



## PROGRAM SNAPSHOT: MyGOALS

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.



[MyGoals for Employment Success](#) (MyGoals) is part of a select group of employment coaching interventions being evaluated under 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 MyGoals implement employment coaching?

MyGoals is a coaching demonstration that provides employment coaching and financial support to unemployed adults. MyGoals was designed by MDRC, an education and social policy research organization. The program's objective is to help participants improve their overall economic security and decrease their reliance on public assistance in the long term. MyGoals uses a highly structured and nondirective coaching process to assist clients in four main domains: (1) employment and career management; (2) education and training; (3) financial management; and (4) personal and family well-being.

#### 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.

- **Assessment.** During the initial meeting, MyGoals coaches assess participants' interests, strengths, experiences, credentials, and self-regulation skills, such as the ability to stay organized and control one's emotions. The results of the assessment can help inform goal setting.
- **Goal setting.** Through motivational interviewing, the coaches guide participants through a process for identifying long-term goals within one or more domains. They then develop highly specific short-term goals (to be achieved within as little as one or two weeks) and action steps that build toward their long-term goals, with continual review of progress and revision of strategies, as needed. If participants encounter situations in which self-regulation weaknesses interfere with goal achievement, the coaches help them choose effective responses, drawing on practices developed by behavioral psychologists.
- **Coaching frequency.** Coaches meet with participants every three to four weeks during the first two years and are encouraged to check in between sessions using phone calls, text messages, or emails. They will also meet during a third year, but less frequently.
- **Coach characteristics.** The MyGoals coaches have case management experience from previous positions. Several of the coaches formerly worked for the housing authority in different capacities. All of the coaches have at least a bachelor's degree, and a few coaches also have a master's degree.
- **Other services.** MyGoals offers participants a monthly stipend for engaging in the program and tiered financial incentives for obtaining and retaining employment. Participants have access to specially prepared and locally specific labor market information highlighting relevant job openings and employers, and directories that list training opportunities offered by partner organizations.



### How is MyGoals funded and whom does it serve?

The MyGoals demonstration is being funded by the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, the JPB Foundation, the Weinberg Foundation, and the Houston Endowment. It is being implemented in Baltimore, Maryland, and Houston, Texas, within the cities' housing authorities. The program is targeted to unemployed adults between ages 18 and 56 who are receiving support from the housing authority, including Section 8 voucher holders and residents of public housing.

### Where and when is MyGoals being evaluated?

Mathematica Policy Research, Abt Associates, and MDRC are evaluating MyGoals in both the Baltimore and Houston sites. Study enrollment began in March 2017 in Houston and April 2017 in Baltimore and will continue for about two years in both sites.

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Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre>

Contract/Task Number: HHSP233201500035I / HHSP23337018T

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Suggested citation: Joyce, Kristen and Sheena McConnell (2019). "MyGoals program snapshot." OPRE Report #2019-61. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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