



PROGRAM SNAPSHOT: FaDSS

By Kristen Joyce and Sheena McConnell

Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations

To learn more about the potential of coaching to help Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other low-income people reach economic security, OPRE awarded a contract to Mathematica Policy Research and Abt Associates to conduct an evaluation of employment coaching interventions. The evaluation will use an experimental research design to examine the effectiveness of coaching interventions that aim to help low-income individuals succeed in the labor market. It will also examine the implementation of the coaching interventions, the impact of coaching on self-regulation skills, and the role of self-regulation skills in generating any impacts on employment outcomes. Descriptive findings will be available in fall/winter 2019 and impact findings will be available beginning in 2021.

For more information visit the project's [web page](#) or [email](#) us about receiving regular updates on the project.



Iowa's [Family Development and Self-Sufficiency \(FaDSS\)](#) program is part of a select group of employment coaching interventions participating in the Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations, funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE), within the Administration for Children and Families.

How does FaDSS implement employment coaching?

FaDSS provides

assessments, coaching, and referrals during home visits. FaDSS is a voluntary program that serves only TANF recipients. The objective of FaDSS is to help families achieve family stability and economic independence. The coaches, called Certified Family Development Specialists, visit families in their homes to complete both formal and informal assessments and help develop their goals.

- **Assessment.** The coaches assess a family's strengths and challenges using multiple tools. They also screen for domestic violence and assess child development. The findings from the assessments inform the goal setting process.

What is employment coaching?



Coaching involves a trained staff person or coach working with a participant to set personalized goals, as well as supporting, motivating, and providing feedback over time to the participant as he or she pursues those goals. The coach is not directive but works collaboratively with the participant.

- **Goal setting.** Coaches work with families to set two types of goals: (1) family stabilization goals (considered short-term, in the areas of housing and transportation) and (2) economic self-sufficiency goals (considered long-term, in the areas of education and employment). The goal-setting process is family-driven, taking into consideration the needs of the family as a whole. All home visits are centered on goal setting and pursuit, tracking progress toward previously set goals, assessing whether new goals are appropriate, and identifying action steps to be taken before the next home visit. Action steps are developed to take advantage of a family's assessed strengths.
- **Coaching frequency.** The coaches aim to meet with families in their homes six times during the first three months. Starting in the fourth month, the level of contact is determined by the needs of the family but at a minimum the coaches meet with families monthly, with two additional contacts each month.
- **Coach characteristics.** The coaches' qualifications are determined by each local agency. Ninety percent of the specialists start the job with a bachelor's degree from varied disciplines. All specialists across the state must be oriented to FaDSS procedures and policies upon being hired. In addition, specialists must receive the Family Development Certification training from the National Resource Center at the University of Iowa within one year of being hired.
- **Other services.** The coaches also provide families with one-on-one work readiness, life skills, and self-advocacy instruction and referrals to community resources.

How is FaDSS funded and whom does it serve?

Iowa's Department of Human Rights implements FaDSS through subcontracts with 17 local agencies across the state in urban and rural counties. It is funded through the TANF block grant and state general funds and serves TANF recipients with barriers to self-sufficiency.

Where and when is FaDSS being evaluated?

Seven local agencies in Iowa are participating in the evaluation. Study enrollment began in June 2018 and will continue for about 12 months.

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