino (59 percent versus 73 percent nationally) or Black, non-Latino (10 percent versus 13 percent). In addition, a relatively large proportion of Sacramento County residents (21 percent) were born outside the United States.

In terms of educational attainment, Sacramento County's population was similar to national estimates (13 percent of adult residents in Sacramento County did not have a high school diploma).

Exhibit 2-1. Demographic and Economic Characteristics, Sacramento County

Characteristic	Sacramento County	United States
Total population	1,465,832	318,558,162
Median household income (\$)	67,305	67,871
All families with children below age 18 below poverty level (%)	20	17
Households receiving cash public assistance (%)	6	3
Households receiving food stamp/SNAP benefits in the last 12 months (%)	12	13
Gross rent as a percentage of monthly income (%)		
Less than 30 percent	45	49
30 percent or more	55	51
Occupied housing units (%)		
Owner-occupied housing units	55	64
Renter-occupied housing units	45	36
Race and ethnicity (%)^a		
White, non-Latino	59	73
Black or African American, non-Latino	10	13
Other race, non-Latino	31	14
Latino	23	17
Foreign-born residents (%)	21	13
Highest educational attainment (%)^b		
Less than high school diploma/equivalent	13	13
High school graduate	22	28
Some college, no degree	25	21
Associate's degree	10	8
Bachelor's degree	19	19
Graduate or professional degree	10	12
Unemployment rate (%)^c	5.4	4.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates.

Notes: ^a Race and ethnicity sums to more than 100 percent because respondents could identify as two or more races in the survey.

^b Among respondents age 25 and older.

^c The unemployment rate represents 2016 data, rather than a five-year estimate of the 2012-2016 period.

Sacramento County had a strong economy during the study period, although unemployment was higher than the national average. According to estimates from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, from 2015 to 2017 the Sacramento County unemployment rate decreased from 6.0 percent to 4.6 percent, whereas the national unemployment rate decreased from 5.3 percent to 4.4 percent.⁶

⁶ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/lau/tables.htm>

2.2. The CalWORKs Program in Sacramento County

Federal TANF rules require that states meet the federally defined work participation rate (WPR), measuring the extent to which cash assistance recipients engage in work-related activities as a condition of benefit receipt.⁷ The federal law also establishes criteria for when cash assistance recipients can be disregarded from the WPR; for example, because they are incapacitated or caring for an infant. To meet the state's WPR, cash assistance recipients may perform several work-related activities including job search and job readiness assistance.⁸ TANF also requires states to impose sanctions on recipients who do not satisfy their work activity requirement (e.g., by reducing their cash assistance). In addition, a 60-month lifetime limit applies to families in which an adult receives federally funded assistance. These TANF rules are made at the federal level, but states have wide discretion to set eligibility and program requirements, as well as to make benefit determinations.

California follows federal TANF guidelines, requiring families with a TANF work-eligible individual, as defined by criteria established by the TANF statute and regulations, to participate in a specified number of hours per week to avoid sanctions for noncompliance. To meet the overall work rate, a work-eligible individual must participate an average of 30 hours per week per month; 20 hours for a single parent relative with a child under age six.

In California, single- and two-parent families with children and pregnant women whose income and assets are low enough to meet program requirements qualify for monthly cash benefits through the CalWORKs program, overseen by the California Department of Social Services (DSS). While the state set a 48-month time limit on benefits for CalWORKs recipients (shorter than the federal maximum of 60 months), the state's monthly cash assistance benefit is about \$714 for a non-exempt single-parent family of three, which is above the national average.^{9,10} The CalWORKs income eligibility rules allow recipients to combine cash assistance and work. For example, a family of three can earn approximately \$1,430 per month and technically remain eligible for cash assistance, though their benefit amount may be small.¹¹

As TANF requires, California established sanctions for noncompliance with work requirements: in California the cash assistance grant is reduced by the amount received by the adult household member

⁷ The WPR calculates the share of the state's TANF families with a work-eligible individual participating in countable work activities for the required number of hours.

⁸ Specifically, to meet the work participation requirement, cash assistance recipients may perform several core activities: unsubsidized and subsidized employment, work experience, on-the-job training, job search and job readiness assistance (limited to 12 weeks in the preceding 12-month period), community service programs, vocational educational training (up to 12 months in a lifetime), and child care provided to an individual who is participating in a community service program.

⁹ In 2017, the mean maximum monthly TANF benefit for a family of three was \$454 nationally. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/welfare-rules-databook-state-tanf-policies-as-of-july-2017>

¹⁰ In addition to the cash assistance programs, California operates other public assistance programs, including home energy assistance, rental assistance, and emergency assistance, that TANF recipients may also receive.

¹¹ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/welfare-rules-databook-state-tanf-policies-as-of-july-2017>

who is not in compliance (the grant amount for children in the household is not affected by noncompliance). A first sanction can be lifted at any time once the sanctioned individual complies, but subsequent sanctions continue for a minimum length of time, even if the individual comes into compliance before the period ends. Specifically, a second sanction lasts a minimum of three months, and any subsequent sanctions last a minimum of six months. Compared to other states, California's sanction policy is more lenient than many; for example, in 28 states their most severe sanction for noncompliance is to close the individual's TANF case entirely for a period of time.¹²

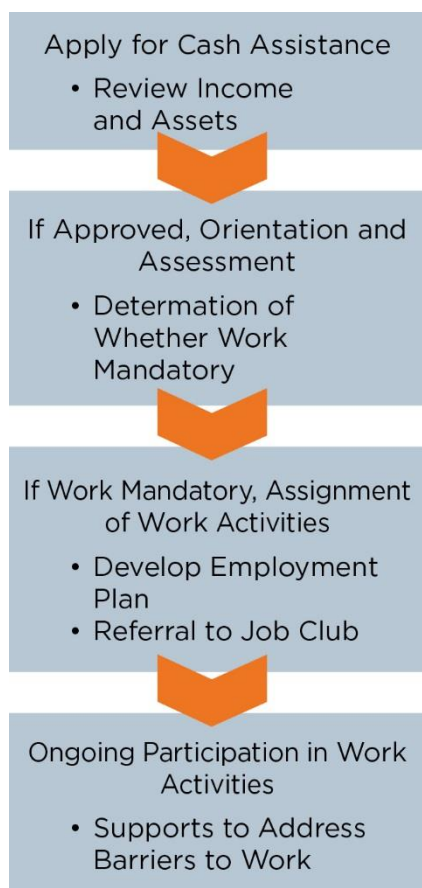
While CalWORKs is overseen by DSS, it is county administered. State law gives counties in California flexibility in operating its programs within the state's basic guidelines. CalWORKs in Sacramento County is administered by DHA. DHA staff approve applicants for CalWORKs cash assistance, determine cash assistance recipients' status as mandatory for work (nonexempt from federal work participation requirements) or not, and develop and provide employment services to CalWORKs recipients at its nine local CalWORKs offices (called site bureaus in Sacramento). In addition, DHA also administers Sacramento County's SNAP, child support, foster care support, education, housing, health insurance, and veterans' programs and services.

2.3. CalWORKs Service Delivery Structure

DHA provides CalWORKs recipients who are determined as mandatory for work with employment services through a program called Welfare-to-Work (WTW). As shown on Exhibit 2-2 and outlined below, individuals are determined eligible and assigned to the WTW program in a series of steps administered by DHA Human Services Specialists (HSS). Prior to the JSA evaluation, those steps were the following:

¹² <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/welfare-rules-databook-state-tanf-policies-as-of-july-2017>

Exhibit 2-2. Overview of Cash Assistance Enrollment Process Prior to the JSA Evaluation



1. **Apply for cash assistance through the CalWORKs program.** Sacramento County residents can apply online or visit one of seven DHA offices that conduct intake for CalWORKs. HSS staff conduct an initial review and assessment of the applicant’s income and assets, along with an in-person interview, to determine the individual’s eligibility for cash assistance.
2. **Determined mandatory for work.** Once approved for cash assistance, new CalWORKs recipients must attend an in-person orientation at the CalWORKs intake offices. This is followed by a one-on-one meeting with an HSS staff person, who administers the Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool (OCAT) assessment. This assessment, which reviews the recipient’s employment and education history and barriers to work, is used to determine whether the recipient is work mandatory and nonexempt from the federal work requirements.
3. **Development of employment plan and assignment to work activities.** Based on the results of the OCAT, the HSS staff person develops an employment plan with the recipient, identifies the recipient’s support service needs (particularly child care and transportation), determines an appropriate work activity for the recipient, and schedules the recipient for participation in that work activity. Most work mandatory cash recipients are required to participate in at least 30 hours of job search assistance activities per week, provided through a group class followed by supervised job search. This program is called Job Club/Job Search. On a case-by-case basis, HSS staff may determine that recipients who have immediate needs that should be addressed prior to searching for work or who have previously completed the Job Club can be referred to an activity other than Job Club.

4. **Ongoing participation in work activities.** HSS staff continue to manage each recipient’s case, as needed, during the recipient’s time in work-related activities. HSS staff are assigned to help the recipient address barriers to work, such as lack of transportation or adequate child care. HSS staff may also refer CalWORKs recipients to other services including vocational assessments, substance abuse support, mental health counseling, and medical services.

As discussed in Chapter 3 in detail, working with DHA staff, the JSA evaluation altered the steps in the above process by creating two program options—the Standard Job Club and the Fast Track Job Club—and randomly assigning eligible cash assistance recipients who were determined appropriate for referral to Job Club/Job Search to one of the options. Development of these two program options is described briefly in the next section.

2.4. Participation in the JSA Evaluation: Developing Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs

The Sacramento County DHA’s interest in participating in the JSA evaluation stemmed from an interest in improving its existing approach for preparing cash assistance recipients for work. At the time the JSA evaluation was launched, Sacramento County had already been considering alternatives to improve its existing job search assistance program, so the evaluation was an opportunity to test the relative effectiveness of the two variations.

The Job Club/Job Search program that preceded the JSA evaluation consisted of two phases that took place over a seven-week period:

- During the first phase, which typically lasted two weeks, CalWORKs recipients were required to attend daily group classes that provided instruction in basic job-seeking skills (e.g., resume writing, interviewing, and job search strategies), workplace behavior, and soft skills that help individuals succeed in the workplace.
- During the second phase, which typically lasted five weeks, recipients undertook a job search, with supervision and assistance provided by DHA staff.

Over time the county’s nine CalWORKs offices that provided the Job Club/Job Search program altered and adjusted this general structure, so the program varied in both duration and content across the offices. For example, in some offices, the group instruction lasted four weeks with elements added to the curriculum (particularly regarding soft skills), in others it lasted two weeks.

The JSA evaluation provided DHA with an opportunity to act on its interest in improving and standardizing its Job Club/Job Search program and to test the effects of different approaches to providing job search activities on recipients’ employment and cash assistance outcomes. In 2015, DHA developed two job search assistance programs for the JSA evaluation, both based on elements of its pre-existing programs:

- **Standard Job Club** was based largely on Sacramento County’s existing two-week job club workshop, with several new elements. First, DHA consolidated the best practices and lessons from across the county to enhance and standardize that part of the program. The new curriculum also drew on elements of the Job Information Seeking and Training (JIST)

curriculum.¹³ Second, DHA added a one-week workplace behaviors and soft skills (sometimes called life skills) class that focused on topics such as time and stress management, communication, and budgeting. This one-week segment was developed internally by DHA staff, based on a previously used stand-alone program in the county. Third, at the conclusion of the three weeks of group instruction, individuals were required to come to a CalWORKs office daily for a period of five weeks (or until they secured employment) to conduct their job search and meet with job search assistance staff.

- **Fast Track Job Club**, in contrast, was designed to be a condensed curriculum focused on developing specific job search skills. DHA took four core components from its existing Job Club workshop (resume building, completing job applications, interviewing skills, and job search strategies) and developed a three-and-a-half day group class. At the conclusion of this class, individuals were required to begin conducting job search activities, but they could do so from home, in a CalWORKs office, or at other locations during times that worked for their schedule. To document these activities, individuals assigned to Fast Track would be required to maintain job search logs and meet with job search assistance staff at a CalWORKs office weekly for seven weeks (or until they secured employment).

For the evaluation, DHA conducted two days of training in December 2015 and January 2016 for staff on either the Standard Job Club or the Fast Track Job Club. It launched both programs in February 2016 (each staff person worked on only one program, not both) in eight CalWORKs offices.¹⁴ The Standard Job Club operated in six offices during the study period; the Fast Track Job Club operated in two offices. Because the group workshop in the Standard Job Club was longer than in the Fast Track (three weeks versus three-and-a-half days), the Fast Track Job Club was offered more frequently; consequently, fewer Fast Track locations and staff were needed.

As described in the next chapter, at the meeting with HSS staff when CalWORKs recipients receive their assignments to work activities, staff randomly assigned the recipients determined to be work mandatory to either the Standard or the Fast Track Job Club. The location of the assigned office was typically the one that was most convenient to the recipient.

¹³ The JIST curriculum is documented in Farr (2011); also see <http://jist.com/>

¹⁴ One office, in Galt, was not included in the study because it operated in a remote area that served a TANF caseload too small to warrant participation in the study.

3. JSA Strategies Evaluation Design and Data Sources

The goals of the JSA evaluation in Sacramento County are to describe the implementation and operation of the Standard Job Club and Fast Track Job Club programs, compare the use of job search assistance and related services by individuals assigned to the two programs, and determine whether the Standard Job Club or Fast Track Job Club yields more favorable labor market and public assistance outcomes. These goals require two distinct approaches: an implementation study (to document program operations) and an experimental impact study (to determine differences in service receipt and employment and public assistance outcomes).

This chapter describes the evaluation’s methods. The first section of the chapter provides the theory of change that links the key aspects of the Standard Job Club and Fast Track Job Club program design and implementation to their potential effects on individual outcomes (Section 3.1). This theory of change motivates the research questions that the evaluation seeks to answer (Section 3.2). The chapter then describes the overall research design and analysis plan—including random assignment procedures and characteristics of the research sample, as well as a description of analytic methods used to estimate impacts for the study and used in the implementation study (Section 3.3) and concludes with the data sources used to conduct the analyses (Section 3.4).

3.1. Theory of Change

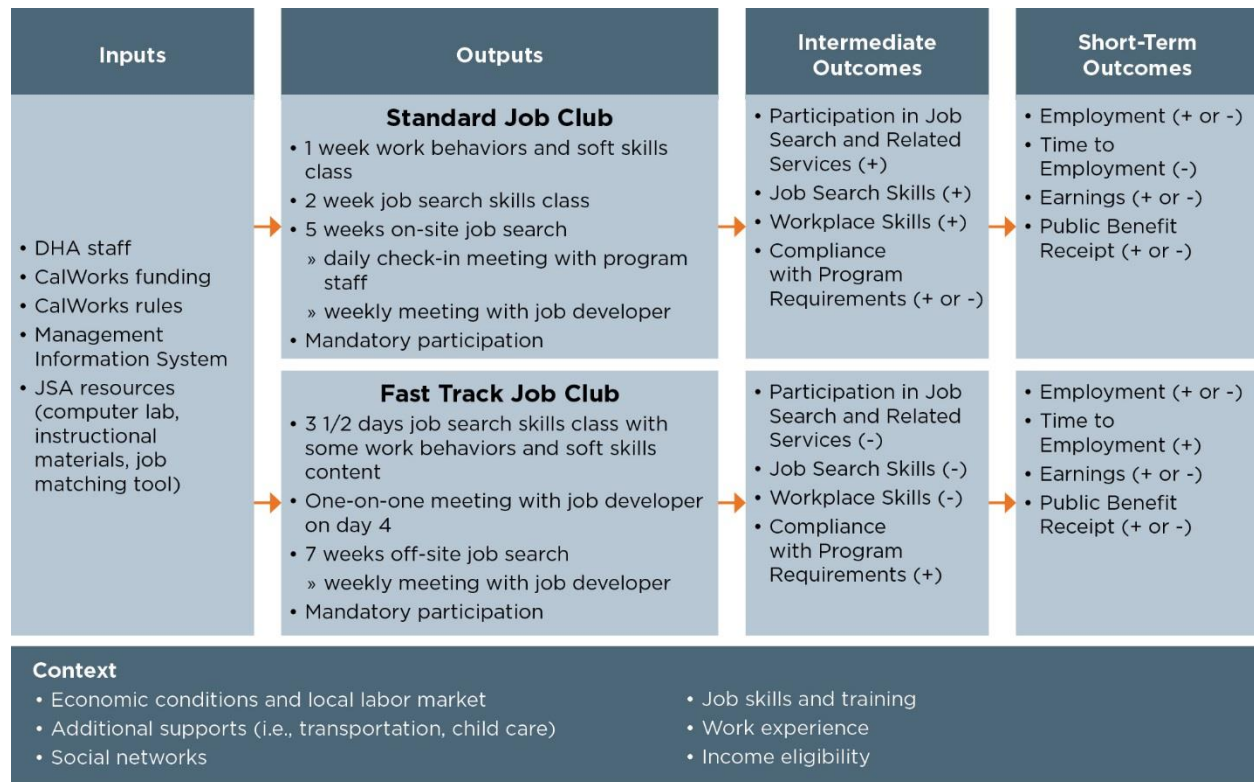
The Standard and the Fast Track Job Clubs are designed to assist CalWORKs recipients who are work mandatory find employment and reduce their need for income support from TANF and/or other public assistance programs. The primary strategy for achieving this aim is the same for both Job Clubs: providing job search assistance to recipients to help them secure and maintain employment. Though both interventions occur over an eight-week period, they differ in terms of (1) the duration of group classroom instruction; (2) the frequency of one-on-one assistance; and (3) the content of the instruction.

- The **Standard Job Club** requires
 - three weeks of classroom instruction (five days per week, eight hours per day), consisting of one week of training in workplace behaviors and soft skills including stress management, communication, and budgeting and
 - two weeks of job search assistance instruction focused on resume development, job applications, interview techniques, and other job-related topics. Following this class, recipients search for employment, mostly at the CalWORKs office, checking in with program office staff daily for five weeks or until they find employment.
- In contrast, those assigned to the **Fast Track Job Club** attend
 - three-and-a-half days (eight hours per full day) of group instruction with a primary focus on developing job search skills followed by
 - a mostly off-site job search for seven weeks, during which time they are required to meet with program staff weekly at the CalWORKs office, or until they find employment.

Recipients referred to either program who do not comply with its participation requirements can be sanctioned, resulting in a partial loss of their cash assistance benefit.

As shown on **Error! Reference source not found.**, the Standard and the Fast-Track Job Clubs have a different *theory of change* regarding the mechanisms by which they will—if successful—produce their outcomes. Though the programs have similar inputs and operate in the same context, there are multiple potential mechanisms by which the duration, frequency, and content of the instruction supports could affect outcomes. On **Error! Reference source not found.**, the plus (+) and minus (-) signs indicate whether we would expect to see more or less favorable outcomes, respectively, compared to the other program. At the outset of the evaluation the DHA staff who designed the two programs and the study team did not have pre-established expectations about which program would produce better outcomes.

Exhibit 3-1. Theory of Change for the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs



Notes: Plus (+) and minus (-) signs indicate whether we would expect to see more or less favorable outcomes, in comparison to the other program

Mechanisms by which the Standard Job Club Might Improve Outcomes Compared to the Fast Track Job Club

Like other JSA programs, the Standard and the Fast-Track Job Clubs both include assistance and enforcement components (see Chapter 1). Assistance includes a range of group and one-on-one job search instruction and services designed to help individuals prepare for work and then find and keep jobs. As shown in the top row of Exhibit 3-1, the greater amount of instruction on job search and workplace skills provided to recipients through the Standard Job Club compared to the Fast Track Job Club is expected to:

- increase the receipt of job search assistance services (group and one-on-one) from program staff because the higher level of participation is mandatory; and through participation in that assistance;
- increase recipients' job search skills (e.g., knowing how to look for, apply, and obtain a job); workplace behaviors and soft skills; self-awareness and understanding of their career interests and competencies; and knowledge of available jobs in the local labor market (including through more contacts with employers about specific job opportunities).

In turn, recipients in the Standard Job Club could experience short-term outcomes superior or at least comparable to those of the Fast Track Job Club in terms of:

- decreasing the time it takes to find a job and/or to find a better job because the job search is structured;
- increasing their point-in-time employment rate and/or earnings through finding a better job with higher pay; which
- decreases their use of public assistance.

Due to the time that cash assistance recipients are required to spend in the CalWORKs office, the Standard Job Club also imposes a more demanding participation requirement than does the Fast Track Job Club. It is possible that the additional time and requirements of the Standard Job Club might induce recipients to participate only sporadically or to drop out of the program without finding a job, and be sanctioned and have their cash assistance reduced due to noncompliance. Such an outcome would decrease public benefit receipt without necessarily increasing employment and earnings.

Mechanisms by which the Fast Track Job Club Might Improve Outcomes—or Produce Similar Outcomes—Compared to the Standard Job Club

Because this study targets cash assistance recipients who are considered work mandatory, at least some of them may have been employed previously or otherwise already have the skills and knowledge to be effective at finding employment. Such recipients assigned to the Fast Track Job Club, with its relatively limited staff assistance, may be as effective or possibly more effective at finding employment compared to those assigned to the more structured and time-intensive services provided by the Standard Job Club. Moreover, such recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club would not necessarily benefit from the more intensive assistance and services it provides.

As shown in the second row of **Error! Reference source not found.**, compared to the Standard Job Club, the Fast Track Job Club is expected to:

- decrease the receipt of job search and related assistance (group and one-on-one) from program staff; and thus
- result in no increase in recipients' job search and workplace skills.

In turn, recipients in the Fast Track Job Club could experience short-term outcomes superior or at least similar to outcomes of the Standard Job Club in terms of:

- the time it takes to find a job and/or to find a better job;
- employment rate and and/or earnings through finding a better job with higher pay; and

- receipt of public assistance.

If so, the Fast Track Job Club could be seen as preferable to the Standard Job Club, given the former's presumably lower burden on CalWORKs recipients and its lower staff costs (though costs are not examined in this study).

As discussed, the more rigorous Standard Job Club requirements might deter or make it more difficult for recipients to participate. If compliance rates are higher for those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club than for those assigned to the Standard Job Club, then those in Fast Track could receive an increased level of job search assistance services on average, through weekly meetings with program staff and use of other job search assistance resources at DHA. That outcome could also lead to superior employment outcomes for the Fast Track Job Club compared to the Standard Job Club, but with an ambiguous effect on public assistance receipt. Specifically, public assistance receipt could decrease for those assigned to the Fast Track compared to the Standard Job Club, due to increased earnings. Alternatively, public assistance receipt also could decrease for those assigned to the Standard Job Club compared to the Fast Track Job Club due to sanction for noncompliance or from forgoing assistance to avoid the participation requirement.

In sum, multiple factors are hypothesized to affect the extent to which the Standard Job Club or the Fast Track Job Club produces better outcomes. In the JSA evaluation, we seek to understand the differences in outcomes between the programs and in the mechanisms that yield these outcomes. These theories of change drive the research questions examined in this report and discussed in the next section.

3.2. Research Questions

As discussed, the JSA evaluation in Sacramento County includes both an implementation study of the two JSA service approaches and operations and an impact study of the relative effectiveness of the two programs. More specifically, the evaluation seeks to answer the following questions.

3.2.1. Implementation Research Questions for the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs

- What is the institutional and community context for delivering job search assistance to cash assistance recipients?
- What elements were intended to be part of the program model?
- What intervention was actually implemented? Did it differ from plans or expectations and in what ways?

3.2.2. Impact Research Questions for the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs

- Does the receipt of job search assistance differ between the Standard Job Club and Fast Track Job Club groups? Specifically, are there differences in the level and duration of job search assistance, types of services received, and use of job search tools?
- Are there differences in the employment, earnings, and time to employment between the Standard Job Club and Fast Track Job Club groups?
- Are there differences in public benefit receipt between the two groups, specifically cash assistance through the TANF program and payments from SNAP?

- Are there differences between the Standard Job Club and Fast Track Job Club groups for other outcomes such as job quality (e.g., hourly wage, work-related benefits, regularity of hours) and motivation to search for a job and factors that affect ability to work?

Because the programs are both relatively short and their objective is moving cash assistance recipients to employment, all of the comparative impact questions are considered for a follow-up period of approximately six months.

3.3. JSA Evaluation Design and Analysis

The JSA evaluation's impact study uses a random assignment research design to estimate the differential impact between the two job search assistance programs on CalWORKs recipients' employment and other outcomes. The advantage of such a design is that when properly implemented, it ensures that differences in outcomes between the two groups can be reliably interpreted as resulting from programmatic differences, and not from differences in characteristics or external circumstances of the group members.

The study's random assignment methodology estimates the impact of the Standard Job Club as a whole compared to the Fast Track Job Club as a whole, rather than the impact of either program's specific components. The study compares the outcomes for all those assigned to the Standard Job Club to all those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club, regardless of individual group members' use of particular job search assistance services or sanction status due to noncompliance.

As discussed in the remainder of this section, an effective evaluation hinges on four factors: (1) rigorous sample intake and random assignment, (2) matched random assignment groups, (3) a strong impact analysis plan, and (4) an integrated implementation analysis plan.

3.3.1. CalWORKs Intake Process and Random Assignment

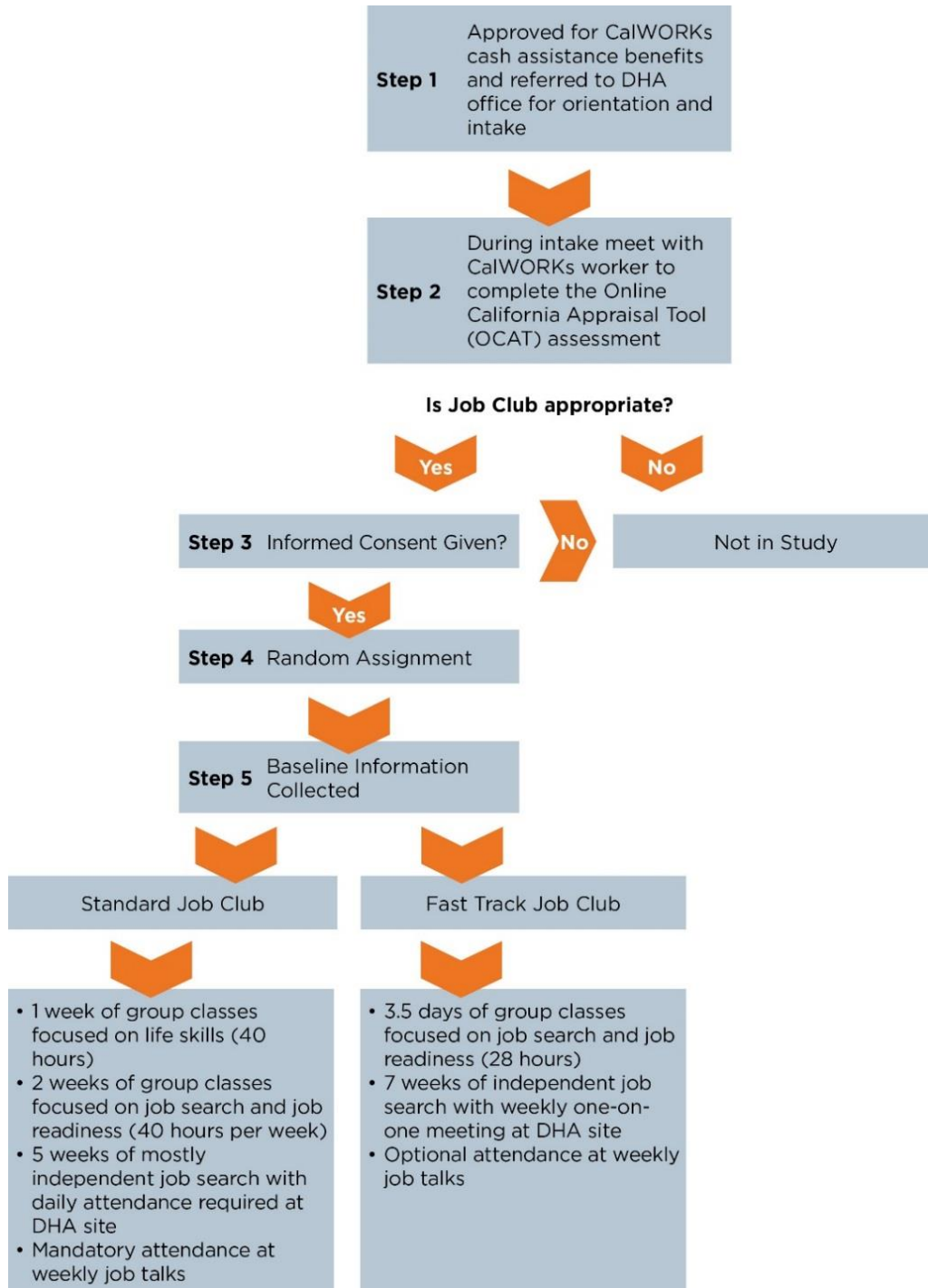
The study team worked closely with DHA and CalWORKs intake and eligibility staff from six intake offices to design and implement program intake and random assignment procedures.¹⁵ Once a single- or two-parent case was approved for CalWORKs cash assistance benefits and the head of household was determined to be mandatory for work and appropriate for job search assistance activities, the recipient became a candidate for the JSA evaluation. Exhibit 3-2 depicts the steps in the study's intake and random assignment process, as detailed below.

- **Approval for cash assistance and referral to employment services.** As discussed in Chapter 2, CalWORKs applicants approved for cash assistance were required to enroll in CalWORKs employment services at the DHA intake office, including attending an orientation and completing the Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool (OCAT) assessment.
- **Determined mandatory for work and appropriate for job search assistance services.** After the orientation, HSS staff met individually with each CalWORKs recipient to administer the OCAT, documented employment and education history and barriers to work, and developed an employment plan. During this process, the HSS worker identified CalWORKs recipients who were

¹⁵ Overall, a total of 10 offices were involved in the study (either conducting random assignment providing a Job Club program or both): eight provided one of the Job Club programs, six conducted intake and random assignment, and four did both.

determined mandatory for work. Those who were mandatory for work, had not previously completed DHA’s Job Club, and were deemed appropriate for job search assistance services were identified as potential study participants. The vast majority of recipients who were determined mandatory for work were required to participate in job search assistance services, although HSS staff had discretion to allow those with immediate personal or family needs to address those prior to being assigned to job search assistance activities.

Exhibit 3-2. Random Assignment Process for the JSA Evaluation in Sacramento County



- Informed consent, Baseline Information Form (BIF), and random assignment.** For those recipients considered work mandatory and appropriate for job search assistance services, the HSS staff member explained the JSA evaluation, invited them to participate and to give their consent to be studied, and provided an informed consent form to read and sign. Recipients who consented received the study's BIF and filled it out themselves. The BIF collected demographic and contact information. Then HSS staff used an online management information system developed by the study team to randomly assign study participants to either the Standard or the Fast Track Job Club.¹⁶ The random assignment ratio was 1:1, so that each group included about half of the recipients who consented to be part of the study.
- Service receipt based on assignment to the Standard Job Club or Fast Track Job Club.** HSS staff informed recipients of which Job Club they were required to attend, providing the date and office where the next available Job Club would begin, which was typically one to three weeks in the future at an office location most convenient to the recipient. In the interim, recipients were expected to work with their HSS staff person to address immediate support service needs (such as child care and transportation) and, as time allowed, begin an informal job search process. The HSS staff person continued to manage the recipient's cash assistance case, but was not involved in the delivery of Job Club services.

Between April 21, 2016, and July 11, 2017, HSS staff randomly assigned 493 CalWORKs recipients into the JSA evaluation in Sacramento County: 247 to the Standard Job Club and 246 to the Fast Track Job Club.

3.3.2. Characteristics of the Study Sample

Exhibits 3.3 through 3.5 list demographic characteristics and prior education, employment, and cash assistance for the entire sample and for each program group separately. When properly implemented, random assignment ensures that sample groups will be very similar, differing only by chance. Therefore, there should be only small differences between the groups. The far right column of each table indicates whether these differences reached statistical significance, or were more likely due to chance. For characteristics with multiple categories (e.g., marital status), the study team conducted chi-square tests to determine whether the characteristic differs between the Standard and Fast Track groups; this joint test considers all the categories (e.g., married, widowed, divorced, never married) simultaneously rather than testing for differences for each category separately.

As expected, the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs groups are very similar, with only two statistically significant differences. On average, individuals assigned to the Standard Job Club had fewer children (1.9) than those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club (2.1). Although employment was rare at the time of application, individuals assigned to the Fast Track Job Club reported they were more likely to be employed (five percent) than those assigned to the Standard Job Club (one percent). In all other respects, the two groups align. As described below and in Appendix A, we control for these and other characteristics when estimating impacts. Because the two groups are mostly similar, below we discuss the characteristics of the entire ("pooled") sample.

¹⁶ Recipients who did not consent to participate in the evaluation were not included in the study sample, but were assigned to the Job Club that the HSS staff person deemed most appropriate for that individual.

As shown on Exhibit 3-3, approximately 70 percent of the study sample were female (reflecting that the study included both one- and two-parent families). The sample was racially diverse: approximately one-third reported being Black, another one-third reported being White, and the remaining reported being either Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin (15 percent) or of Other Race (15 percent). Sample members were approximately 30 years old, on average.

Exhibit 3-3. Demographic and Household Characteristics of Study Sample at Baseline

Characteristic	Entire Sample	Standard Job Club	Fast Track	Significance
Gender (%)				
Female	69.5	66.8	72.0	
Male	30.5	33.2	28.0	
Race (%)^a				
Black or African American	35.4	33.2	37.8	
Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino Origin	15.4	14.1	16.8	
White	33.9	37.2	30.6	
Other (American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian,	15.2	15.6	14.8	
Average age	30.6	30.1	31.2	
Marital status (%)^a				
Married	19.9	19.3	20.4	
Widowed	0.2	0.4	0.0	
Divorced	10.8	10.3	11.3	
Never Married	59.4	61.4	57.4	
Adults in household^a				
One adult	41.9	38.5	45.2	
Two adults	40.0	42.1	38.0	
Three or more adults	18.1	19.5	16.8	
Children in household (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Number of children in household	2.0	1.9	2.1	*
Average age of youngest child	4.8	4.7	4.8	

Source: Baseline Information Form.

Sample: Sample includes 493 (246 Standard; 247 Fast Track) respondents. Sample sizes vary by characteristic due to item non-response.

Notes: ^a Indicates equivalence is tested jointly using a chi-square test; results appear only for joint test.

Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Statistical significance levels for joint tests are indicated with † signs, as follows: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

Approximately 40 percent of the sample reported that there was one adult in the household.¹⁷ Most study participants (60 percent) had never married, though one in five (20 percent) were married at the time of enrollment. On average, households had two children, and about two-thirds had a child under age six (one-third had a child under age three).

As shown on Exhibit 3-4, the study sample had low education levels. About one-quarter had some high school but did not finish, and about one-third had a high school diploma (24 percent) or GED (nine percent) but no additional education; fewer than one-third (about 30 percent) had attended some college. Approximately one-quarter (24 percent) had received a postsecondary vocational or technical certificate. The majority (82 percent) of sample group members had received mostly B’s (44 percent) or C’s (38 percent) in high school.

Exhibit 3-4. Educational Background of Study Sample at Baseline

Characteristic	Entire Sample	Standard Job Club	Fast Track Job	Significance
Attainment (%)^a				
Some high school	24.2	25.7	22.8	
GED or alternative credential	8.9	9.5	8.3	
High school diploma	25.3	26.6	24.1	
Some college credit, but less than one year	14.7	14.9	14.5	
One or more years of college credit, but no degree	14.7	10.4	18.9	
Associate's degree	6.7	6.3	7.0	
Bachelor's degree or higher	5.6	6.8	4.4	
Received postsecondary vocational or technical certificate	23.6	25.7	21.7	
High School Grades (%)^a				
Mostly received A's	13.6	13.3	13.8	
Usually received B's	43.9	42.9	45.0	
Usually received C's	37.6	37.6	37.6	
Usually received D's	3.3	4.8	1.8	
Usually received F's	1.6	1.4	1.8	

Source: Baseline Information Form.

Sample: Sample includes 493 (246 Standard; 247 Fast Track) respondents. Sample sizes vary by characteristic due to item non-response.

Notes: ^a Indicates equivalence is tested jointly using a chi-square test; results appear only for joint test.

Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Statistical significance levels for joint tests are indicated with † signs, as follows: ††† = 1 percent; †† = 5 percent; † = 10 percent.

As shown on Exhibit 3-5, employment rates and earnings were low for the study sample. This is not surprising given they were receiving cash assistance. Fewer than five percent reported they were working at the time they enrolled in the study, although 40 percent had worked in the quarter prior to random assignment based on administrative data and two-thirds had worked in the year prior.

¹⁷ The study did not collect whether the sample members received assistance from CalWORKs as a one- or two-parent case. For this item, recipients report the number of adults in the household, which may be different than the number of adults on the cash assistance case. For example, the household could include a grandparent or other adult.

Approximately 70 percent of the sample reported that they had stable employment (full-time employment with a single employer for six months) at some point prior to random assignment.

Exhibit 3-5. Employment, Earnings, and Public Benefit Receipt of Study Sample at Baseline

Characteristic	Entire Sample	Standard Job Club	Fast Track	Significance
Self-Reported Employment and Earnings				
Working at time of application (%)	3.2	1.4	4.9	**
Not working at application, worked in past 12 months (%)	46.9	46.8	47.1	
Not working at application, no work in past 12 months (%)	49.9	51.9	48.0	
Self-Reported Stability of Employment				
Ever worked full time for 6 months for one employer (%)	69.4	69.7	69.1	
Employment and Earnings (NDNH)				
Employment in quarter prior to random assignment (%)	40.7	42.9	38.5	
Employment in four quarters prior to random assignment (%)	64.5	62.5	66.5	
Earnings in quarter prior to randomization (\$)	1,383	1,447	1,319	
Earnings in four quarters prior to random assignment (\$)	6,812	6,167	7,460	
Public Benefit Receipt Prior to Random Assignment (DHA Administrative Data)				
Ever received TANF prior to application (%)	97.1	97.1	97.1	
Received TANF in 3 months prior to random assignment (%)	94.6	94.1	95.0	
Received TANF in 4 to 12 months prior to random assignment (%)	69.7	73.6	65.8	*
Total TANF benefits in 3 months prior to random assignment (\$)	1,252	1,248	1,255	
Total TANF benefits in 4 to 12 months prior to random assignment	2,558	2,698	2,418	
Ever received SNAP prior to application (%)	92.3	93.7	90.8	
Received SNAP in 3 months prior to random assignment (%)	90.6	91.6	89.6	
Received SNAP in 4 to 12 months prior to random assignment (%)	76.8	79.9	73.8	
Total SNAP benefits in 3 months prior to random assignment (\$)	1,095	1,078	1,111	
Total SNAP benefits in 4 to 12 months prior to random assignment	2,454	2,547	2,361	

Source: Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance Administrative Records., National Directory of New Hires, Baseline Information Form

Sample: Sample includes 493 (246 Standard; 247 Fast Track) respondents. Sample sizes vary by characteristic due to item non-response.

Notes: Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Measures of average total benefits include \$0 for individuals who did not receive benefits.

Earnings in the quarter prior to study enrollment averaged \$1,383 which includes those who had no earnings because they did not work in the quarter. Earnings over the four quarters prior to study enrollment averaged \$6,182, or \$10,172 among those who worked (not shown in the table) during that time period. These earnings levels put the typical recipient below the federal poverty level, which in 2016 was \$16,020 for a two-person household and increases based on family size.

Consistent with recipients' limited earnings, historical reliance on government income support was high. Taking out the current spell of public assistance receipt (the period immediately before random assignment when benefits were approved but before a recipient was randomly assigned), about 70 percent reported receiving cash assistance through CalWORKs in the four to 12 months prior to random assignment, and more than three quarters received SNAP benefits. In total, in the year prior to random assignment, the average sample member received \$3,810 in cash assistance and \$3,549 in SNAP benefits (not shown in the table, these averages include \$0 for those with no benefit receipt).

3.3.3. Analysis Plan for the Impact Study

The impact evaluation for JSA addresses two key challenges when estimating impacts for Sacramento County. First, the sample size for the evaluation is lower than was anticipated when the study was designed. This is due to a smaller number of CalWORKs recipients being determined work mandatory and consenting to the study than expected—a total of 493 CalWORKs recipients were randomly assigned. This sample size limits the study's ability to detect all but large impacts.

Second, we seek to understand the differential effects of the Standard and the Fast Track Job Clubs on many different outcomes, which tends to increase the chance that we detect impacts where none exist. If the evaluation were to test for impacts on 20 outcomes, for example, we would expect to find one or two impacts (five percent) to be statistically significant at conventional levels purely by chance, even if there were no effect on any outcome in reality. This is known as the problem of multiple comparisons. The standard way of addressing the problem is to stipulate in advance a very small number of confirmatory hypothesis tests by which to judge an intervention's success. Significant findings for these confirmatory tests signal one of the interventions as superior to the other. All the remaining hypothesis test results are considered exploratory of additional possible impacts, but cannot be as conclusive as the confirmatory test(s) regarding the overall success of one of the interventions over the other.

Confirmatory Test

For the JSA evaluation, the research team confines confirmatory analysis to a single outcome and corresponding impact test. Because there is only one confirmatory outcome, no correction for multiple comparisons is required for this outcome (as would be required if we were testing two or more confirmatory outcomes). This strategy of selecting one confirmatory outcome maximizes the chance of deriving a conclusive result on the superiority of one of the job search assistance approaches over the other.^{18,19}

¹⁸ Schochet (2008) provides an explanation of the importance of a multiple comparison adjustment when two or more confirmatory tests are run and the reduction that creates in the ability of an analysis to prove that *any* confirmatory effect has occurred.

¹⁹ No multiple comparison adjustments are needed across JSA evaluation sites, as the New York City, Sacramento, and Michigan randomized tests do not constitute multiple attempts to prove that somewhere among the three settings that any one JSA approach generates more favorable outcomes than another for JSA services for cash assistance applicants/recipients. Instead, the three sites encompass different JSA programs and services in each of their six random assignment arms (two in each site); they differ as well in their service populations (Family Assistance and childless Safety Net applicants in New York City, TANF recipients in Sacramento, and TANF applicants and recipients in Michigan).

The JSA evaluation’s impact analysis uses *employment in the second quarter after random assignment* as the confirmatory outcome to be tested. As discussed in Chapter 1, prior research indicates that job search assistance activities are likely to have a moderate impact and are more likely to affect employment rates than they are outcomes such as earnings or public benefit receipt. Using a measure of employment two quarters after random assignment gives each JSA program an adequate amount of time to achieve impacts—especially because the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs are both designed to move individuals to work quickly (e.g., relative to other strategies such as occupational training).

Exploratory Tests

In addition to this confirmatory outcome, the analysis also estimates impacts for many other outcomes, including type and level of job search assistance received, time to employment, earnings, public benefit receipt, and job characteristics. The outcome measures are described in detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

Although we follow the standard approach and report exploratory findings without multiple comparisons corrections, there are a large number of exploratory hypotheses—including impacts on job search assistance services, earnings, and public benefits. This large number of hypotheses introduces the multiple comparisons problem again; that is, that simply by chance some of the impacts would appear to be statistically significant. In part, we address the problem by focusing on patterns of findings across related outcomes, rather than reporting on every significant finding.

We use several different approaches to identifying and describing patterns of impacts on related outcomes. For outcomes measured in dollars (e.g., earnings), we use aggregate measures (e.g., cumulative earnings over the follow-up period) to draw conclusions about differential impacts of the two programs. For related outcomes that cannot be easily combined (e.g., measures of assistance with various job search skills), we take two approaches simultaneously: we construct simple scales (e.g., a count of the number of job search skills) and we conduct a statistical test across all related outcomes. Where possible, we use a scale to characterize findings. The statistical test is an *f*-test of the null hypothesis that all impacts are zero. Rejecting this hypothesis implies that there is a significant difference between the two groups on one or more of the outcomes tested. Because the *f*-test combines information across multiple outcomes, it is more powerful than any of the individual tests it combines. In some cases, none of the individual tests is significant but the overall test is significant. When that happens, we conclude that there is an impact on one or more of the outcomes, but we are not able to identify which outcome it is.

Estimation Method

The JSA evaluation estimates impact as the difference in average outcomes between sample members randomly assigned into the two different JSA programs (for Sacramento County, Standard versus Fast Track Job Club). The random assignment research design implies that a simple difference in mean outcomes provides an unbiased estimate of the differential impact; however, to improve precision the evaluation estimates impacts using a regression model that adjusts for differences in baseline characteristics between the two groups.

We do this because adjustment increases the statistical precision of impact estimates—and thus heightens the chance of correctly detecting non-zero differential impacts as statistically significant. The adjustment does this by eliminating chance differences in baseline characteristics between the two

samples. By using regression adjustment, the impact study will be able to detect smaller true impacts with a given probability. Regression adjustment also helps to reduce bias due to follow-up survey nonresponse for outcome measures taken from that source (see Appendix A).

We use the following equation to estimate the differential impact of the Standard Job Club program compared to the Fast Track Job Club program:

$$y_i = \alpha + \delta G_i + Z_i' \gamma + X_i' \beta + \varepsilon_i$$

where

y_i is the outcome of interest (e.g., employment, earnings, public benefit receipt);

α is the intercept, which can be interpreted as the regression-adjusted Fast Track Job Club mean;

δ is the incremental effect of Standard Job Club relative to Fast Track Job Club assignment on the outcome;

G_i is the random assignment group indicator (1 for those individuals assigned to the Standard group; 0 for the individuals assigned to the Fast Track group);

Z_i is a vector of pre-intervention measures of key outcomes;²⁰

γ is a vector of coefficients capturing the relationship between pre-intervention measures of key outcomes and the (post-intervention) outcome;

X_i is a vector of baseline characteristics centered around means;²¹

β is a vector of coefficients capturing the relationship between baseline characteristics and the outcome;

ε_i is the residual error term; and

i is a subscript indexing individuals.

We use ordinary least squares to estimate these parameters, testing whether the δ coefficient is significantly different from zero to determine whether outcomes differ between the two JSA models.²²

Where possible, we prioritize outcome measures from administrative data over outcome measures from survey data. We do so because survey data have substantial survey nonresponse, whereas administrative data do not. To some extent, we can address nonresponse by weighting, but there are

²⁰ All analyses of public benefits outcomes include pre-intervention measures of the receipt of CalWORKs and SNAP, and the value of CalWORKs and SNAP benefits. Pre-intervention measures of employment and earnings are included in analyses of employment and earnings outcomes. See Appendix A for additional details.

²¹ See Appendix A for a complete list of the baseline measures included in the model.

²² For binary outcome measures, such as employment in a given quarter (Y/N), this model is a linear probability model. A key advantage of the linear probability model is that impact estimates are interpretable. For employment, the impact estimate is the expected difference in the employment rate between the two groups.

challenges to that, as well. A more detailed description of various data sources is included in Section 3.4, and technical approaches to missing data and survey nonresponse are discussed in Appendix A.

3.3.4. Analysis Plan for the Implementation Study

The implementation study documents the operation of the Standard and the Fast Track Job Clubs across eight DHA site bureaus providing JSA in Sacramento County. Its three objectives are to provide (1) context for the interpretation of the impact findings, (2) an assessment of whether the programs were operated as planned, and (3) an understanding of conditions necessary for successful future replication of the programs.

As this is a differential impact study comparing the outcomes of two different programs, in order to interpret the employment and public assistance outcomes of the two programs, the implementation study measures key aspects of program design and implementation of both programs for the same key dimensions. Driven by the theory of change (**Error! Reference source not found.**), the implementation study considers the frequency of meetings with program staff, use of group and one-on-one job search assistance, and topics covered in job search assistance instruction.

The implementation study uses site visits, interviews with program staff, and a web-based staff survey. To document and compare the operation of the two programs, the study relies both on qualitative information from the staff interviews and on quantitative analyses from the staff survey on these key dimensions.

3.4. Data Sources

The JSA evaluation's implementation and impact studies use a variety of data sources.

Site Visits

For the implementation study, the study team conducted site visits to four DHA offices in Sacramento County across a four-day period in February 2017, about 10 months after random assignment began in April 2016. The goal of the visits was to document the components of Standard Job Club and Fast Track Job Club implementation across the county. During the visits, two members of the study team observed portions of both Job Clubs and conducted group interviews with facilitators, supervisors, job developers, and social workers from both programs. Approximately half of all Job Club staff across the county were included in the interviews. The study team also interviewed the DHA administrators who were involved in designing and overseeing the Standard and Fast Track programs. The interviews were structured to cover information on local program context (including local caseload demographics and trends, and economic environment), organizational background and structure, program management and staffing, intake procedures, job search services and activities, job development strategies, and implementation challenges and lessons.

Job Search Assistance Staff Survey

The study team conducted an online survey of staff from the Sacramento County CalWORKs offices participating in the JSA evaluation. The surveyed staff included HSSs who conducted CalWORKs intake and assessments and enrolled cash assistance recipients in the JSA evaluation, as well as staff who delivered Job Club services, including facilitators, job developers, and social workers.

The survey had an overall response rate of 65 percent (137 of 211 staff). The response rate was higher, however, among the subset of staff (facilitators, job developers, and social workers) who were involved in delivering Job Club services: 81 percent (42 of 52 staff). The survey asked respondents about the types of job search assistance provided, staff services and activities, and staff perceptions of the services.

Baseline Information Forms (BIFs)

As part of the intake process, HSS staff collected BIFs from study-eligible individuals just prior to random assignment. Measures from the BIF cover demographic characteristics, prior education, and employment history. They are subject to some degree of missing data (see Appendix A) as well as potential self-reporting error.

Follow-Up Survey

The study team sought to survey all JSA study sample members (cash assistance recipients) by telephone starting at six months after their random assignment. On average, successful interviews occurred about seven months after random assignment.²³ A total of 240 study sample members (120 from the Standard Job Club and 120 from Fast Track) responded to the survey, for an overall response rate of 49 percent (proportions nearly identical across groups). The survey measured levels and types of job search assistance received, use of job search tools, employment, job characteristics (including hourly wage, work-related benefits, and regularity of hours), and non-economic outcomes (including motivation to search for a job and factors affecting ability to work).

National Directory of New Hires (NDNH)

The evaluation's primary source of data for estimating impacts on sample members' employment and earnings was wage records that employers report quarterly to state Unemployment Insurance agencies. We access these through the NDNH database maintained by the Office of Child Support Enforcement at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. Most but not all types of employment are included in these data; in particular, independent contractor, cash-based, and self-employment jobs are omitted.

The study collected quarterly employment and earnings data for the seven quarters prior to random assignment, which we use to describe recipients' past work history and as covariates in the impact analyses of earnings and employment outcomes. The evaluation also collected at least three quarters of post-random-assignment employment and earnings data.

Of 493 total study participants, NDNH data was available for 479 individuals (240 from the Standard Job Club and 239 from the Fast Track Job Club).²⁴ The NDNH was unable to match study records to UI

²³ The average follow-up period is seven months and two days across all sample members—the difference in average length of follow-up between the groups is about three days. Seventy-five (75) percent of respondents completed their surveys between six months and six days and seven months and 25 days after randomization.

²⁴ For all sample members randomly assigned before June 30, 2017, we observed three full quarters of follow-up data. Two sample members were randomly assigned after this date, both to the Standard Job Club. Earnings and employment measures for the third quarter and the cumulative earnings and employment measures are missing for these two individuals.

records for 14 individuals (six in the Standard Job Club and eight in the Fast Track Job Club). These match errors are most likely due to errors entering key identifying information (name, date of birth, or Social Security number) at study intake. Earnings and employment data are missing for these sample members.

DHA Administrative Data

The evaluation used administrative data to measure monthly benefit receipt, benefit amounts, and sanction status from CalWORKs and CalFresh (California’s SNAP program). These data extend 24 months prior to study enrollment and nine months following random assignment (so as to cover the first two full calendar quarters after the quarter of random assignment). Pre-random-assignment measures of public assistance receipt help to describe sample members’ public assistance history, and we use them as covariates in the impact analysis. DHA administrative data on public benefit receipt were not available for 62 study participants (out of 493) who could not be matched.

The evaluation also included person-level administrative data from DHA on participation in job search and other work-related activities during the nine months following random assignment. These data include the name of the activity, participation begin and end dates, and participation status (i.e., referred, active, no show, etc.).

Program Documents

The study team obtained and reviewed program documents, including reports and program materials such as applications and forms, job search materials, and class syllabi and PowerPoint presentations.

3.4.1. Sample Sizes across Data Sources

Exhibit 3-6 gives the total number of study participants randomly assigned and the sample sizes for the three sources of outcomes data for the impact study.

Exhibit 3-6. JSA Evaluation Impact Study Sample Sizes

Sample	Total	Standard Job Club	Fast Track Job Club
Total recipients randomly assigned	493	246	247
Follow-up survey respondent sample	240	120	120
NDNH sample	479	240	239
DHA administrative data sample	431	220	211

4. Implementation of the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs

This chapter describes the implementation of job search assistance services provided by the Standard Job Club and the Fast Track Job Club in Sacramento County. The chapter begins with a description of the administrative structure and staffing for each type of Job Club program. It then discusses the design of and key differences between the two Job Clubs. The chapter concludes with findings from the implementation study on how the programs operated during the study period. This chapter draws on data collected during site visits by the study team, administrative data from DHA, regular communication between the team and DHA staff over the study period, and an online survey of staff at each of the CalWORKs offices in the study.²⁵

4.1. Administrative Structure and Staffing of the Job Clubs

The Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs were both administered and operated by the Sacramento County DHA. A total of eight CalWORKs offices in Sacramento County operated Job Clubs. Each of the eight offices operated only one type of Job Club, with six operating Standard Job Clubs and two operating Fast Track. As discussed in Chapter 2, because the group workshop in the Standard Job Club lasted longer than in the Fast Track (three weeks versus three-and-a-half days), the Fast Track program was offered more frequently and, consequently, fewer Fast Track locations were needed.

Across all eight offices that participated in the study, both Job Clubs were overseen and supported by a county-level DHA administrator, and each office had its own program manager. The Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs had a similar staffing structure that included three facilitators, a job developer, and a social worker.²⁶ In addition, Job Club supervisors in each office provided immediate oversight and ongoing technical assistance to staff as needed. At the time of the JSA evaluation's online staff survey, DHA employed a total of 39 staff in Standard Job Club positions and 13 staff in Fast Track positions. (Again, because the Standard Job Club operated in more locations, a greater number of staff worked for it.) Though most facilitators, job developers, and social workers worked only in either the Standard or Fast Track program, a small number were involved with both at different times during the study period.²⁷ These frontline job categories are described below:

- **Facilitators.** Facilitators were responsible for providing instruction in the group Job Club classes. Two facilitators were assigned to each Job Club location, and they typically worked in tandem to deliver the curriculum to CalWORKs recipients. In addition to leading classes, facilitators also

²⁵ The sample for the analysis of the JSA staff survey consists of survey respondents who delivered Job Club services for either the Standard Job Club or the Fast Track Job Club. Of the 42 staff surveyed who delivered Job Club services, 27 delivered Standard Job Club services only, eight delivered Fast Track Job Club services only, and seven delivered services for both. The analysis sample excludes the survey respondents who provided services to both Job Clubs because their responses do not provide information about the difference between the programs.

²⁶ These staff numbers are based on full-time-equivalent positions. In some cases, there were two or three social workers in a single CalWORKs office assigned to a Job Club, but they were assigned to Job Club on a part-time basis only.

²⁷ Across the study period, there were four facilitators, three job developers, and two social workers involved in both the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs. These staff are not included in the analyses of the staff survey (findings are reported for each program separately) because they worked on both programs.

provided one-on-one job search assistance to individuals who had completed the workshop; for example, by providing help with resume development and job applications. The facilitators were also responsible for completing program paperwork (e.g., updating case notes; assisting with transportation vouchers and other ancillary services such as clothing; completing daily attendance logs and generating attendance reports; initiating the noncompliance process; and communicating with HSS staff about recipients' status).

- **Job developers.** For both the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs, job developers conducted a one-on-one assessment with each CalWORKs recipient to determine the individual's employment goals and barriers and then met weekly to help them search for and find jobs. Once CalWORKs recipients were placed in a job, the job developers were also responsible for following up once per month for two months to determine whether recipients retained the job, to provide any needed assistance, and to share other job leads. Staff reported that the typical caseload for a job developer at any given time was 20 to 30 individuals.
- **Social workers.** Social workers were assigned to work with individuals from several DHA programs, including the Job Clubs.²⁸ For both the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs, social workers reviewed barrier assessments completed by each recipient and followed up individually to address barriers and other needs identified by facilitators or job developers. In the Standard Job Club, social workers also taught and facilitated the one-week group session on workplace skills (see details below); they did not have a role in the Fast Track group class. The social workers also followed up with recipients who failed to participate; like facilitators, they could initiate the noncompliance process necessary to institute a sanction (discussed below). Staff reported that their dedicated time to those participating in the Job Clubs ranged from 25 to 60 percent, depending on their commitments to other DHA programs and activities.

Sacramento DHA managers provided training and support to Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs staff. At the outset of the evaluation period, staff from both Job Clubs participated in a two-day training provided by DHA on the curriculum and the requirements for their respective Job Club program. Ongoing training and support was also provided to Job Club staff through monthly team meetings and periodic refresher trainings.

Job club supervisors at each CalWORKs office also monitored and supported the performance of their Job Club staff through: observation; open door policies, in which staff could bring concerns and discussion topics to them; weekly staff meetings; periodic conversations with recipients about their experiences with staff; and CalWORKs recipient surveys at the completion of a Job Club.

4.2. Design and Operation of the Job Clubs

This section describes the program design and content, including key differences between the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs. It then discusses how the programs operated during the study period.

As outlined in Chapter 3, CalWORKs recipients deemed appropriate for job search assistance activities were randomly assigned to either the Standard or Fast Track Job Club, required to participate or be sanctioned and have their cash assistance grant reduced. Based on their random assignment, CalWORKs recipients were

²⁸ Social workers also assisted individuals participating in other DHA programs such as those related to housing support and kinship care.

given a program start date and location. The key elements of the two Job Club programs are shown on Exhibit 4-1.

4.2.1 Standard Job Club

Standard Job Club consisted of two components: (1) *three weeks of Career Connections* group instruction; and (2) up to *five weeks* of daily, in-person, supervised job search.

During the **three weeks** of group instruction, CalWORKs recipients attended class from 9 am to 5 pm four days a week and spent one day per week in less-structured activities such as working on applications and resumes. Staff reported that a typical group class was 14 to 16 individuals, but could range from as few as five to as many as 25. The key activities in this period were the following:

- *One week of instruction on workplace behaviors and soft skills.* This workshop included lessons on stress management, goal setting, time management, emotion regulation, communication, healthy relationships, and budgeting.
- *Two weeks of instruction on job search skills.* These weeks included lessons on developing a resume, cover letter, master application, and a short elevator speech for use in interviews and cover letters. Recipients also took part in a mock interview and were coached in various workplace and job retention skills, including dressing for success, stress management, and task prioritization.

During the subsequent **five weeks of supervised job search**, the CalWORKs recipients were required to meet with staff at the program office daily (Monday-Friday) to verify that they were searching for jobs and making contact with potential employers. Recipients had flexibility in how long they stayed at the program office during the check-ins; staff reported that some stayed less than an hour but others spent several hours or most of the day using the job search resources available there.

Recipients were also required to complete and document 25 job-related contacts each week. These contacts could include phoning or emailing an employer, submitting a job application or resume, and having a job interview. At least once each week, CalWORKs recipients were required to meet with their job developer, to turn in weekly job logs documenting the efforts they had made.

Exhibit 4-1. Comparison of Key Elements of the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs

Element	Standard Job Club	Fast Track Job Club
Participation requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three weeks of daily attendance (40 hours/week, 5 days/week: 120 hours total) • Five weeks of supervised job search with daily one-on-one meetings with staff and a weekly one-on-one meeting with a job developer (with opportunity for more frequent meetings) • Requirement to complete 25 job-related contacts or activities per week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three-and-a-half days of daily attendance (28 hours total) • Seven weeks of independent job search with weekly one-on-one meetings with a job developer and a facilitator • Requirement to complete 25 job-related contacts or activities per week
Job search assistance services provided	<p>Week 1: Group instruction on workplace behaviors and soft skills, including healthy relationships; communication skills (work and personal); self-esteem; anger management; organization and time management; stress management; budget and money management; assistance addressing barriers (e.g., criminal records, landlord/tenant issues) and accessing services; social media conduct</p> <p>Weeks 2 and 3: Group instruction on both job search and workplace skills including resume building, cover letter development, master application completion, interviewing and mock interviewing practice, employer expectation activities; dress for success and first impression activities; job retention; effective communication (verbal and non-verbal); conflict resolution in the workplace; cold call practice; job habits, manners, responsibility, accountability, and attitude; practice using job search engines; problem-solving and decision-making activities</p> <p>Weeks 5 through 8: Supervised job search, with daily required attendance at the CalWORKs office</p>	<p>Week 1, Days 1 to 3: Group instruction on job search skills, including resume building, cover letter development, master application completion, interviewing, dressing for success, and time management</p> <p>Week 1, Day 4: One-on-one meetings and activities with job developer and facilitator</p> <p>Weeks 2 through 8: Independent job search, with weekly required meetings at the CalWORKs office</p>
Job development services	<p>Employability assessment and interest tool; development of individualized job search goal plan; recruitment of employers, and matching recipients to available jobs; use of a web-based job-matching tool to connect recipients to subsidized jobs (if needed); weekly meetings with job developers and employer talks at program office</p>	
Support services available	<p>Child care, transportation, and other needs (such as health and housing issues) are addressed by HSS case worker or social worker. Referrals as needed to services outside of CalWORKs, including vocational assessment, substance abuse support, mental health counseling, medical services</p>	
Retention and post-Job Club services	<p>Following job placement, job developers follow up with recipients once per month for two months via phone, email, or in person. Recipients who are not employed after eight weeks are assigned to another employment-focused activity, typically a subsidized job, unpaid work experience, or vocational training</p>	
Consequences for non-compliance	<p>A partial-family sanction (adult-only sanction) may be applied for not meeting the participation requirement (failing to participate without an excused or verifiable absence)</p>	

Sources: Site visits and regular communication between study team and DHA program administrators during the study period.

4.2.2 Fast Track Job Club

Fast Track Job Club required CalWORKs recipients to attend a three-day *Career Connections* group workshop from 9 am to 5 pm, followed by a half-day group class on how to search for employment on their own. Following the workshop, those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club were required to conduct an independent job search.

The Fast Track Job Club **group workshop** focused on job search skills including online job resources, interviewing skills, and development of a resume, cover letter, master application, and a short elevator speech for use in interviews. Because of time constraints, instruction on soft skills was limited and generally was integrated with the job search skills; for example, a discussion of time management in the context of the job interview. Similar to the Standard Job Club, the typical Fast Track Job Club workshop size was 16 to 18 individuals, but could range from as few as five to as many as 25.

During **independent job search**, CalWORKs recipients assigned to the Fast Track Job Club were required to come in once per week on a specific day to meet with a facilitator. In addition, recipients were required to complete and document 25 job-related contacts each week and meet with a job developer. During their weekly check-in, recipients turned in job logs; met with staff to discuss their goals, their job search progress, and any specific barriers they encountered; and received assistance with applications and interviewing. At their discretion, they could come in on other days for help with a specific need, such as preparing for an interview or updating a resume.

In sum, the key distinctions in the design of the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs were twofold—the duration and content of the group job search class and the frequency of in-person meetings with staff after the group class ended. CalWORKs recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club received three weeks of group instruction on job search, particularly on workplace behaviors and soft skills that recipients assigned to the Fast Track Job Club did not receive. The Standard Job Club required daily rather than weekly attendance in the CalWORKs office.

4.2.3 Program Services Common to Both Job Clubs

Both Job Clubs had access to job developers who worked with all participants in the group class. During the first individual meeting after the group class, the job developer conducted an employability, skills, and interest assessment with the recipient and they worked to develop an individualized job search goal plan. This assessment involved a conversation to build rapport and gather information, along with a Sacramento County-developed paper-and-pencil worksheet where the recipient described their skills, interests, and educational and employment background. This assessment process also involved a discussion of the recipient's strengths and areas to improve, both current and future employment goals, and the key steps needed to reach the goals. During the ongoing weekly meetings with recipients, job developers discussed and shared information on job openings, monitored recipients' job search contact logs, and provided additional support as needed to help recipients search for, find, and apply for jobs.

To support recipients' participation in job search activities, both Job Clubs provided assistance with child care in the form of subsidies and assistance locating providers, and with transportation in the form of bus passes or gas cards. Individuals assigned to both Job Clubs also had support from their HSS case worker and social workers to address other barriers to work such as housing and health issues. Either

HSS staff or social worker could initiate and authorize child care and transportation services, either before or after the recipient's referral to Job Club.

In both Job Clubs, recipients who did not find jobs by the end of the eight-week period were typically assigned to subsidized employment or unpaid work experience. Similarly, following placement in employment, all CalWORKs recipients received the same job retention services, consisting of monthly follow-up from job developers for two months following job placement.

Finally, recipients in both Job Clubs were subject to the same consequences for non-compliance with the participation requirements. In both cases, non-compliance issues were referred by Job Club staff (most commonly the social worker) to the HSS staff. The HSS staff was responsible for authorizing sanctions and initiating the official non-compliance and sanction process (see further discussion in Section 4.2.4 below).

4.2.4 Key Findings from the Implementation Study

This section examines key findings from the JSA evaluation's implementation study. We examine the operation of the two Job Clubs, participation levels by CalWORKs recipients assigned to the Job Clubs and use of sanctions for noncompliance, and the frequency and nature of the job search assistance provided by staff.

- ***Both Job Clubs operated largely as designed during the evaluation period, with both programs maintaining the intended differences in the job search assistance services provided throughout the study period.***

Based on the interviews conducted for the study, both Job Clubs were implemented with overall fidelity to their specific designs, but with some small adjustments to the program models. As intended, individuals assigned to the Standard Job Club were required to attend the *Career Connections* group class for three weeks, followed by five weeks of supervised job search. One deviation from the design was that Standard Job Club staff in most offices reported that they permitted CalWORKs recipients some flexibility in how often they conducted job search activities in-person at the Job Club location, particularly in the five weeks of supervised job search. In some of the six offices that operated the Standard Job Club, staff reported that they required recipients to attend in person fewer than the prescribed five days, with one requiring recipients to attend in person on two days, and others requiring participation on three or four days.

Similarly, Standard Job Club staff in some offices reported that they required CalWORKs recipients to make fewer than the prescribed 25 job-related contacts each week in order to be in compliance with program requirements. In some offices, staff required recipients to make as few as 10 contacts, whereas other locations required 20 or 25 contacts each week. If fewer employer contacts were required, staff reported that they closely monitored the nature of the contacts, typically requiring that they be in-person contacts or formal job interviews.

Standard Job Club group class facilitators across the offices were also given discretion over how to deliver the curriculum, and as a result, the classes varied to some extent. For example, facilitators varied in their use of worksheets and group discussion to cover a specific topic; in some cases, they developed

supplemental activities to augment the standard curriculum. However, these adjustments did not change the overall content of the material provided.

Staff reported more consistent implementation of the Fast Track Job Club. Based on the interviews conducted for the study, the two Fast Track offices implemented their Job Club programs as designed, following the prescribed group activities using the established curriculum. Staff also closely adhered to the requirement that recipients meet weekly at the program office while conducting their independent job search. They also tracked that recipients completed and documented 25 job-related contacts each week.

For both the Standard Job Club and the Fast Track Job Club, periodic observations were conducted by program administrators to ensure that the Job Clubs were operated in the manner and spirit intended by the program design. Ongoing training and support was also provided to staff from both Job Clubs through monthly team meetings, periodic training sessions on relevant topics, and technical assistance from program administrators.

- ***As intended, the Standard Job Club placed more emphasis on workplace behaviors and soft skills compared with Fast Track's activities.***

The study examined differences in the provision of services focused on strengthening workplace behaviors and soft skills. Both interviews conducted for the study and the staff survey indicated that the Standard Job Club emphasized these topics more than the Fast Track Job Club. Specifically, the staff survey examined the time and emphasis given to different activities as part of the Job Club programs. Considered as a whole, these results indicate the Standard Job Club provided more instruction and assistance on workplace behaviors and soft skills compared to Fast Track Job Club, in both group and one-on-one activities. First, because the three-week group class was designed in part to develop recipients' workplace skills as well as their job search skills, on several measures Standard Job Club staff were more likely to report that soft skills relevant for workplace behavior were a "major" or "moderate" emphasis of their Job Club classes compared to those provided by Fast Track (Exhibit 4-2, top panel). Specifically, 86 percent of Standard Job Club staff reported that guidance both on handling stress and anxiety in the workplace and on balancing work and family responsibilities was given a "major" or "moderate" emphasis in the group class, compared with 38 percent and 50 percent, respectively, in Fast Track.

Second, the staff survey also asked Job Club staff to consider the amount of time they spent conducting various activities, including those related to workplace behavior and soft skills (Exhibit 4-2, middle panel). Standard Job Club staff were more likely than Fast Track staff to report that they provided assistance "frequently" or "quite a bit" on several measures related to workplace behaviors. For example, 69 percent of Standard Job Club staff provided frequent assistance on "workplace behaviors and etiquette" compared with 17 percent of Fast Track staff. Similarly, more than three quarters (77 percent) of Standard Job Club staff compared with less than one-third (29 percent) of Fast Track staff reported that they frequently spent time providing guidance to participants on "persisting in job search and skills needed to overcome challenges."

Finally, the staff survey examined the topics covered during one-on-one meetings with recipients. Across several measures related to workplace behaviors and soft skills, more than 60 percent of Standard Job

Club staff reported they “always” or “often” covered these topics in their one-on-one discussions with recipients, compared to a half or fewer of the Fast Track staff (Exhibit 4-2, bottom panel). One result was statistically significant: Standard Job Club staff were more likely to report that they “always” or “often” provided “problem solving on work-related or personal issues” with recipients during individual meetings (74 percent of Standard versus 29 percent of Fast Track staff).

Exhibit 4-2. Workplace Behavior and Soft Skills Covered in Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs

Survey Item	Standard Job Club	Fast Track Job Club	Difference
Staff reporting topic is a major or moderate emphasis of group job search (%)			
Proper workplace behaviors	90.5	75.0	15.5
Communication in the workplace	90.5	62.5	28.0
Problem solving (work-related or personal)	95.2	75.0	20.2
Handling stress and anxiety in the workplace	85.7	37.5	48.2***
Balancing work and family responsibilities	85.7	50.0	35.7*
Staff reporting that they provide assistance on topic frequently or quite a bit (%)			
Communication/social skills, teamwork, and problem solving	61.5	33.3	28.2
Workplace behaviors or etiquette	69.2	16.7	52.6***
Screening for recipient’s barriers to employment	76.9	71.4	5.5
Addressing recipient’s barriers to employment	65.4	57.1	8.3
Guidance on persisting in job search and skills needed to overcome challenges	76.9	28.6	48.4**
Staff reporting topic is always or often covered during one-on-one job search assistance (%)			
Communication and workplace relationships	61.1	33.3	27.8
Problem-solving (work-related or personal)	73.7	28.6	45.1**
Proper workplace behaviors	63.2	50.0	13.2
Handling stress and anxiety in the workplace	57.9	33.3	24.6
Balancing work and family responsibilities	63.2	33.3	29.8

Source: JSA staff survey.

Sample: Sample includes 27 Standard Job Club and eight Fast Track Job Club respondents. Sample sizes vary by topic due to item non-response.

Notes: Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent. Test of null hypothesis that all impacts are zero: $\chi^2(15) = 42.10$; p-value < .01.

- ***Few differences were found between the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs on providing assistance on building job search skills.***

The study also examined differences in the provision of services focused on building job search skills, such as developing resumes and filing applications. Both interviews conducted for the study and the staff survey indicated that both the Standard and Fast Track Job Club emphasized these topics (the study did not measure the amount of time spent on these activities, which may have varied given the length of the workshops). For example, on the staff survey, about 80 percent of staff from both programs reported that a range of job search skills were a “major” or “moderate” emphasis of their Job Club classes (Exhibit 4-3, top panel). None of the reported differences between staff from the two Job Clubs was statistically significant.

Only one statistically significant difference was detected in the proportion of staff that reported they provided assistance “frequently” or “quite a bit” on a number of measures related to job search skills

(Exhibit 4-3, middle panel). A greater proportion of Fast Track staff reported providing assistance related to identification of job openings through online and other (non-employer) sources—83 percent compared to 50 percent of Standard Job Club staff.

Finally, similar proportions of staff from both Job Clubs reported that they “always” or “often” provided assistance with job search skills during one-on-one meetings (Exhibit 4-3, bottom panel). The most often cited topic of one-on-one meetings for both groups was “counseling on jobs and careers to consider.” More than 80 percent of staff from both Jobs Clubs reported that they always or often provided this type of assistance. The study also found statistically significant differences between the two groups on one measure related to job search skills covered during one-on-one meetings: a greater proportion of Standard Job Club staff reported that they always or often provided recipients with “guidance with resume preparation or adaptation”—84 percent compared with 43 percent of Fast Track staff.

Exhibit 4-3. Job Search Skills Covered in Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs

Survey Item	Standard Job Club	Fast Track Job Club	Difference
Staff reporting topic is a major or moderate emphasis of group job search (%)			
Resume preparation	81.0	87.5	-6.5
Job search techniques	95.2	87.5	7.7
Use of online job search resources	90.5	87.5	3.0
Assistance filling out job applications	57.1	71.4	-14.3
Interviewing skills/mock interviews	89.5	87.5	2.0
Staff reporting they provide assistance on topic frequently or quite a bit (%)			
Oversight of self-directed job search activities	60.0	28.6	31.4
One-on-one sessions to review and monitor job leads	84.6	71.4	13.2
One-on-one guidance on career and job opportunities	73.1	71.4	1.7
Identification of job openings through online and other (non-employer) sources	50.0	83.3	-33.3*
Matching recipients to a job based on their skills and interests	53.8	71.4	-17.6
Monitoring and reporting participation in job search and other work-related activities	69.2	42.9	26.3
Re-engaging recipients who are non-participants	38.5	42.9	-4.4
Following up with recipients after placement in employment	46.2	42.9	3.3
Staff reporting topic is always or often covered during one-on-one job search assistance (%)			
Number of job applications submitted	63.2	50.0	13.2
Hours of job search completed	52.6	50.0	2.6
Assistance identifying specific job leads	68.4	57.1	11.3
Guidance with resume preparation or adaptation	84.2	42.9	41.4**
Counseling on jobs and careers to consider	84.2	85.7	-1.5

Source: JSA staff survey.

Sample: Sample includes 27 Standard Job Club and eight Fast Track Job Club respondents. Sample sizes vary by topic due to item non-response.

Notes: Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Test of null hypothesis that all impacts are zero: $\chi^2 (18) = 79.56$; p-value < .01.

- ***More than Fast Track staff, Standard Job Club staff reported that the job search assistance services allowed for more one-on-one meetings, resulting in services that were more tailored to individual needs.***

Staff reported that the more rigorous participation requirement of the Standard Job Club—with the longer group class and daily rather than weekly attendance expected at the CalWORKs offices—allowed for more opportunity for staff to get to know recipients, understand their needs, help them address barriers, and support their individual job search goals and plans. During interviews, staff from the Standard Job Club reported meeting more frequently with and providing more one-on-one support to recipients than did staff from the Fast Track Job Club. In addition, the Standard Job Club’s longer group workshop sessions made time available for facilitators and other staff to provide customized assistance based on recipients’ individual circumstances. Though facilitators were not responsible for managing recipients’ cases on an ongoing basis, the facilitators from the Standard Job Club reported that they typically built relationships with recipients during the three-week class. In addition, these staff reported that building relationships with CalWORKs recipients was part of the philosophy of the three-week group workshop, as it enabled more effective training around workplace behaviors and soft skills.

- ***Recipients in both Job Clubs had access to a strong set of job development services, but recipients in the Standard Job Club had more frequent interaction with and access to these services.***

Job development services were a key aspect of the job search assistance provided through both the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs, and CalWORKs recipients assigned to either Job Club had access to the same job development services. As discussed above, each Job Club employed a job developer whose primary role was to help recipients make connections with employers and search for and identify potential job opportunities. The job developers’ work with recipients was concentrated on the time period after the group workshops. Each recipient was required to meet with the same job developer at least weekly over the course of his or her participation in Job Club. Staff reported that recipients who were in the office more frequently (those in the Standard Job Club) were more likely to hear about new opportunities in a timely way. Moreover, because job developers and other Job Club staff had the opportunity to get to know the Standard Job Club recipients better because of their more frequent attendance, staff became more attuned to recipients’ interests and abilities, and thus were better equipped to find an appropriate job match based during the job development activities described below.

Job developers reported that they focused on generating leads for specific jobs and then matching individual recipients to the job opportunities, based on the skills and interests identified in the assessment conducted at the end of the group class (see Section 4.2). The job developers reviewed these leads with recipients during the weekly meetings and also shared job leads and job fair information with recipients via email, when possible. They also advertised available job openings via hard copy binders and on bulletin boards in the CalWORKs offices. During recipients’ time in the office, they reviewed these materials and also made active use of the Job Club’s computer lab, where they could view County-identified job postings, search online for additional job opportunities, and customize their resume for a particular job opening.

In identifying unsubsidized job opportunities, the job developers reported that they relied on long-standing relationships with local employers who historically had hired CalWORKs recipients. Staff also tracked local labor market information, both to determine which industries to target for job opportunities and to gather information on typical wages in particular industries. The most commonly targeted industries and positions included administrative (permanent and seasonal/temporary positions), security, warehousing, child care, home health/medical assistance/billing, customer service at area call centers, data entry, and food service. Most jobs were entry level, but job developers aimed to identify as many openings as possible that paid more than minimum wage. Staff reported the presence of many government jobs in the County, and they encouraged qualified individuals (typically those with at least an Associate's degree) to apply for and take the entrance test necessary for these jobs.

Regular employer-led presentations (job talks) were another service offered at the Job Clubs, and recipients in both programs were encouraged to attend. Job developers arranged these presentations, each of which featured a different employer. Though the talks were intended to occur weekly, more likely they were held twice each month. Job talks typically lasted an hour and were available both to community members and Job Club participants.

- ***Staff for both the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs monitored attendance according to each's specific requirements, but provided multiple chances for recipients to fulfill the commitment.***

To ensure that CalWORKs recipients assigned to either the Standard or Fast Track Job Club program complied with program requirements, program staff tracked each recipient's attendance in the required activities and imposed sanctions if the recipient did not comply. As discussed above, for CalWORKs recipients who are sanctioned, the family's cash benefit is reduced for the adult recipient. Job Club staff monitored whether recipients (1) attended the Job Club to which they were assigned at all; and (2) if they did, whether they met the specific requirements of the program.

As discussed, when CalWORKs recipients were randomly assigned to one of the Job Clubs, HSS staff provided each recipient with the date and office where the next available Job Club would begin. (This was typically one to three weeks in the future at an office location most convenient to them.) For both the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs, staff reported that recipients who failed to participate in Job Club for which they were scheduled received additional opportunities to do so. If they attended on the second day of the Job Club, they could continue attending the remainder of the session. However, if the recipient did not attend by the second day of the workshop, HSS staff were notified and the recipient was scheduled for the next available workshop at the same CalWORKs office. In limited circumstances, HSS staff might re-assign the recipient to a different type of activity if it appeared warranted, for example, for substance abuse treatment services. Staff reported that if recipients did not attend after being scheduled for three Job Clubs, they were referred to a HSS worker to initiate the sanction.

Similarly, for both Job Clubs, among recipients who did attend a Job Club but missed sessions or otherwise didn't fulfill its requirements, Job Club staff (most commonly the social workers) followed up with the recipient before a sanction was imposed. Staff assessed recipients' reasons for nonparticipation and tried to help address any needs or barriers that prevented participation. Staff reported that the

sanctions typically were initiated only after recipients were given several chances to comply with program requirements and only after a recipient had more than three unexcused or non-verifiable absences. If the noncompliance continued, the social worker then referred the recipient's case to the HSS staff, who was responsible for formally imposing the sanction. Once the formal process was initiated by the HSS staff, the recipient was allowed another chance to comply by agreeing to and signing a compliance plan or by requesting good cause for noncompliance. Staff reported that the sanction would be imposed only if a recipient was not found to have good cause and did not agree to and sign a compliance plan.

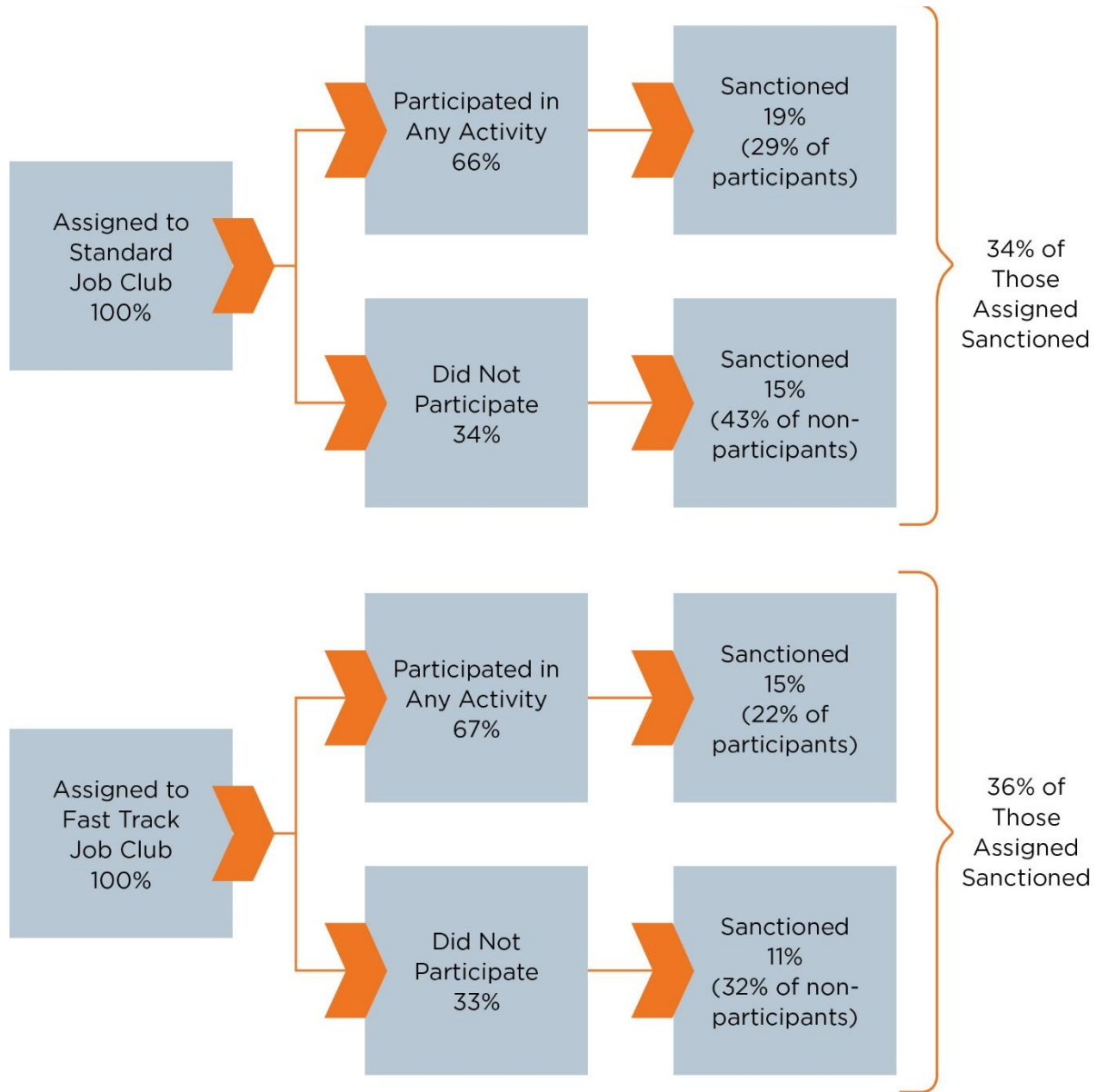
- ***Between one-quarter and one-third of those assigned to either the Standard or the Fast Track Job Clubs were sanctioned at some point during the study's six month follow-up period, with no differences between the groups.***

DHA administrative data analyzed for the study indicate that CalWORKs recipients assigned to the Standard or Fast Track Job Clubs were sanctioned for (1) failing to show up for their assigned program activities within the follow-up period; and (2) for those who did attend, not meeting the requirements of their assignment. Similar levels of sanctions were observed between the two groups. As shown on Exhibit 4-4:

- A substantial portion of CalWORKs recipients, about one-third of those assigned to either Job Club, did not participate in job search or any other program activity during the six month follow-up period (Chapter 5 provides more discussion of service-level receipt for the two groups).²⁹

²⁹ A "no-show" rate of this level is common in welfare-to-work programs (see Hamilton, 2002) and was experienced in Sacramento prior to the JSA evaluation.

Exhibit 4-4. Sanction Rates by Participation Status for the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs



Source: Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance administrative data.

Notes: None of the differences between groups are statistically significant.

- Among those recipients assigned to a Job Club who did not attend any program activities, 43 percent of the Standard group and 32 percent of the Fast Track group were sanctioned. Data are not available on the reasons why the other noncompliant recipients who did not attend a Job Club were not sanctioned, but possible reasons include they found employment or that their case was closed for other reasons (e.g. the recipient moved).
- Among recipients who did attend Job Club activities, 19 percent of the Standard group and 15 percent of the Fast Track group were sanctioned at some point during the study’s six month follow-up period.

Overall, including those who both never attended a Job Club and those who did attend but did not meet its requirements, 34 percent of those assigned to the Standard Job Club and 26 percent of those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club were sanctioned. (The differences between sanction rates for the two groups are not statistically significant; see Chapter 6 and Appendix C). The prevalence of sanctions in both the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs suggests the participation requirement was enforced in both programs. In addition, almost half of all sanctions for both groups (45 percent, not shown) were imposed on those who participated in program activities, despite staff allowing multiple chances to comply. This suggests staff were tracking and enforcing the requirements of each program.

- ***For both the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs, staff reported focusing on quickly connecting recipients to employment, as well as making a good job match for individual recipients.***

In interviews conducted for the study, both Job Clubs employed staff who expressed pride in and commitment to their positions as facilitators, job developers, and social workers. The majority of staff across both Job Clubs reported that staff made an effort not only to learn about recipients’ career and employment goals, but also to identify a large number of available jobs and help match recipients to jobs based on their skills and interests (Exhibit 4-5).³⁰ The relative importance of obtaining rapid employment versus making a good job match was similar among staff from both the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs—43 percent of staff ranked them equally. Staff from both Job Clubs stressed the importance of helping to place recipients in jobs that would help them gain valuable work experience and support their long-term employment success.

Exhibit 4-5. Staff Views for Making a Good Job Match for the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs

Survey Item	Standard Job Club	Fast Track Job Club	Difference
Staff reporting somewhat agree or strongly agree (%)			
Staff make an effort to learn about CalWORKs recipients’ career and employment goals and motivation to work	80.8	100.00	-19.2**
CalWORKs recipients are matched to jobs based on their skills, abilities, and interests	88.5	83.3	5.1
Staff reporting most important goal of program is (%)			
Making a good job match	33.3	28.6	4.7
Both equally	42.9	42.9	0.0
Rapid employment	23.8	28.6	-4.8

Source: JSA staff survey.

Sample: Sample includes 34 Standard Job Club and nine Fast Track Job Club respondents.

Notes: Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Test of null hypothesis that all impacts are zero: $\chi^2(4) = 6.94$; p-value = .14.

³⁰ A joint statistical test does not support the finding of differences in the proportion who agree or strongly agree that staff make an effort to learn about recipients’ career and employment goals.

4.3 Summary

Both the Standard and the Fast Track Job Club operated as designed during the study period. As intended, the Standard Job Club provided a greater level of assistance with workplace behaviors and soft skills compared to Fast Track, but the programs similarly emphasized providing assistance with job search skills. More than Fast Track staff, Standard Job Club staff reported that they provided assistance that was tailored to individual needs, particularly the job development services.

Staff for both the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs monitored attendance according to each program's specific requirements, but provided multiple chances for recipients to fulfill the commitment. Nonetheless, one-quarter to one-third of recipients were sanctioned, and the sanction levels were similar for both the Standard and Fast Track Clubs. Recipients were sanctioned both for not attending the Job Club at all, and for not meeting the program's specific requirements once they did attend. The prevalence of sanctions in both the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs suggests the participation requirement was enforced in both programs.

5. Impacts on Receipt of Job Search Assistance Services

The previous chapter described the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs in Sacramento County from the staff perspective. This chapter uses data from the follow-up survey (administered starting six months after random assignment) to describe the program from the recipient perspective. The theory of change discussed in Chapter 3 suggests that differences in the level and content of job search services received should induce differences in employment and public assistance receipt. This chapter tests those implications, presenting findings on the type, frequency and duration of job search assistance received (Section 5.1) and the content of that assistance (Section 5.2). In addition, the chapter examines some details of the job search process, including the use of different online job search tools, number of contacts with employers, and factors that affected decisions to apply for jobs (Section 5.3). Building on these findings, Chapter 6 will describe impacts on recipients' employment and earnings, public assistance receipt, and job characteristics.

This chapter reports impacts—that is, the differences in outcomes between the two programs for otherwise identical groups of individuals. For such impacts, the chapter also reports statistical tests of the probability that the observed impacts could be due to chance. The textbox **How to Read Impact Tables** below briefly explains how to read and interpret impact tables throughout this report. In general, we report program-specific results and impacts only when the statistical tests clearly imply that the result is not due to chance (formally $p < .10$). Exceptions are explicitly noted.

How to Read Impact Tables

*The exhibits in this chapter and Chapter 6 list the outcome measure in the analysis in the left-most column (**Outcome**), with the unit of that outcome in parentheses; for example, (%).*

*The **Standard Job Club** column presents the mean outcome for that group of CalWORKs recipients, followed in the next column by the corresponding mean outcome for the **Fast Track Job Club**. These means are regression adjusted. The regression adjustments correct for random variation in baseline covariates between the two groups (and thus differ slightly from the raw means). The **Difference (Impact)** column gives the estimated impact (e.g., in percentage points) of the Standard Job Club relative to the Fast Track Job Club, which by construction equals the difference between the previous two columns. The next column is the **Percent Impact**, which expresses the impact as a percentage of the Fast Track Job Club mean in the second column.*

*In the Difference (Impact) column, **statistical significance** is denoted by asterisks that reflect the strength of the evidence that the difference between the Standard and Fast Track groups is not the result of chance but is a real difference in the effectiveness of the two programs. In this report, tests are considered statistically significant and highlighted in tables if the probability that the measured impact due solely to chance is less than or equal to 10 percent (p -value less than or equal to .10). The smaller the p -value, the stronger the evidence of a real effect. Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated as follows: * = 10 percent, ** = 5 percent, *** = 1 percent.*

*Exhibit rows in italics flag findings for **subsets of survey respondents** defined after random assignment (e.g., those who participated in job search assistance services). These estimates are not impacts, but instead are descriptive profiles of experiences/outcomes for the most relevant subset of participants. These estimates use the same adjustments as the impacts, so the reader can make meaningful comparisons between the analyses using the full sample and selected subsamples. Exhibit rows not in italics contain outcomes and impact estimates for statistically equivalent populations and thus do reflect differential impacts of the two job search assistance models.*

5.1 Level and Duration of Job Search Assistance and Other Employment-Focused Activities

This section describes the type, frequency, and duration of job search assistance activities during the early weeks after random assignment, as reported by study participants on the follow-up survey. This time frame roughly aligns with the period after cash assistance recipients were assigned to the Standard or Fast Track Job Club, during which their participation in job search assistance activities was required.

- *There were no differences in participation in employment-focused activities, including job search assistance services, between the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs groups.*

Exhibit 5-1 shows levels of participation in any employment-related activity, including job search assistance, during the initial weeks after random assignment, as reported in the follow-up survey. Consistent with participation being a requirement to continue receiving cash assistance, participation rates in employment-related activities exceeded 70 percent for the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs. In both groups, job search assistance was the most commonly reported activity (accounting for nearly all participation). This level of “no-show rate” is common in welfare-to-work programs and was observed in Sacramento County prior to the JSA evaluation.³¹

There were also no differences between the two groups in the participation levels for other job-related activities, including classes to train for a job in a specific occupation and unpaid work experience, and those participation rates were low (11 percent or less). As noted in Chapter 4, individuals assigned to either Job Club group were sometimes assigned to these other activities if employment was not found during the eight-week program.

- *There were no differences between the two groups in the number of hours per week in job search assistance.*

The theory of change hypothesized that the increased time commitment of the Standard Job Club at the CalWORKs office would result in group members receiving more job search assistance than those assigned to Fast Track. However, as shown on Exhibit 5-1, no differences in hours of participation in job search activities were observed. Those assigned to the Standard or the Fast Track Job Club (including those who did *not* participate in the program) reported that they spent about 20 hours per week in job search assistance services and about 14 hours per week looking for work as part of the program.³² The subset who did participate in job search, on average, spent about 28 hours in job search assistance and about 20 hours looking for work as part of the program (a non-experimental comparison).

³¹ Compared to the participation rate based on DHA data reported in Chapter 4 (about 66 percent), the somewhat higher participation rate in employment-related services observed in the follow-up survey may reflect participation in job search or other employment-related services that the respondent received outside of the Standard or Fast Track Job Club and thus would not be reflected in DHA administrative data.

³² These averages include those who did not participate in job search activities, and thus had zero hours. Possible reasons for non-participation include leaving CalWORKs for employment, leaving CalWORKs for other reasons, good cause exemptions, or unexcused non-compliance with program rules.

The duration of the job search assistance services was the same for both groups (less than four weeks), although among the subset who did participate in job search assistance services, those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club attended about one week longer (six weeks versus five weeks).

- ***Recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club reported more frequent participation in group job search activities than those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club.***

As shown on Exhibit 5-1, approximately 57 percent of those assigned to either the Standard or Fast Track Job Club reported that they participated in group job search activities, with no difference detected between the groups. This reflects that group job search classes were required by both programs. Consistent with the difference in program design, those assigned to the Standard Job Club were more likely to report participating in the group sessions daily than were those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club (35 percent versus 14 percent). However, those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club were more likely than the Standard Job Club group to participate two to three times per week (22 percent versus 13 percent) or weekly (13 percent versus four percent) in group job search services.

- ***Recipients assigned to the Fast Track Job Club were more likely to report meeting one-on-one with a staff person to find a job than were those assigned to the Standard Job Club.***

A larger proportion of those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club reported meeting one-on-one with a staff person for help finding a job (64 percent versus 51 percent). This finding shown on Exhibit 5-1 likely reflects that most job search assistance for the Fast Track group was provided on a one-on-one basis (with only three-and-a-half days of group activities). As expected given the design of the two Job Clubs, recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club were more likely than those in the Fast Track Job Club to meet one-on-one with a staff person daily (13 percent versus 4 percent). However, those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club were more likely than those in the Standard Job Club to meet once per week (33 percent versus 21 percent).

Exhibit 5-1. Impacts on Participation in Job Search Assistance Services and Other Employment-Focused Activities in the Early Weeks after Random Assignment

Outcome	Standard Job Club	Fast Track Job Club	Difference (Impact)	Percent Impact (%)
Participation type				
Participated in any activity (%)	74.7	71.4	3.3	4.7
Participated in job search assistance services (%)	71.1	69.2	1.9	2.8
Participated in classes to prepare for specific occupation (%)	5.5	9.1	-3.6	-39.7
Participated in unpaid work experience (%)	10.9	8.7	2.2	25.8
Participation frequency				
Hours per week of job search assistance services	19.3	21.2	-1.8	-8.7
<i>Among those who participated in job search assistance</i>	<i>27.1</i>	<i>29.5</i>	<i>-2.4</i>	<i>-8.1</i>
Hours per week looking for work as part of the program	13.5	13.6	-0.1	-0.7
<i>Among those who participated in job search assistance</i>	<i>19.0</i>	<i>22.1</i>	<i>-3.1</i>	<i>-14.1</i>
Met one-on-one with staff person to find a job (%)	50.8	64.0	-13.3**	-20.7
Every day	12.6	3.5	9.1**	> 100.0
2-3 times per week	10.5	16.3	-5.8	-35.7
Once a week	21.0	32.8	-11.8**	-36.0
2-3 times total	4.3	9.2	-4.9	-53.5
Once	2.5	2.3	0.2	6.6
Participated in group job search services (%)	57.4	57.7	-0.3	-0.5
Every day	34.9	13.7	21.2***	> 100.0
2-3 times per week	12.9	22.1	-9.2*	-41.6
Once a week	3.5	13.3	-9.8**	-73.5
2-3 classes total	3.5	8.5	-5.0	-58.4
Once	2.5	0.1	2.4	> 100.0
Participation duration				
Weeks of job search assistance services	3.3	3.9	-0.5	-13.9
<i>Among those who participated in job search assistance</i>	<i>4.7</i>	<i>5.9</i>	<i>-1.1**</i>	<i>-19.0</i>

Source: Six Month Follow-up Survey.

Sample: Sample includes 240 (120 Standard Job Club; 120 Fast Track Job Club) survey respondents. Non-experimental contrasts (italicized) include 161 (78 Standard Job Club; 83 Fast Track Job Club) survey respondents. Sample sizes vary for outcomes due to item nonresponse.

Notes: Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Test of null hypothesis that all *duration* and *frequency* impacts are zero: $F(16,224) = 2.98$; p -value < .01.

5.2 Assistance Developing Job Search and Soft Skills

Job search assistance could help recipients develop two competencies: (1) job search skills such as how to fill out a job application or interviewing techniques; and (2) workplace behaviors and soft skills that help people succeed in the workplace as well as in their job search. The Standard Job Club was designed to provide job search assistance in both areas over a three-week period. The Fast Track Job Club

provided a condensed version of the curriculum, with a focus on job search skills, over three-and-a-half days. Based on these differences in the Job Club services, we would expect a greater level of assistance for workplace behavior and soft skills for the Standard Job Club group, and similar levels of assistance for the job search skills.

- ***No differences in the receipt of assistance with job search skills were found between the groups.***

As shown on Exhibit 5-2, recipients assigned to either Job Club reported spending time on a range of job search skills during the weeks following random assignment. Including those who did not receive job search assistance, slightly more than half of respondents (50 to 60 percent) reported receiving assistance with each of the specific job search skills asked about, with no differences detected between the groups. This is consistent with findings from the implementation study (see Chapter 4) where staff reported that both the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs emphasized the provision of job search skills.

Exhibit 5-2. Impacts on Receipt of Job Search Assistance Skills in the Early Weeks after Random Assignment

Outcome	Standard Job Club	Fast Track Job Club	Difference (Impact)	Percent Impact (%)
Skill for which help was received (%)				
Practicing for job interviews	61.2	58.6	2.6	4.4
Filling out job applications	51.2	49.1	2.1	4.3
Finding specific job leads	58.8	56.9	1.9	3.4
Looking for a job	55.9	61.9	-6.0	-9.6
Using web-based job search engines such as Monster	54.1	60.4	-6.2	-10.3
Figuring out right job or career goal	57.0	63.6	-6.6	-10.4
Learning about messages sent with dress, speech	55.0	62.1	-7.1	-11.4
Creating or editing resume	54.0	61.3	-7.2	-11.8

Source: Six Month Follow-up Survey.

Sample: Sample includes 240 (120 Standard Job Club; 120 Fast Track Job Club) survey respondents. Sample sizes vary for outcomes due to item nonresponse.

Notes: Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

- ***Recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club appear to have received more assistance than those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club in learning appropriate workplace behaviors and other soft skills.***

As with job search skills, soft skills focused on building and reinforcing positive workplace behaviors are hypothesized to improve employment outcomes based on the theory of change (see Chapter 3). A joint statistical test comparing all available items weakly indicates that those assigned to the Standard Job Club received more assistance with workplace behaviors than those assigned to Fast Track Job Club (see Exhibit 5-3). Those assigned to the Standard Job Club were more likely to report that they received help with managing money and finances than those in the Fast Track group (50 percent versus 38 percent). Although none of the other individual items is detectably different between the groups, the majority of impacts are similarly positive for the Standard Job Club. This pattern of findings also aligns with

differences in staff-reported emphasis on workplace behavior and soft skills in the group job search instruction offered by the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs (see Chapter 4).

Exhibit 5-3. Impacts on Receipt of Assistance on Workplace Behaviors and Soft Skills in the Early Weeks after Random Assignment

Outcome	Standard Job Club	Fast Track Job Club	Difference (Impact)	Percent Impact (%)
Skill for which help was received (%)				
Managing money and finances	50.4	38.1	12.3*	32.2
Balancing work and family	50.1	39.4	10.7	27.1
Managing anger and frustrations	50.2	44.0	6.2	14.1
Handling stress or anxiety	52.1	47.9	4.2	8.7
Setting and managing goals	56.6	54.9	1.7	3.1
Problem solving in work or personal life	55.7	54.6	1.1	2.1
Dealing with rejection	49.7	49.9	-0.2	-0.4
Proper workplace behaviors	57.0	60.0	-2.9	-4.9
Communication at the workplace	52.6	55.7	-3.1	-5.6
Having a good work ethic	56.2	61.1	-4.9	-8.0

Source: Six Month Follow-up Survey

Sample: Sample includes 240 (120 Standard Job Club; 120 Fast Track Job Club) survey respondents. Sample sizes vary for outcomes due to item nonresponse.

Notes: Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Test of null hypothesis that all impacts are zero: $F(10,230) = 1.74$; $p\text{-value} = .07$.

5.3 Use of Job Search Tools, Number of Contacts with Employers, and Factors that Affect Decisions to Apply for and Take Jobs

The JSA evaluation also explored how cash assistance recipients found jobs. This section examines the use of online job search tools, the number of employers contacted, the factors that affected the decision to apply for a job, and which tools were most helpful in finding a job.

- *No differences on the use of online job search tools or the number of employers contacted during the program were found.*

The follow-up survey asked recipients about their use of different online job search tools in their job search. For one item—state or government job banks—a statistical test suggests that those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club were more likely to use it “a lot” or “some of the time” than were the Standard Job Club group. However, as shown on Exhibit 5-4, there were no differences detected on other measures of use of such tools. Given the large number of items, the lack of an overall pattern, and the failure of the joint test to show any impact, this finding is most likely due to chance variation.

Exhibit 5-4 also shows that though there were no differences for individual tools between the Job Clubs, across both groups a majority of CalWORKs recipients used online job search tools to look for employment. About three quarters of those assigned to the Standard or Fast Track Job Club commonly used online search engines (e.g., Google or Bing) and online tools for creating and posting resumes (e.g.,

Monster). The least commonly used tool was social media sites (e.g., LinkedIn or Facebook), used by fewer than half those assigned to either Job Club.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the theory of change hypothesizes that because of their increased access to program staff, including job developers who connect specific individuals with employers, the Standard Job Club group might contact more employers about jobs compared to the Fast Track Job Club group. However, recipients assigned to either Job Club made contact with similar numbers of employers: an average of 13 employers in the early weeks after random assignment. Among the subset who looked for employment in either group, they contacted an average of about 15 employers during this time (a non-experimental analysis of the 67 percent of survey respondents who had looked for employment during the follow-up period).

Exhibit 5-4. Impacts on Use of Job Search Tools and Contacts with Employers in the Early Weeks after Random Assignment

Outcome	Standard Job Club	Fast Track Job Club	Difference (Impact)	Percent Impact (%)
Used job search tools "a lot" or "some of the time" (%)				
Online mobile tools for creating and posting resumes	81.5	79.9	1.6	2.0
Craigslist	58.6	57.9	0.7	1.2
Commercial job search services such as Monster	73.0	74.1	-1.2	-1.6
Web-based tools to find jobs based on skills and interest	65.0	67.1	-2.1	-3.1
Social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook	38.8	42.4	-3.6	-8.4
Online job searches such as Google or Bing	73.0	77.0	-4.0	-5.2
State or government job bank	54.4	66.1	-11.7*	-17.7
Number of employers contacted during program	12.6	13.3	-0.7	-5.1
<i>Among those who looked for employment</i>	<i>14.4</i>	<i>15.0</i>	<i>-0.5</i>	<i>-3.5</i>

Source: Six Month Follow-up Survey.

Sample: Sample includes 240 (120 Standard Job Club; 120 Fast Track Job Club) survey respondents. Non-experimental contrasts (italicized) include 161 (78 Standard Job Club; 83 Fast Track Job Club) survey respondents who looked for employment. Sample sizes vary for outcomes due to item nonresponse.

Notes: Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Test of null hypothesis that all employer contacts and use of job search tools impacts are zero: $F(9,231) = .75$; p -value = .67.

Test of null hypothesis that all factors affecting decisions to apply and tools identified as helpful impacts are zero: $F(25,127) = 2.41$; p -value < .01.

- ***Differences were in the factors that affected recipients' decision to apply for a job were found, with those in the Standard Job Club group being more likely to report that they applied for jobs where they knew the employer was looking for someone with their experience.***

The follow-up survey asked those who applied for jobs (a non-experimental comparison) what specific factors affected their decision to do so. As shown on **Error! Reference source not found.5**, a joint statistical test indicated that the factors affecting the decision to apply for a job differed between the Job Club groups. Among those who applied for a job, those assigned to the Standard Job Club were more likely than those in the Fast Track Job Club to report that knowing the employer was looking for someone with their skills and experience affected their decision to apply (82 percent versus 67 percent); and those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club were more likely that those in the Standard Job Club to report they felt like they needed to take anything they could get (80 percent versus 63 percent). This

could reflect the increased assistance received from job developers, who focused on matching recipients to appropriate jobs, by those in the Standard Job Club.

Overall, the most common factors that affected their decision to apply for a job for those in both programs were knowing they had the skills the employer was looking for, feeling strong and healthy, needing to take anything they could get, having good references, and not having anything to lose. Fewer reported getting help from a friend or family member, having a friend or relative at the employer, or getting help from program staff.

Exhibit 5-5. Impacts on Factors that Affect Decision to Apply for a Job and Tools that “Helped” in Job Search

Outcome	Standard Job Club	Fast Track Job Club	Difference (Impact)	Percent Impact (%)
Factors affected decision to apply for a job (%)				
<i>Knew they were looking for someone with my skills and experience</i>	82.1	66.8	15.3**	22.9
<i>Had a good reference</i>	66.3	54.8	11.4	20.9
<i>A friend or family member helped me apply</i>	18.6	15.9	2.7	17.2
<i>Did not have anything to lose</i>	54.5	53.4	1.2	2.2
<i>Had a good night's sleep</i>	43.1	42.3	0.7	1.7
<i>Person at employer looked friendly</i>	30.2	31.3	-1.1	-3.6
<i>Someone at Job Club helped me apply</i>	23.7	26.1	-2.3	-9.0
<i>I was dressed well</i>	43.5	50.1	-6.6	-13.2
<i>Someone at the employer was a friend or relative</i>	20.4	27.7	-7.3	-26.4
<i>Felt strong and healthy</i>	67.7	77.0	-9.3	-12.0
<i>Felt like I needed to take anything I could get</i>	63.3	80.5	-17.3**	-21.4
Following tools "helped" or were "big part of success" in last successful job search (for those who found work) (%)				
<i>Place ad about my availability</i>	22.5	11.7	10.9**	93.0
<i>Follow up leads by private employment agency</i>	25.5	15.9	9.6	60.3
<i>Check for jobs on state or government job bank</i>	23.3	16.3	7.0	42.9
<i>Check ads in newspaper</i>	11.6	6.9	4.7	68.6
<i>Online searches using Google, Bing, Yahoo</i>	38.6	35.2	3.4	9.6
<i>Asked for jobs at establishments without help-wanted signs</i>	19.0	16.8	2.2	13.1
<i>Check for jobs on commercial job search services</i>	37.4	36.7	0.6	1.7
<i>Find jobs on Facebook</i>	12.7	12.3	0.4	2.8
<i>Find jobs on Craigslist</i>	22.6	24.6	-2.0	-8.2
<i>Find jobs on LinkedIn</i>	10.7	14.8	-4.1	-27.6
<i>Looked for help-wanted signs at stores or other</i>	17.5	27.8	-10.3	-37.0
<i>Follow up leads by friend or family member</i>	35.4	46.0	-10.6	-23.0
<i>Follow up lead from Job Club</i>	32.4	46.5	-14.1	-30.3
<i>Call employers on the phone</i>	43.5	60.2	-16.7*	-27.7

Source: Six Month Follow-up Survey.

Sample: Non-experimental contrasts (italicized) include 152 (77 Standard Job Club; 75 Fast Track Job Club) survey respondents who found employment. Sample sizes vary for outcomes due to item nonresponse.

Notes: Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Test of null hypothesis that all factors affecting decisions to apply and tools identified as helpful impacts are zero: F(25,127) = 2.41; p-value < .01.

The survey also asked those who found work during the six month follow-up period (a non-experimental comparison) what tools “helped” or were a “big part of success” in obtaining their current or most recent job. For both Job Club groups, the most helpful tools (used by more than 35 percent in either program) were calling employers by phone, leads from friends or family, leads from program staff, checking for jobs on commercial job search services such as Monster, and online searches using Google, Bing, or Yahoo.

Finally, for those who found a job (a non-experimental comparison), those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club were more likely than those in the Standard Job Club to report calling employers on the phone as being a “big part of success” (60 percent versus 43 percent). Those assigned to the Standard Job Club were more likely than those in the Fast Track Job Club to report success with placing an ad indicating their availability (22 percent versus 11 percent), using social media, Craigslist, or a listserv.

5.4 Summary

We examined differences in the level and content of job search services received by those assigned to the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs. Overall, more than 70 percent of CalWORKs recipients assigned to either Job Club reported receiving any job search services, and no significant differences between the groups were detected.

Reflecting the two Job Club designs, during the initial weeks after random assignment, recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club reported participating in group job search assistance services more frequently than did recipients assigned to Fast Track. In addition, though those assigned to Fast Track were more likely to report meeting one-on-one with a staff person to find a job, those assigned to the Standard Job Club reported more frequent one-on-one meetings with program staff. Overall, those in the Standard Job Club received assistance more frequently—both in group and one-on-one settings—compared to the Fast Track Job Club.

Reflecting the curricula of the Standard Job Club group class, those assigned to the Standard Job Club were more likely to report receiving more assistance with workplace and soft skills, compared to those in the Fast Track Job Club. However, there were no differences between the groups in the receipt of specific job search skills instruction such as filling out a job application or developing a resume. There is also some evidence of better “job matching” in the Standard Job Club, potentially through the increased use of job developers. Among those who applied for a job (a non-experimental comparison), those assigned to the Standard Job Club were more likely to report knowing the employer was looking for someone with their skills.

6. Impacts on Employment and Earnings, Public Assistance Receipt, and Job Characteristics

Both the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs seek to transition CalWORKs recipients to employment, eliminating or reducing their need for public benefits. As described in Chapter 4, Standard Job Club does this by requiring recipients to participate in three weeks of job search and employment readiness activities in a group setting followed by five weeks of daily on-site supervised job search. In contrast, the Fast Track Job Club requires recipients to participate in three-and-a-half days of group job search assistance followed by seven weeks of independent job search with weekly on-site meetings.

The first section of this chapter considers differential impacts (Standard versus Fast Track Job Club) on employment and earnings, including the impact on the study's pre-specified confirmatory outcome: **employment in the second quarter after random assignment** (Section 6.1). The next section considers this impact differential on public-benefit-related outcomes, specifically CalWORKs and SNAP receipt (Section 6.2). Section 6.3 examines characteristics of the jobs that study participants took, including wages, hours, and benefits. Finally, Section 6.4 examines CalWORKs recipients' perceptions of their job search skills, motivation to work, and potential barriers to employment. The chapter is based on NDNH data, administrative data on CalWORKs and SNAP benefit receipt, and the six month study participant follow-up survey.³³

6.1. Impacts on Employment and Earnings

This section examines the differential impact of the Standard Job Club compared to the Fast Track Job Club on **employment levels and earnings**, based on NDNH data. The theory of change lays out two possible scenarios. On the one hand, the increased intensity of job search assistance provided by the Standard Job Club could translate into increased employment and earnings. On the other hand, CalWORKs recipients deemed work mandatory may already have the skills and knowledge to be effective at finding employment; if so, the Fast Track Job Club, with its relatively limited staff assistance, may be as effective as or possibly more effective than the structured and time-intensive services provided by the Standard Job Club.

³³ As described in Chapter 3, the large number of exploratory hypotheses introduces a multiple comparisons problem again; that is, that some of the impacts would simply by chance appear to be statistically significant. In part, we address the problem by focusing on patterns of findings across related outcomes, rather than reporting on every significant finding. For outcomes measured in dollars (e.g., earnings), we use aggregate measures (e.g., cumulative earnings over the follow-up period) to draw conclusions about differential impacts of the two Job Club programs. We use a similar approach for measures of receipt of public benefits and conduct joint statistical tests.

Though the study focuses on a six month (two-quarter) follow-up period, three quarters of NDNH data (not including the quarter of random assignment) are available for nearly all study sample members.³⁴ We exclude the quarter of random assignment from the impact analysis because if an individual applied for benefits at the end of a quarter, the quarter of random assignment would be almost entirely prior to the start of the Standard or Fast Track Job Club.³⁵

- ***We do not detect an impact on employment levels in the second quarter after random assignment for the Standard Job Club versus Fast Track. In addition, no differences in earnings were detected.***

In the second quarter after random assignment, 56 percent of those assigned to either the Standard or Fast Track Job Club were employed (Exhibit 6-1).³⁶ We do not detect a difference in the employment rate between the two groups. Thus, with respect to the confirmatory outcome—measured by earnings in the second quarter after random assignment—the evaluation does not identify one program as more effective than the other.

It is important to note because the sample size is relatively small (see Section 3.1), we are not able to rule out the possibility that employment rates differ by as much as 7.5 percentage points.³⁷ Given results from past studies, a difference of 7.5 percentage points would be a large impact (Hamilton, 2002). Moreover, we do not detect a difference in employment over the two-quarter follow-up period, or in the first and third quarters after random assignment.

³⁴ There are two recipients in the sample with only two quarters of follow-up data available. NDNH records in the third follow-up quarter are treated as missing for these individuals. Additionally, NDNH was unable to match study records to UI records for 14 recipients (six in the Standard Job Club and eight in the Fast Track Job Club). Earnings and employment data are missing for them.

³⁵ Depending on when a recipient was randomly assigned during a quarter, the follow-up period begins anywhere from the day after randomization to three months after randomization.

³⁶ Quarterly *earnings* are calculated as the sum of all wages (i.e., earnings; not earnings per hour) reported to the NDNH for an individual in a calendar quarter (e.g., January through March). If the individual does not have any wages reported in a given quarter, earnings are considered to be zero for that quarter. *Employment* is constructed from the calculated quarterly earnings: if an individual has positive earnings in a quarter, that individual was employed; if earnings in a quarter are zero, the individual was not employed.

³⁷ The 90 percent confidence interval for the confirmatory outcome (i.e., estimated impact on employment in the second full quarter after random assignment) ranges from -7.6 to 7.5 percentage points. Appendix C reports standard errors and confidence intervals for all impact estimates.

Exhibit 6-1. Impacts on Employment and Earnings

Outcome	Standard Job Club	Fast Track Job Club	Difference (Impact)	Percent Impact (%)
Confirmatory outcome				
Employed in Q2 (%)	56.3	56.3	-0.1	-0.1
Employment (%)				
Any Employment in Q1-Q2	65.0	65.6	-0.6	-1.0
Any Employment in Q1-Q3	70.6	71.6	-1.0	-1.4
Employed in Q1	52.9	51.2	1.7	3.4
Employed in Q3	58.0	55.2	2.8	5.1
Earnings (\$)				
Cumulative Earnings in Q1-Q2	4,487	4,355	132	3.0
Cumulative Earnings in Q1-Q3	7,467	7,003	464	6.6
Earnings in Q1	1,901	1,868	33	1.8
Earnings in Q2	2,586	2,487	99	4.0
Earnings in Q3	2,943	2,638	304	11.5

Source: National Directory of New Hires.

Sample: Sample includes 477 (238 Standard Job Club; 239 Fast Track Job Club) individuals with three quarters of outcome data. We treat two individuals who are not observed in the third quarter as item-level nonresponse.

Notes: Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Average cumulative earnings during the two-quarter follow-up period were approximately \$4,500 for those assigned to the Standard Job Club and approximately \$4,350 for those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club. The difference of roughly \$150 is not distinguishable from zero. Among recipients who worked, earnings averaged approximately \$6,600 over the six month period (not shown). Again, because the sample size is small, there is uncertainty in the earnings impacts.³⁸

6.2. Impacts on Public Benefit Receipt

This section presents differential impacts on benefit receipt for the CalWORKs program and on food support benefits from SNAP. CalWORKs recipients were required to participate in the Standard or Fast Track Job Club as a condition of receiving CalWORKs benefits. Chapter 3 described two separate mechanisms by which the Job Clubs could affect receipt of benefits: (1) a Job Club that increased employment could result in reduced benefits; and/or (2) the more rigorous requirements associated with the Standard Job Club could lead to a loss of benefits, due to recipients being sanctioned or leaving assistance to avoid its requirements.

- ***We do not find a difference in receipt of CalWORKs benefits or CalWORKs benefit amounts for the Standard Job Club versus the Fast Track Job Club.***

Given that all sample members were receiving CalWORKs at random assignment, rates of CalWORKs receipt were high for both the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs with no difference between the two

³⁸ The 90 percent confidence interval ranges from a \$769 difference in earnings between the groups, with higher average earnings for the Fast Track Job Club group, to a \$1,034 difference, with higher earnings for the Standard group. Appendix C reports standard errors and confidence intervals for all impact estimates.

(Exhibit 6-2): more than 95 percent of recipients received CalWORKs benefits in the two quarters following random assignment, with benefits valued at approximately \$2,800.³⁹ As discussed in Chapter 4 and also shown on Exhibit 6-2, we do not detect a statistically significant difference in sanction rates for recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club compared to those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club (34 percent versus 26 percent). Given the lack of impacts on employment, earnings, and sanction rates, it is not surprising that there were no differences detected on receipt or amount of CalWORKs benefits for the Standard and Fast Track Job Clubs.

The high CalWORKs benefit receipt rate, even though more than half of recipients were working (see Exhibit 6-1), likely is due to CalWORKs grant levels and income eligibility rules that allow recipients to combine cash assistance and work. For example, a family of three can earn approximately \$1,430 per month and technically remain eligible for cash assistance, though their benefit amount may be small.⁴⁰

³⁹ We convert the monthly benefits data to quarterly data to align the follow-up period for impacts on public benefits with the follow-up period for impacts on earnings. This alignment is important because earnings directly determine benefit eligibility, and one might expect impacts on benefits to occur in the same time window as an earnings impact. We focus on the first two quarters following the quarter of random assignment. The *value* of quarterly benefits is calculated as the sum of monthly payments. *Participation* in the programs is constructed from the calculated quarterly benefits: if an individual has benefits in a quarter, that individual was coded as receiving benefits for that quarter; if an individual's benefits in a quarter are zero, the individual was coded as not receiving benefits for that quarter.

⁴⁰ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/welfare-rules-databook-state-tanf-policies-as-of-july-2017>

Exhibit 6-2. Impacts on CalWORKs and SNAP Benefit Receipt

Outcome	Standard Job Club	Fast Track Job Club	Difference (Impact)	Percent Impact (%)
CalWORKs				
Received benefits (%)				
Quarters 1-2	96.7	95.5	1.2	1.2
Quarter 1	95.8	95.2	0.7	0.7
Quarter 2	77.4	80.2	-2.8	-3.4
Benefit amount (\$)				
Quarters 1-2	2,797	2,827	-30	-1.1
Quarter 1	1,565	1,599	-34	-2.1
Quarter 2	1,232	1,229	4	0.3
Ever sanctioned (%)	33.5	26.4	7.0	26.6
SNAP				
Received benefits (%)				
Quarters 1-2	96.2	98.5	-2.2	-2.3
Quarter 1	96.2	98.0	-1.8	-1.8
Quarter 2	92.1	92.5	-0.5	-0.5
Benefit amount (\$)				
Quarters 1-2	2,517	2,534	-17	-0.7
Quarter 1	1,299	1,312	-12	-0.9
Quarter 2	1,218	1,222	-4	-0.3

Source: Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance records.

Sample: Sample includes 431 (220 Standard Job Club; 211 Fast Track Job Club) individuals with administrative records.

Notes: Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

- *We do not find a difference in receipt of SNAP benefits or SNAP benefit amounts for the Standard Job Club versus the Fast Track Job Club.*

As was the case with CalWORKs cash assistance benefits, we do not detect any differences in SNAP receipt or benefit amounts in the two quarters following random assignment for recipients assigned to the Standard or Fast Track Job Clubs. We find similarly high rates of SNAP benefit receipt, in excess of 95 percent, during the six month follow-up period for both groups. Recipients received approximately \$2,500 in cumulative SNAP benefits during this time. Again, given employment levels of just over 50 percent (see Exhibit 6-1), many CalWORKs recipients likely received SNAP benefits in addition to their earnings.⁴¹

6.3. Impacts on Job Characteristics

This section considers differential impacts on the characteristics of CalWORKs recipients' current or most recent job, as reported on the six month follow-up survey. The discussion focuses on wages, hours worked,

⁴¹ A family of three can earn approximately \$3,400 per month and qualify for SNAP benefits. <http://mycalfresh.org/the-basics/>.

job benefits, and job schedule.⁴² The discussion also considers time to find employment, for those who found a job. The theory of change is ambiguous about the direction of any differential impact. For instance, the less intensive participation requirement of the Fast Track Job Club might allow individuals assigned to this program to reject lower-quality job offers in favor of waiting for higher-quality job offers, allowing them to ultimately obtain jobs with higher wages, better benefits, and more regular schedules. Alternatively, the increased access to job search assistance services in the Standard Job Club, including job developers who provide connections to jobs and employers, might allow those recipients to obtain higher-quality job offers than those in Fast Track.

- ***We do not detect a difference in self-reported employment during the six month follow-up period for the Standard Job Club versus Fast Track.***

As shown on Exhibit 6-3, roughly 60 percent of CalWORKs recipients assigned to either Job Club reported working for pay *at any time during the six month follow-up period*.⁴³ However, 49 percent of those assigned to the Standard Job Club reported currently working for pay *at the time they responded to the six month follow-up survey* compared to 34 percent of those assigned to Fast Track, an impact of 15 percentage points. The reason for this impact is not clear, although it suggests that those in the Fast Track Job Club may become unemployed more quickly than those in the Standard Job Club.

- ***We do not detect a difference in the time from random assignment to starting a job for the Standard Job Club versus Fast Track.***

One hypothesized benefit of the Fast Track Job Club, because of its shorter group class, is that it would move recipients into employment more quickly. We do not find evidence that either program is more effective than the other at reducing the time it took recipients to begin working. Average time to employment is approximately 17 weeks for those assigned to the Standard Job Club and 13 weeks for those assigned to Fast Track; the difference in impacts is not statistically significant.

- ***Recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club reported more favorable characteristics in their current or most recent job compared to those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club.***

The six month follow-up survey collected information on three characteristics of the respondent's current or most recent job: pay, hours worked, job benefits, and job schedule.⁴⁴ As shown on Exhibit 6-3 below, there is

⁴² These results include all survey respondents; in particular, those with no recent job were coded as zero for these outcomes. Thus, these are experimental comparisons and can be interpreted as estimates of program impacts.

⁴³ Where we measure similar outcomes using both survey and NDNH data, we consider NDNH findings to be more reliable. Survey data are available for only the 49 percent of the randomized sample who responded, whereas NDNH data are available for more than 99 percent of the sample. NDNH data are also not subject to recall bias like survey data are. We use nonresponse weighting to address survey nonresponse bias, but complete data still outperform statistical adjustment. However, the possibility remains that the respondent could be self-employed or work for an employer that does not submit earnings data to NDNH.

⁴⁴ Unless explicitly noted, these results include all survey respondents; in particular, those with no recent job were coded as zero for these outcomes. Thus, these are experimental comparisons and can be interpreted as estimates of program impacts.

some evidence to suggest that those assigned to the Standard Job Club were more likely to earn higher hourly wages than those assigned to Fast Track. Specifically, those assigned to the Standard Job Club were more likely to earn an hourly wage greater than \$15 per hour than were those assigned to Fast Track (18 percent versus eight percent). However, those assigned to Fast Track were more likely to earn an hourly wage ranging from \$10 to \$13 per hour than those assigned to the Standard Job Club (40 percent versus 22 percent). Similarly, recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club were more likely to earn more than \$750 per week than those assigned to Fast Track (10 percent versus three percent), and recipients assigned to the Fast Track Job Club were more likely to earn between \$300 and \$450 per week than those assigned to the Standard Job Club (22 percent versus 11 percent).⁴⁵

Despite these results, as also shown on Exhibit 6-3, we detected no difference in the average hourly wage between Standard Job Club and Fast Track Job Club members—neither among the entire sample (not shown) nor among those who had worked for pay since random assignment (a non-experimental comparison). Those assigned to the Standard Job Club who had worked since random assignment earned an average of \$15.28 per hour, whereas those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club earned an average of \$13.71 per hour, and the difference is not statistically significant. Along with lack of impacts on earnings discussed above (based on NDNH data), the results here indicate the higher wages observed in the distribution of wages for those assigned to the Standard Job Club were not substantial enough to affect overall earnings.

Those assigned to the Standard Job Club also reported some better job benefits than those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club: about 40 percent of the Standard group had a job with paid sick leave and holidays compared to 26 percent of the Fast Track group. Across both groups, only about one-third of recipients had a job with health insurance, and about half worked a regular daytime schedule.

⁴⁵ Weekly earnings are calculated from hourly wage and hours worked.

Exhibit 6-3. Impacts on Job Characteristics

Outcome	Standard Job Club	Fast Track Job Club	Difference (Impact)	Percent Impact (%)
Worked for pay during follow-up period (%)	63.1	60.7	2.4	4.0
Currently working for pay (%)	48.5	33.9	14.5**	42.8
Time to employment (weeks)	17.4	13.3	4.1	30.5
Pay in current or most recent job				
Weekly earnings (\$)	311	292	19	6.5
\$150–\$300/week (%)	16.1	16.9	-0.8	-4.6
\$300–\$450/week (%)	11.1	22.4	-11.3**	-50.5
\$450–\$600/week (%)	14.7	13.4	1.4	10.3
\$600–\$750/week (%)	6.4	6.8	-0.4	-5.5
Greater than \$750/week (%)	10.3	2.7	7.7**	>100.0
<i>Weekly earnings for those who worked for pay (\$)</i>	<i>516</i>	<i>511</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>0.9</i>
Hours worked per week				
Among those who worked for pay	21.3	20.8	0.5	2.2
	<i>34.0</i>	<i>35.4</i>	<i>-1.4</i>	<i>-3.8</i>
Current or most recent job paid (%):				
Less than \$10/hour	6.8	3.8	2.9	77.0
\$10–\$13/hour	21.5	41.5	-20.0***	-48.2
\$13–\$15/hour	15.2	8.6	6.6	76.2
Greater than \$15/hour	17.9	7.9	10.0**	>100.0
<i>Hourly wage for those who worked for pay (\$/hour)</i>	<i>15.28</i>	<i>13.71</i>	<i>1.57</i>	<i>11.5</i>
Job benefits				
Paid sick days (%)	41.4	26.8	14.7**	54.8
Paid holidays (%)	39.0	26.3	12.7*	48.3
Paid vacation (%)	31.0	24.3	6.7	27.7
Health insurance (%)	33.4	29.3	4.0	13.8
Retirement or pension benefits (%)	26.3	22.3	4.0	17.9
Job schedule (%)				
Regular daytime schedule	49.8	46.4	3.4	7.4
Regular evening shift	2.9	8.0	-5.2	-64.3
Regular night shift	2.9	0.2	2.7	>100.0
Rotating shift	1.7	3.1	-1.4	-43.9
Other schedule	4.5	0.9	3.6**	>100.0

Source: Six Month Follow-up Survey.

Sample: Sample includes 240 (120 Standard Job Club; 120 Fast Track Job Club) survey respondents. Non-experimental contrasts (italicized) include 152 (77 Standard Job Club; 75 Fast Track Job Club) survey respondents who worked for pay since random assignment. Sample sizes vary for outcomes due to item nonresponse.

Notes: Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent. Non-experimental comparisons appear in italics. Experimental comparisons: the 37 percent of the sample who never worked for pay are included in analyses with 0 values. Time-to-employment estimates come from a survival analysis described in detail in Appendix C: Expanded Results for Chapter 6. Test of null hypothesis that all impacts (other than time to employment) are zero: $F(26,213) = 2.52$; p -value < .01.

6.4. Impacts on Perceptions of Job Search Skills, Motivation, and Barriers to Work

The follow-up survey asked sample members about a range of issues that might affect their interest in and ability to work. This section presents impacts on self-perceptions of job search skills, motivation to work, and potential barriers to employment. The theory of change suggests that the additional life skills and job search assistance training received by recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club would increase their confidence in their job search skills, through either increasing actual skills or improving their motivation to work. We also analyze perceived barriers to employment because they are potentially related to the success of the job search process.

- *Recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club more often reported possessing job search skills and understanding the type of job that was appropriate for them.*

Compared to those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club, recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club were *more* likely to “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statements “I know how to make a plan that will help me achieve my goals for the next five years” (93 percent versus 73 percent) and “I know the occupation I want to be in” (88 percent versus 79 percent); and those assigned to the Standard Job Club participants were *less* likely to “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement “I am not sure what type of job is best for me.” These differences likely reflect material covered in the Standard Job Club three-week group class that was not included in the three-and-a-half day Fast Track Job Club class due to time constraints. It may also reflect the assistance job developers provided to assess recipients’ personal strengths and interests, identify skills transferable to the labor market, and engage in goal setting and career planning. As discussed in Chapter 4, Standard Job Club staff reported being able to provide more assistance on these issues due to the increased time recipients in this Job Club spent in the program office.

Although the vast majority of recipients assigned to either Job Club reported it is “very” important to have a job, those assigned to the Fast Track Job Club said so at a higher rate (99 percent versus 93 percent), whereas those assigned to the Standard Job Club were more likely than those assigned to Fast Track to say it is “somewhat” important (seven percent versus two percent). That it is “not” important to have a job was another option in the survey, but no respondents selected it.

The most common barrier to interfere with work, job search, or the ability to take a job (that was examined by the study) was child care arrangements, affecting roughly one-third of recipients assigned to either Job Club group. The next most common barrier was transportation arrangements, affecting approximately one-quarter of recipients, followed by health issues. Alcohol or drug use was another option in the survey, but no recipients selected it as a barrier. There was no difference in perceived barriers across the two groups.

Exhibit 6-4. Impacts on Perceptions of Job Search Skills, Motivation, and Barriers to Work

Outcome	Standard Job Club	Fast Track Job Club	Difference (Impact)	Percent Impact (%)
Agree or strongly agree with following statements (%)				
I know how to make a plan that will help me achieve my goals for the next 5 years	92.9	72.6	20.3***	28.0
I know the occupation I want to be in	87.9	79.2	8.7**	10.9
I know the type of employer I want to work for	85.1	83.9	1.2	1.4
I am not sure what type of education and training program is best for me	26.9	34.1	-7.2	-21.2
I am not sure how to accurately assess my abilities and challenges	26.8	29.6	-2.8	-9.4
I am not sure what type of job is best for me	26.2	35.8	-9.6*	-26.8
Importance of having a job (%)				
Very important to have a job	93.1	98.5	-5.4*	-5.5
Somewhat important to have a job	6.9	1.5	5.4*	>100.0
Situations that “very often” or “fairly often” interfered with work, job search or ability to take a job (%)				
Child care arrangements	34.2	35.5	-1.3	-3.8
Transportation	23.5	24.1	-0.6	-2.6
Illness or health condition	8.6	8.5	0.1	1.0

Source: Six month Follow-up Survey.

Sample: Sample includes 240 (120 Standard Job Club; 120 Fast Track Job Club) survey respondents. Sample sizes vary for outcomes due to item nonresponse.

Notes: Statistical significance levels for two-sided tests are indicated with asterisks, as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Test of null hypothesis that all impacts are zero: F(11,229) = 2.73; p-value < .01.

6.5. Summary

This study did not detect a difference in employment in the second quarter after random assignment between the Standard and the Fast Track Job Clubs. Thus, with respect to the confirmatory outcome, the evaluation does not identify one program as more effective than the other. Further, no differences were detected in earnings, sanction levels, and benefit receipt between the groups. Given the small sample size, the impacts are imprecisely estimated and we cannot rule out the possibility that one program does have meaningfully larger impacts than the other on employment and public benefits receipt.

There is some evidence to suggest recipients assigned to the Standard Job Club were more likely to obtain jobs with higher hourly wages while those in Fast Track lost their jobs more quickly. However, given the lack of earnings impacts, these differences are small at best. Nonetheless, those assigned to the Standard Job Club were more likely to have jobs with paid holidays and sick days than were those assigned to Fast Track; the Standard group were also more likely to report possessing job search skills and understanding the type of job that could be appropriate for them.

7. Conclusions

There is a considerable interest at the federal, state, and local levels in the effects of job search assistance services and participation requirements on employment and public assistance outcomes for recipients of cash assistance and other public benefits such as SNAP. The Sacramento County JSA evaluation results have a number of implications for policymakers and program administrators to consider.

- ***The two Job Clubs were well implemented and resulted in differences in service receipt, but they did not affect labor market outcomes or benefit receipt outcomes.***

Participation in job search assistance services was high for both groups. Those assigned to the Standard Job Club participated more frequently in group and one-on-one job search activities compared to those in Fast Track, and those in the Standard Job Club received more assistance with workplace behaviors and soft skills. However, inasmuch as the goal of rigorous work requirements is to improve employment outcomes, this did not occur in Sacramento County. While the impact estimates are imprecise due to small sample sizes, the study did not find a difference in employment rates (the study's confirmatory outcome) or in earnings during the six month follow-up period. This sample size limits the study's ability to detect all but large impacts.

In addition, the more burdensome participation requirement of the Standard Job Club did not affect recipients' public benefit receipt. The overall participation levels in program activities and sanction rates were similar across the two Job Clubs. Moreover, the public assistance receipt rates and amounts were the same for the two programs, indicating the Standard Job Club's more rigorous requirements did not deter recipients from remaining on assistance. We note that work requirements as part of public benefit programs sometimes have goals beyond improving employment and reducing public benefit receipt, such as establishing a *quid pro quo* for benefits.

- ***The operational costs of the Standard Job Club are likely higher than of the Fast Track, but this additional cost did not result in a change in employment, earnings, or public assistance outcomes.***

This study did not specifically estimate program costs, but the intensive Standard Job Club required more staff time—including group facilitators and job developers—and thus was likely more expensive to operate than the Fast Track. However, the additional investment required by the Standard Job Club did not result in better economic outcomes. It is possible that certain subgroups of CalWORKs recipients benefited from the Standard Job Club, for example, those with more limited work histories. If so, that would indicate it is appropriate to target these more intensive services to more disadvantaged recipients. This study was unable to address the issue due to limited sample sizes; however, this is an area for further consideration and research.

- ***Many cash assistance recipients are working, but their earnings remained low and receipt of public assistance high.***

Even though they met the requirements for being mandated to work under TANF rules, recipients served through the Job Clubs in Sacramento County were a disadvantaged group. They experienced high

levels of unemployment and benefit receipt throughout the follow-up period: close to half were not working, more than 80 percent received CalWORKs benefits, and more than 95 percent received SNAP six months after program enrollment. Even among those who worked, cumulative earnings over the six month follow-up period were just about \$6,600, on average, and the hourly wage was about \$14 per hour for both groups. Though these results may not be surprising given the disadvantaged nature of those served by the Job Clubs, inasmuch as the goal of the CalWORKs program is to improve workers' earnings trajectories so they are no longer dependent on public assistance, other strategies may be needed to help achieve that goal.

Overall, this study of job search assistance services in Sacramento County, California, provides new, rigorous experimental evidence on the differential effects of two approaches to job search assistance for cash assistance recipients —one approach requiring a three-week group class and five weeks of daily attendance in a program office, the other requiring a three-and-a-half day class followed by weekly check-ins for seven weeks. Overall, no differences in employment, earnings, or public benefit receipt were observed. The study highlights some of the challenges short-term job search interventions face in moving cash assistance recipients to work, particularly to jobs that will improve their overall economic well-being.

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