The Employment Retention
and Advancement Project

Findings for the Eugene and Medford, Oregon, Models: Implementation and Early Impacts for Two Programs That Sought to Encourage Advancement Among Low-Income Workers

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Overview

This report assesses the implementation and early effects of two programs in Eugene and Medford, Oregon, that provided individualized employment retention and career advancement services to low-wage workers, including counseling on how to find a better job, assistance in accessing education and training programs, advice on conflict resolution on the job, and referrals to supportive services. Targeted to current or recent recipients of welfare benefits, food stamps, or child care subsidies, the programs are among the 16 models that MDRC is testing around the country as part of the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project, under contract to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, with additional funding from the U.S. Department of Labor.

In the Eugene and Medford tests, from 2002 to 2004, individuals were randomly assigned either to an ERA group, eligible for ERA services, or to a control group, whose members were not eligible for ERA but who could seek services from other providers in their communities. For this report, the employment and earnings of single-parent sample members in these two groups were tracked and compared for 1.5 years following their dates of random assignment.

The Eugene program was jointly operated by staff from the local welfare agency and a community college. The Medford program also involved the local welfare agency, which partnered with The Job Council, a local community college, and the Oregon Employment Department.

Key Findings

- **Staff in both programs provided individualized employment retention and advancement services but also encountered unanticipated levels of demand for reemployment services.** Staff assisted clients — all of whom were working as of random assignment — in developing career plans and provided counseling on how to advance on the job or find a better job and also made referrals to education or training programs. Frequent contact was emphasized, and assistance was tailored to participants' career goals and interests. Clients experienced frequent job loss, however, requiring staff to redirect their efforts to rapid reemployment and detracting from the career counseling envisioned for the program. In addition, funding and staffing cuts limited the ability of staff, particularly in the Medford program, to provide the full array of services throughout operations. The programs tended to serve the most highly motivated clients or those who were in crisis.

- **Compared with their respective control groups, both programs moderately increased participation in retention- and advancement-related activities.** Both programs increased individuals' likelihood of getting help with finding a better job while working or with career assessment. In addition, the Eugene program increased the proportion of individuals who received help with job search and job preparation, while the Medford ERA program increased the proportion of individuals who participated in education or training activities. Still, differences in service receipt or participation between the program and control groups were smaller than expected.

- **Neither program increased employment retention or advancement during the first 1.5 years of follow-up.** The results suggest that offering counseling and coaching to low-wage workers in the manner done by these two programs may not be enough to increase their likelihood of remaining employed or advancing. MDRC will continue to track the longer-term impacts of these two programs on employment and earnings.

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About the Employment Retention and Advancement Project

The federal welfare overhaul of 1996 ushered in myriad policy changes aimed at getting low-income parents off public assistance and into employment. These changes — especially cash welfare's transformation from an entitlement into a time-limited benefit contingent on work participation — have intensified the need to help low-income families become economically self-sufficient and remain so in the long term. Although a fair amount is known about how to help welfare recipients prepare for and find jobs in the first place, the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project is the most comprehensive effort thus far to ascertain which approaches help welfare recipients and other low-income people stay steadily employed and advance in their jobs.

Launched in 1999 and slated to end in 2009, the ERA project encompasses more than a dozen demonstration programs and uses a rigorous research design to analyze the programs' implementation and impacts on research sample members, who were randomly assigned to the study groups. The study was conceived and funded by the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; supplemental support has been provided by the U.S. Department of Labor. The project is being conducted by MDRC. Most of the ERA programs were designed specifically for the purposes of evaluation, in some cases building on prior initiatives. Because the programs' aims and target populations vary, so do their services:

- **Advancement programs** focus on helping low-income workers move into better jobs by offering such services as career counseling and education and training.
- **Placement and retention programs** seek to help participants find and hold jobs and are aimed mostly at "hard-to-employ" people, such as welfare recipients who have disabilities or substance abuse problems.
- **Mixed-goals programs** focus on job placement, retention, and advancement, in that order, and are targeted primarily to welfare recipients who are searching for jobs.

The ERA project's evaluation component investigates the following aspects of each program:

- **Implementation.** What services does the program provide? How are those services delivered? Who receives them? How are problems addressed?

- **Impacts.** To what extent does the program improve employment rates, job retention, advancement, and other key outcomes? Looking across programs, which approaches are most effective, and for whom?

A total of 16 ERA models have been implemented in eight states: California, Illinois, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, and Texas. But — given significant differences in implementation in the three sites operating the Texas model — the project ultimately will yield 18 independent estimates of site effectiveness.[1]

The evaluation draws on administrative and fiscal records, surveys of participants, and field visits to the sites.

[1]Past reports list 15 ERA models. This number was changed, however, to recognize that one of the tests in Riverside, California, actually involved two models, given the two initiatives' different sets of service providers and program rules. Note that "site effectiveness" refers to the effectiveness of different models or to the effectiveness of a model that was implemented very differently in a number of locations.

Acknowledgments

The Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) evaluation would not have been possible without the cooperation, commitment, and hard work of a wide range of administrators and staff in all the ERA sites. Notably, findings from all the sites in the evaluation contribute to addressing the study's key questions. All the sites stepped forward to innovate in a challenging and important area of social policy and practice, and as much can be learned from models that so far are not showing economic impacts as from those that are.

For the evaluation of the PROGRESS program and the TAAG program in, respectively, Eugene and Medford, Oregon, the following individuals deserve special thanks.

Ron Taylor, Roma Vasquez, Bob Proctor, and Lisa Lewis of the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) and Sue Cronin of The JOBS Council have been vital to the evaluation. They played major roles in the program design, worked closely with MDRC to set up and monitor the evaluation, assisted in arranging many site visits, facilitated a range of other research and data collection activities, and provided support throughout the study. Guidance and support also came from James Neely, Michael Buckley, Sandy Dugan, John Radich, Elizabeth Lindbloom, Ida Saito, and Daniel Kinsey of DHS; Shirl Meads of Lane Community College and Laurie Rydell of Rogue Community College; and Bob Fletcher, formerly of The JOBS Council. Program staff graciously accommodated numerous MDRC site visits and data collection activities and also willingly discussed their experiences with MDRC researchers and participated in an in-depth study of how they spent their time at work. Kevin Hern and Lisa Baker of DHS provided administrative records data to MDRC for the study.

At MDRC, we thank Barbara Goldman, Stephen Freedman, Jacquie Anderson, Cynthia Miller, and Margaret Bald, who reviewed multiple versions of the report and provided several useful suggestions. Stephen Freedman also helped oversee data collection from the beginning. Susan Blank insightfully reorganized an early version of the report. Tojuana Riley, Daniel Schlaff and Carolyn Fraker provided excellent research assistance, and Diane Singer provided administrative support. Joel Gordon and Galina Farberova managed the random assignment design. Gilda Azurdia and Zakia Barnes did the programming and assisted in the analysis. Robert Weber edited the report, and David Sobel prepared it for publication.

Finally, we extend our deep appreciation to the hundreds of families who participated in the study and gave generously of their time to respond to a survey.

The Authors

Executive Summary

This report presents interim results for two programs, based in Eugene and Medford, Oregon, that were designed to help low-wage workers stay employed and advance in their jobs. Both programs were part of the national Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project, which was conceived and funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and also supported by the U.S. Department of Labor. The project is testing the effectiveness of 16 different innovative models across the country that aim to promote steady work and career advancement for current and former welfare recipients and other low-wage workers. A great deal is known about how to help these groups find jobs, but there are few proven strategies for promoting their job retention and career advancement. The ERA evaluation is seeking to identify promising approaches to furthering these goals. MDRC — a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization — is conducting the ERA evaluation under contract to ACF and is producing an interim report that is similar to this one for each site in the project.

Structure and Goals of the Eugene and Medford ERA Programs

The ERA programs in Eugene and Medford began in early 2002 and operated through mid-2005. They were designed to improve employment retention and career advancement outcomes among recently employed leavers of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program; for employed food stamp recipients; or for working people who were receiving government-provided, employment-related daycare benefits. Both ERA programs offered participants employment retention and career advancement services and involved significant levels of collaboration between different institutions to manage operations. In both sites, most members of the research sample were single parents, and the two programs operated under the same state welfare rules and under similar labor market conditions.

The programs offered participants individualized career coaching and case management assistance. Site staff worked with participants to write personal career development plans and then provided them with various services to help them stay employed and advance. Services that were focused on employment retention included job coaching, referrals to supportive services, budgeting and financial planning, and advice on conflict resolution in the workplace. Career advancement services included job search activities, career coaching, help with résumé development, help with enrolling in education and training opportunities, and assistance in applying for financial aid.

The ERA program in Eugene was managed jointly by the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) and Lane Community College (LCC), and it leveraged resources from the

welfare and workforce agencies. Career development specialists at LCC delivered counseling services focused on career advancement, while DHS case managers helped participants obtain supportive services and extended benefits available through the welfare system — supports such as extending the child care assistance available for periods of time after someone leaves welfare for work.

Initially, the ERA program in Medford was operated by a team comprising staff from four partner agencies: the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS), The Job Council, Rogue Community College (RCC), and the Employment Department (ED). To underscore the program's focus on career advancement, the service team was housed at offices of The Job Council. Midway through the period of program operations, the ED and RCC staff withdrew from the team due to funding cuts that affected their agencies, and, as a result, these partner agencies ceased participating in the Medford ERA program.

The ERA Evaluation

A random assignment research design is being used to assess the effectiveness of the ERA programs in Eugene and Medford. From 2002 to 2004, individuals in each site were assigned to either the ERA group (which was offered ERA services) or to a control group (whose members were not eligible for the ERA program but who could seek services from other providers in their communities).

MDRC is tracking both groups using automated TANF and food stamp benefits data from DHS and quarterly earnings data reported to Oregon's unemployment insurance (UI) program. One and a half years of follow-up data on UI earnings and welfare and food stamp benefits are available for each person covered by the report's analysis. For a smaller sample, data are also available from the ERA 12-Month Survey of clients.[1]

There are some important differences in how the samples in the Eugene and Medford tests were defined and identified. Moreover, the roles and responsibilities of DHS staff on the ERA team across the two programs differed, likely contributing to differences in participation among ERA program group members. In Eugene, employed TANF leavers were randomly assigned into the study when they found employment and submitted a form to DHS to report

[1]While the Eugene survey results are reliable, some indication of survey response bias was found in the Medford survey. An assessment of the Medford survey results indicates that ERA group members who were interviewed for the survey entered the study more job-ready than their counterparts interviewed in the control group. Thus, the Medford survey results should be viewed with caution, and, in cases where the survey results differ from the results of analyses of administrative records, more weight is given in this report to results from the larger and unbiased administrative records sample. For a more detailed explanation and analysis of the reliability of the surveys in Eugene and Medford, see Appendix F and Appendix G.

their new status and wages. They were subsequently informed of their research status, and, if assigned to the ERA program group, they were invited to receive services through Eugene's ERA program. DHS case managers in Eugene provided supportive services and extended benefits to ERA program participants. In Medford, study-eligible individuals were first contacted to assess their interest in ERA-type services. These individuals included recently employed TANF leavers, employed food stamp recipients, and recipients of extended child care benefits. Individuals who expressed interest in the types of services that ERA could provide were randomly assigned as part of the study; if assigned to the ERA program group, however, they still needed to volunteer in order to access program services. In contrast to the program model in Eugene, in Medford the DHS case manager on the ERA team did not help ERA program participants obtain or maintain benefits available through the welfare system.

These eligibility criteria and the role of the DHA case managers had the following results. First, Medford sample members entered the study with somewhat more stable employment than Eugene sample members. Second, inasmuch as participation in ERA services by ERA program group members in both sites was voluntary, staff in the Eugene program needed to do more marketing of ERA services following random assignment than staff in the Medford program. Third, because Eugene program participants entered the study immediately after they left TANF due to employment, and because the Eugene ERA case manager was tasked to help these participants access supportive services and extended benefits, these recent TANF leavers had more occasion to seek the services of the ERA team. In contrast, ERA program participants in Medford who needed help with accessing welfare-related services and supports were required to go to the welfare office and talk with different staff to obtain benefits.

Two aspects of the economic context within which the programs operated are also worth highlighting: First, during the period of program operations, Oregon had one of the nation's highest unemployment rates, which may have made higher-paying jobs more difficult to find than in states with less unemployment. Second, Oregon's relatively high state minimum wage ($7.50 per hour in 2005) may have made it more difficult for case managers to increase the wages of program group members above the wages of control group members.

Key Findings on Program Implementation

- **In Eugene, services were delivered as envisioned by the program designers and were focused on employment and job retention goals.**

Field research indicates that when viewed through the lens of the level and quality of services offered to people who requested them, the Eugene program was a strong one. The colocation of staff facilitated information sharing and problem solving about participants and made it easier for participants to access services more immediately and more often than would

have been the case if staff had been based in separate offices. Job retention and career advancement services were offered concurrently, and staff worked hard to address clients' personal and family challenges, but, instead of focusing on personal barriers to job retention and career advancement as stand-alone issues, staff consistently tried to relate these problems to individuals' larger employment goals. A key component of Eugene's job retention and case management services involved referring clients to and following up with partner agencies — for example, to a women's shelter where the ERA staff had relationships with staff and where participants could be helped to address domestic violence problems. Staff focused on career advancement during most of their interactions with clients. Focus groups that were conducted with clients revealed high levels of satisfaction with the program.

- **In the Medford program, staff initially focused on crisis management but, over time, focused more on career advancement.**

In the early phase of the Medford program operations, staff were much more focused on helping clients resolve personal crises and overcome barriers to employment, as ways to stabilize individuals' employment situations; career advancement was given limited emphasis, if at all. Once this problem was recognized, changes were made to the content of services and to the sequencing of job retention and career advancement services. The Medford ERA team began to offer advancement services — to help clients advance within their current job or to find a better job — concurrently with assistance to help them retain employment.

The Medford team also began to move away from intervening in personal crises and instead started to focus its job retention assistance on on-the-job problems or on problems that could put clients at risk of losing their jobs or quitting. Overall, while staff were successful in reorienting their services away from crisis intervention and toward advancement, delivering advancement services was a new endeavor for staff, and they initially struggled to define advancement and determine how to help clients progress.

- **In both programs, the staff faced challenges in keeping clients engaged as caseloads grew and reemployment emerged as a more pressing issue than expected.**

In both the Eugene and the Medford ERA program, staff took a proactive approach to client engagement, and levels of engagement were initially high. But by the end of the random assignment period, in mid-2004, engagement levels had dropped off considerably in the two programs, particularly in Medford.

A number of factors contributed to the difficulty of maintaining high levels of client engagement in the sites. One factor was that clients' rates of job loss were very high, with the result that responsibilities for helping clients find new jobs consumed more staff time than

originally anticipated. Consequently, staff in both programs struggled to provide services at the level of intensity and comprehensiveness that had been intended, and advancement activities to some extent were crowded out by reemployment concerns. As caseloads grew in both programs — reaching over 100 per staff member at the peak of operations — staff found it increasingly difficult to provide services to each client, especially because there was insufficient funding to hire more staff to reduce caseloads. This resulted in two kinds of clients attracting the most staff attention: clients who were in crisis and needed immediate assistance and clients who put in effort to initiate contact (and may have been likely to seek out services on their own without ERA). As a result, an important segment of the ERA sample — clients who were not in crisis (and could perhaps have had more to gain from retention and advancement services) — did not receive as much attention from the program as the groups that were given priority.

Staff also reported that many of those who were eligible for ERA but who were not already pursuing job retention and career advancement activities on their own may simply not have been stable enough in either their personal or professional life to participate in a career advancement program. In addition, focus groups that were held with ERA-eligible individuals revealed that some of them were concerned that if they advanced, they would lose access to such key benefits as Medicaid — a concern that may have undercut their motivation to participate in ERA.

- **The Medford program experienced funding difficulties and staff turnover problems.**

Partway through the period of the Medford program's operations, its partner agencies were confronted by funding cuts that had adverse effects on staff morale and on the level of human resources available for the program. As a result of these cuts, the staff member from the community college was no longer able to provide services on-site to participants, and a staff member from the employment department was unable to give priority to ERA clients. Also because of the funding problems, some staff left their jobs or had their hours reduced. Changes in the program's management structure in the wake of the cutbacks left program staff with diminished levels of day-to-day supervision and guidance and affected staff cohesion.

Key Findings on Program Participation

- **In both Eugene and Medford, control group members were more actively engaged than originally anticipated in some types of retention- and advancement-related activities. The result was smaller-than-expected differentials in levels of service receipt between the program and control groups.**

Outside ERA, there were more services than MDRC and the State of Oregon had originally expected that resembled the ERA services (such as help accessing education and training and supportive services) — services that were available to and being used by the Eugene and Medford target populations. The control group columns in Table ES.1 indicate the substantial proportions of control group members who received help or participated in services on their own initiative — that is, without any exposure to ERA. Moreover, as it turned out, the same service providers outside the program to which ERA staff referred program participants also could be accessed fairly easily by motivated individuals in the control group. In Eugene, for example, all TANF recipients who participated in Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS), Oregon's welfare-to-work program, were informed about and encouraged to use the services available to them at the local One-Stop service center (funded by the federal Workforce Investment Act). After these former TANF recipients found jobs, some of them became control group members and accessed One-Stop services on their own. Likewise, in Medford, the local One-Stop's services were similar to those offered by ERA, and, toward the end of the program period, the Medford ERA program outstationed a staff member at the One-Stop to provide services not only to ERA clients but to the public at large.

- **The Eugene ERA program did not increase rates of overall contact with employment or welfare agency staff for any purpose relative to those of control group members. The Medford ERA program did increase such contact.**

Table ES.1 summarizes the impacts of the two programs on clients' levels of contacts with staff, their receipt of services, and their rates of participation in activities. Differences between the ERA and control groups that are marked with asterisks are statistically significant, which means that it is very unlikely that these difference arose by chance and were not due to the programs.

As shown in the top row of Table ES.1, during the year after they entered the study, about 85 percent of both the program and the control group members in Eugene reported contact with programs or organizations that help people find and/or keep jobs or with a case manager or staff person from an employment, welfare, or similar type of agency. The high percentage of sample members reporting contact with program or agency staff members is likely due to the fact that when most sample members entered the study, they were recent welfare leavers, and leavers often contact welfare agencies to maintain subsidized medical coverage and/or child care benefits.

In Medford, about 73 percent of the program group, compared with about 62 percent of the control group, reported contact with staff from an employment or similar type of program during the year after they entered the study.

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Table ES.1

Impacts on Contact, Services, and Participation

Eugene and Medford

	Eugene				Medford			
Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Any contacts with case manager/employment program since random assignment[a] (%)	83.4	85.7	-2.3	0.518	73.0	62.4	10.6 **	0.045
Average number of contacts with staff/case manager	21.4	17.5	4.0	0.114	9.9	6.5	3.4 **	0.038
Ever met with staff/case manager (%)	76.9	75.4	1.4	0.735	58.1	47.2	11.0 **	0.050
Received help with support services (%)	65.9	58.6	7.3	0.110	38.6	39.0	-0.4	0.942
Received help with basic needs (%)	57.7	50.0	7.8	0.110	40.2	37.5	2.7	0.623
Received help with public benefits (%)	79.8	73.8	6.0	0.148	55.3	66.1	-10.7 **	0.046
Received help with job preparation (%)	50.3	40.1	10.2 **	0.036	25.9	19.6	6.3	0.164
Received help with retention/advancement (%)	38.2	21.8	16.4 ***	0.000	24.6	16.3	8.3 *	0.063
Ever participated in any activity[b] (%)	81.0	74.0	7.0 *	0.087	63.3	55.8	7.4	0.178
Participated in a job search activity (%)	74.8	67.0	7.9 *	0.072	46.2	43.1	3.1	0.569
Participated in an education/training activity (%)	22.0	24.9	-2.9	0.487	30.2	21.7	8.4 *	0.086
Ever participated in an employment or education activity while working (%)	38.0	31.6	6.4	0.166	41.4	26.9	14.5 ***	0.006
Sample size (total = 785)	220	220			167	178		

(continued)

Table ES.1 (continued)

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

NOTES: Estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics of sample members.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

Two-tailed t-tests were applied to differences between outcomes for the ERA group and the control group. Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; and *** = 1 percent.

Unless otherwise stated, results in Eugene are for sample members who were randomly assigned from June 24, 2002, through June 29, 2004. Results in Medford are for sample members who were randomly assigned from February 21, 2002, through April 29, 2004.

[a]This measure includes respondents who said "yes" on the client survey to either of the following questions: "Have you had any experiences with programs or organizations that help people find or keep jobs since your random assignment date?" "Since your random assignment date, have you had any contact, in-person or by phone, with a case manager or a staff person from an employment, welfare or other agency?" However, subsequent survey questions regarding the number and location of contacts were asked only of respondents who said "yes" to the latter question. Therefore, there are some respondents who reported contact but were not asked about the number and location of contacts.

[b]"Any activity" includes employment-related activities, education/training activities, life skills, and other types of activities.

- **ERA program group members in both sites were more likely than their control group counterparts to have reported that they had received help specifically with employment retention, advancement, and preparing for work. Still, overall levels of receipt of help among program group members were lower than expected.**

As shown in Table ES.1 ("received help with retention/advancement"), about 38 percent of the Eugene program group, compared with 22 percent of the Eugene control group, reported having received assistance directly related to keeping a job or advancing to a better one. Specifically, the Eugene program led to increases in receiving help focused on career assessment, on switching to a better job, and on other types of retention- or advancement-related activities. (These findings are not shown in the table.)

Only about 25 percent of the Medford program group reported having received help with employment retention and advancement, compared with 16 percent of the Medford control group, representing a more modest increase than that achieved in Eugene. In addition, the Medford program increased the percentage of program group members receiving help enrolling in job readiness or training activities (findings not shown in table).

While both programs increased the likelihood that individuals would receive support for job retention and advancement, the overall level of receipt of help was low, reflecting the difficulty that staff in both programs had in engaging employed single parents in activities focused on job retention and advancement at rates higher than what they could achieve on their own initiative.

- **ERA group members in Eugene were somewhat more likely than their control group counterparts to participate in job search activities. In Medford, ERA group members were more likely than their control group counterparts to participate in education and training.**

For both research groups and in both sites, the overall rates of participation in job search activities (third row from the bottom in Table ES.1) were much higher than expected for programs that targeted employed individuals. This was probably due to two factors: the high rate of job loss experienced by sample members following random assignment and, possibly, staff's efforts to help sample members seek and advance to better jobs.

In the Eugene program, participation rates in job search activities were higher for the program group (about 75 percent of respondents to a survey administered approximately 12 months after their random assignment date) than for the control group (about 67 percent of respondents) (Table ES.1). The Eugene program did not increase participation in education and training activities over the control group average.

The Medford program did not increase the proportion of individuals who participated in a job search activity, but it did increase the proportion who participated in education and training activities by 8 percentage points above the control group average of 22 percent. Most of the difference in Medford was driven by an increase in the proportion of sample members who took college courses. (Short-term vocational training offered at the local community college was part of the program's advancement strategy.)

Key Findings on Economic Impacts

- **Neither the Eugene nor the Medford ERA program led to increases in employment retention or economic advancement.**

Table ES.2 summarizes the impacts of the Eugene and Medford programs on measures of employment retention and economic advancement over the first year and a half following random assignment, or during Quarters 2 through 7. (This follow-up period does not include the quarter of random assignment, a period when all sample members were employed.) These results are based only on unemployment insurance (UI) earnings data, not on results from the 12-month survey. Retention outcomes reflect the stability of employment over time, while advancement is measured mainly by earnings increases.[2] As shown in the table, neither ERA program generated a systematic increase in measures of employment retention or economic advancement.

While a high proportion of sample members in both sites worked in UI-covered jobs during the follow-up period, keeping jobs was a challenge, as indicated by the average number of quarters that sample members were employed ("average quarterly employment" in Table ES.2). Eugene program group members worked for about two-thirds of the follow-up period, and Medford program group members were employed for around three-quarters of that time.

The Eugene ERA program did increase the percentage of program group members who were ever employed during the follow-up period, representing an increase in the proportion of individuals who were *still employed*, but by less than 3 percentage points above the control group average of 91 percent (Table ES.2). The program generated no other impacts on measures of employment retention or advancement. Members of the program and control groups were about equally likely to be employed for four consecutive quarters (56 percent and 54 percent, respectively) and to have earnings of $15,000 or more (39 percent and 36 percent, respectively).

[2]Staff in the Medford program defined "advancement" more broadly than earnings increases, to include, for example, reducing commuting time to work and spending more time with family. These aspects of advancement were not measured in the Medford test.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Table ES.2

Impacts on UI-Covered Employment and Earnings

Eugene and Medford

	Eugene				Medford			
Outcomes	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Quarters 2-7								
Ever employed (%)	93.9	91.3	2.6 *	0.092	91.5	95.5	-4.0 ***	0.005
Average quarterly employment (%)	68.9	66.5	2.3	0.237	74.7	76.7	-2.0	0.275
Number of quarters employed	4.1	4.0	0.1	0.237	4.5	4.6	-0.1	0.275
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	56.1	53.9	2.1	0.457	64.8	66.5	-1.8	0.506
Total earnings ($)	12,800	12,471	329	0.586	14,800	15,325	-525	0.350
Earned over $15,000 (%)	39.3	35.9	3.4	0.221	44.6	46.0	-1.4	0.589
Average quarterly full-time employment (%)	19.2	17.8	1.4	0.365	22.4	25.8	-3.4 **	0.049
Ever received TANF (%)	38.7	41.9	-3.2	0.251	11.7	10.8	0.8	0.651
Amount of TANF received ($)	1,068	1,292	-224 *	0.065	298	301	-3	0.961
Ever received food stamps (%)	95.8	96.5	-0.7	0.542	89.7	92.6	-2.9 *	0.069
Amount of food stamps received ($)	3,591	3,603	-12	0.916	3,050	3,100	-50	0.633
Total measured income[a] ($)	17,459	17,366	93	0.868	18,148	18,726	-578	0.279
Sample size (total = 2,301)	563	574			590	574		

(continued)

Table ES.2 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from UI administrative records from the State of Oregon.

NOTES: This table includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the Oregon unemployment insurance (UI) program. It does not include employment outside Oregon or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs, some agricultural jobs, and federal government jobs).

Estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics of sample members.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

Two-tailed t-tests were applied to differences between outcomes for the ERA group and the control group. Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; and *** = 1 percent.

Dollar averages include zero values for sample members who were not employed or were not receiving TANF or food stamps.

Hourly wages have been top-coded at $25. ERA study members with UI-wage-reported earnings and no hours worked were excluded from this analysis.

Working full time is defined as working 455 hours per quarter (35 hours per week times 13 weeks).

Unless otherwise stated, results in Eugene are for sample members who were randomly assigned from June 24, 2002, through June 29, 2004. Results in Medford are for sample members who were randomly assigned from February 21, 2002, through April 29, 2004.

[a]Those who did not work are not included in this category.

The Medford program did not generate statistically significant increases for any of the measures of employment retention and advancement. Instead, the program led to a reduction in employment. As shown in Table ES.2, the Medford ERA program decreased the percentage of program group members who were employed at some point during the follow-up period by about 4 percentage points below the control group average of 96 percent. This negative impact represents a reduction in the percentage who were *still employed.*

- **The ERA programs reduced the amount of TANF benefits received in Eugene below the control group average and reduced the percentage who received food stamps in Medford. There was no impact on overall income in either site.**

As shown in the lower rows of Table ES.2, the Eugene program did not affect the percentage of sample members who ever received TANF. But it did reduce the amount of TANF received among ERA group members by $224 below the approximately $1,300 average that control group members received during the follow-up period — a 17 percent difference. (The program did not affect levels of food stamp receipt or total income.) The reduction in the amount of TANF received was surprising because the program did not increase earnings. Especially because most of the decrease occurred early in the follow-up period, the drop may be attributable to a program practice: case managers for Eugene ERA clients would not accept an application for TANF from program participants who lost their jobs until they had completed a 45-day period in which they participated in rapid-reemployment services. Once that period had ended, they were subject to the same TANF 45-day assessment period (during which time they were required to participate in the JOBS program) as were their control group counterparts. The "extra" delay in processing an application may account for the decrease in the amount of TANF benefits received by the program group.

The Medford program produced a small reduction in the number of program group members who received food stamps at some point during the follow-up period, but it had no effect on levels of TANF receipt, amounts of benefits, or total income.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

Despite some staffing and funding problems, the Eugene and Medford ERA programs are good examples of models that try to use intensive case management, individualized career counseling, and collaboration between managing agencies to promote employment retention and advancement among low-wage workers. Neither of these two voluntary programs, however, produced sustained or substantial effects on employment retention and advancement outcomes over one and a half years. Possible reasons for this lack of impacts include the following:

- **The programs operated in an environment where control group members were receiving high levels of employment-related assistance from existing service providers.**

The two ERA programs were designed to provide services that were different from what otherwise existed in their communities or that were not regularly used by their target populations. A main finding from these two and other ERA tests is that the working poor are already expending considerable effort on their own to get ahead in the labor market. The programs did produce some increases in the levels at which individuals received services that were focused on employment retention and advancement — specifically, job search services (Eugene) and education (Medford). But these increases were not large and so far have not translated into improved retention or advancement outcomes relative to those achieved by the control group.

The results suggest that it is critical for program operators to assess what services are actually being accessed by members of a target population and what levels of employment retention and advancement they are achieving with current levels of service. This will enable new interventions to fill service gaps and not inadvertently duplicate existing services. It remains possible, however, that, with more sustained funding or fewer implementation problems, the Eugene and Medford programs might have increased take-up rates of employment retention and advancement services more than they did and that these increases could have improved the economic impacts.

- **Future postemployment programs that are focused on advancement will need to emphasize reemployment along with advancement.**

Sample members in both the Eugene and the Medford ERA program had high levels of job loss, which made it difficult for staff to focus on advancement. This suggests that advancement programs for groups similar to the ones served in these two sites should expect high levels of rapid job loss. In fact, working with clients at the point when they are seeking reemployment may represent the best opportunity to alter their labor market trajectories. Evidence from the ERA tests in Chicago and in Riverside, California (the Post-Assistance Self-Sufficiency [PASS] program) indicate that the reemployment efforts of these programs may have led to improvements in employment and earnings.[3] Other literature also points to job change as a driving force

[3]See Bloom, Hendra, and Page, *The Employment Retention and Advancement Project: Results from the Chicago ERA Site* (New York: MDRC, 2006); and Navarro, van Dok, and Hendra, *The Employment Retention and Advancement Project: Results from the Post-Assistance Self-Sufficiency (PASS) Program in Riverside, California* (New York: MDRC, 2007).

behind advancement.[4] Viewed in that light, reemployment services represent an opportunity for promoting advancement.

The early results presented in this report are not the final word on the Eugene and Medford program models; MDRC will continue to track sample members in these two sites using administrative records. Longer-term results will be made public when they are available.

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

Introduction

This report examines the operations and interim effectiveness results of two programs, implemented in Eugene and Medford, Oregon, that operated from early 2002 to 2005. These two programs were part of a major national research test of innovative approaches to helping low-income workers, including welfare recipients, keep jobs and advance in the labor market. The study, known as the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project, addresses a question that policymakers and program operators have been struggling to answer for almost a decade, namely: What kinds of services, supports, and incentives are best able to help low-income working parents maintain steady employment and move up to better jobs? This issue has assumed greater urgency in the wake of the 1990s welfare reforms, which placed limits on the amount of time that a person can receive welfare benefits, making long-term receipt of benefits to support families much less feasible than it had been.

While a good deal is known about strategies designed to help welfare recipients enter the labor market, so far there is very little evidence about what kinds of interventions might better enable former recipients or other low-income workers to stay in or advance their positions. Previously evaluated interventions that sought to produce these outcomes — most notably, the Post-Employment Services Demonstration (PESD), a project that tested four programs providing follow-up case management services to welfare recipients who found jobs — have generally failed to make a difference in participants' employment outcomes. The ERA project**,** which encompasses the Eugene and Medford models along with 14 other models that collectively span eight states, is designed to add to existing knowledge about what it might take to help low-wage workers retain their employment and move on to better positions.

The balance of this section of the report provides background on the ERA project and the Eugene and Medford models. It first discusses the origins of the project, the three overarching approaches to services and targeting adopted in the project's models, and case management in the models. Next, it gives information on the research design of the overall project and on the studies of the Eugene and Medford models. This is followed by a discussion of the similarities between the Eugene and Medford models that made it appropriate to cover their implementation and early impact results in a single report, as well as a discussion of the cities' local economies. The section concludes with descriptions of the models' target populations and research samples.

Overview of the National ERA Project

ERA was conceived of and is funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), with additional funding support from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). The project began in 1998, when ACF

issued planning grants to 13 states to develop new programs to promote job retention and career advancement among low-wage workers, including welfare recipients. Subsequently, HHS selected MDRC, a nonprofit nonpartisan research organization, to work with these states and with several others toward the goal of mounting a test of ERA programs.

During a planning period that extended from 2000 to 2003, MDRC and its subcontractors, The Lewin Group and Cygnet Associates, provided extensive technical assistance to help some of the states and the managers of their prospective ERA programs design their new strategies. This was particularly important because most programs were starting fresh, with no proven models on which to build. Ultimately, with assistance from The Lewin Group, MDRC went on to study 16 ERA program models. The ERA project is now in its final phase, and MDRC is in the process of assessing the effectiveness of the ERA models.

Approaches Used in the 16 ERA Models

Almost all the ERA programs targeted current or former recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) — the nation's cash welfare program that mainly serves single mothers and their children. But the models that these programs used are diverse and can be classified into three groups:

- **Advancement models** sought to serve low-wage workers and focus on advancement.
- **Placement and retention models** sought to serve people considered hard to employ and primarily aimed to place them in stable jobs.
- **Models with mixed goals** (including those in Eugene and Medford) sought to serve a diverse set of populations — including former TANF recipients, TANF applicants, and low-wage workers — and focused on both job retention and career advancement. Some of the mixed programs began serving participants before they went to work, while others, like the programs in Eugene and Medford, started services after clients became employed.

Appendix Table A.1 describes each of the ERA models, its target populations, and its primary service strategies.

Case Management: ERA-Style

This report uses the term "case management" to describe the main mode of service delivery in the ERA demonstration, including in the Eugene and Medford programs. But, in at least three respects, the Eugene and Medford models offered a different kind of case management than what is typically provided by social service agencies, especially public agencies that

are highly oriented to set routines and that are not particularly focused on marketing their services to clients.

One distinction between case management in these kinds of programs and in the Eugene and Medford ERA programs is that ERA staff were unusually proactive in trying to keep in touch with clients — for example, calling them and writing letters to reschedule missed appointments. Second, although doing so depended on scheduling and workloads, Eugene and Medford staff were open to calling and meeting with clients at times and sometimes in settings that extended beyond the usual 9-to-5 office environment.

Third, the ERA case management was more oriented to employment-focused goals than is typical in most social service agencies. Like traditional social service agencies, the Eugene and Medford programs did refer clients to social service providers, and they did help them address personal and family problems. However, the emphasis of the counseling tended to be more on working through problems to allow clients to concentrate on employment-related goals.

Finally, *career coaching* was an important part of the ERA staff's case management repertoire. This very active coaching was more dynamic than checking to see whether a client were complying with an employment plan that had already been developed. Instead, in keeping with ERA goals, staff in both programs, but particularly in the Eugene program, used a number of strategies — and tailored them to individual clients — to help each person stay employed and advance. These strategies included helping people ask for more hours at work, helping them think about how to behave on the job so that they could get recognized and promoted, helping them find jobs in career tracks that particularly interested them and that had room for advancement, and encouraging them to build skills in their current jobs to prepare for future positions.

The ERA Research Design

The ERA models are being studied with a random assignment research design, meaning that people in the research sample are randomly assigned either to a program group, which receives ERA services, or to a control group, which does not. The power of this random assignment approach is that any differences in outcomes that emerge between the two research groups during the follow-up period can be confidently attributed to the ERA program, rather than to differences in the characteristics of the people in the two groups.

It is important to note that being in a control group does not mean that someone is in a truly no-services group. Control group members can receive services, just not the ones offered by ERA staff. In the case of the Eugene and Medford tests, control group members were eligible for TANF supportive services, such as extended child care and medical coverage

benefits. In addition, they were eligible for other types of assistance and programs available in their communities, such as ones provided through community colleges. As noted below in this report, many control group members did, in fact, avail themselves of these services.

In Eugene, former welfare applicants and TANF recipients — who had been required to participate in job search services through the regular welfare-to-work program (entitled "Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training," or JOBS) and who were no longer mandated to take part in any welfare-to-work program because they had found jobs and left the rolls — were randomly assigned as part of the ERA study. Individuals in Eugene were randomly assigned when they submitted an "I HAVE A JOB" form to their Department of Human Services (DHS) case manager in order to access TANF's postemployment "transitional" or "extended" services — the child care, Medicaid, and transportation assistance that can be made available for a period of time after someone leaves welfare for work. Besides helping to determine eligibility for these services and triggering random assignment, the I HAVE A JOB form provided baseline data (basic information on clients' demographic and educational backgrounds and on their histories of TANF receipt) used in the evaluation.[1] Once random assignment had been completed, clients were sent a letter informing them of their research status, and if they had been assigned to the ERA program group, they were invited to join and receive ERA services through Eugene's *PROGRESS* program ("Progress Towards Retention, Opportunities, Growth, Enhancement and Self-Sufficiency"). (Figure 1 presents an overview of the random assignment process in Eugene, which occurred between June 2002 and June 2004.)

In Medford, clients were identified as eligible for the ERA study through several lists: (1) people who had left TANF and were working full or part time; (2) working people who were participating in the Oregon Food Stamp Employment and Training program, a state-mandated employment and training program for food stamp recipients; and (3) workers who were taking part in the Employment-Related Day Care Program, which provides child care subsidies to low-income working families. A random assignment clerk called individuals on each one of these lists and explained ERA services to them, confirming that they were employed and had not reapplied for TANF. Clients who showed an interest in participating in ERA were randomly assigned.[2] Those who were assigned to the ERA program group were told that they were eligible for ERA services through the *TAAG* program ("Transition, Advancement and

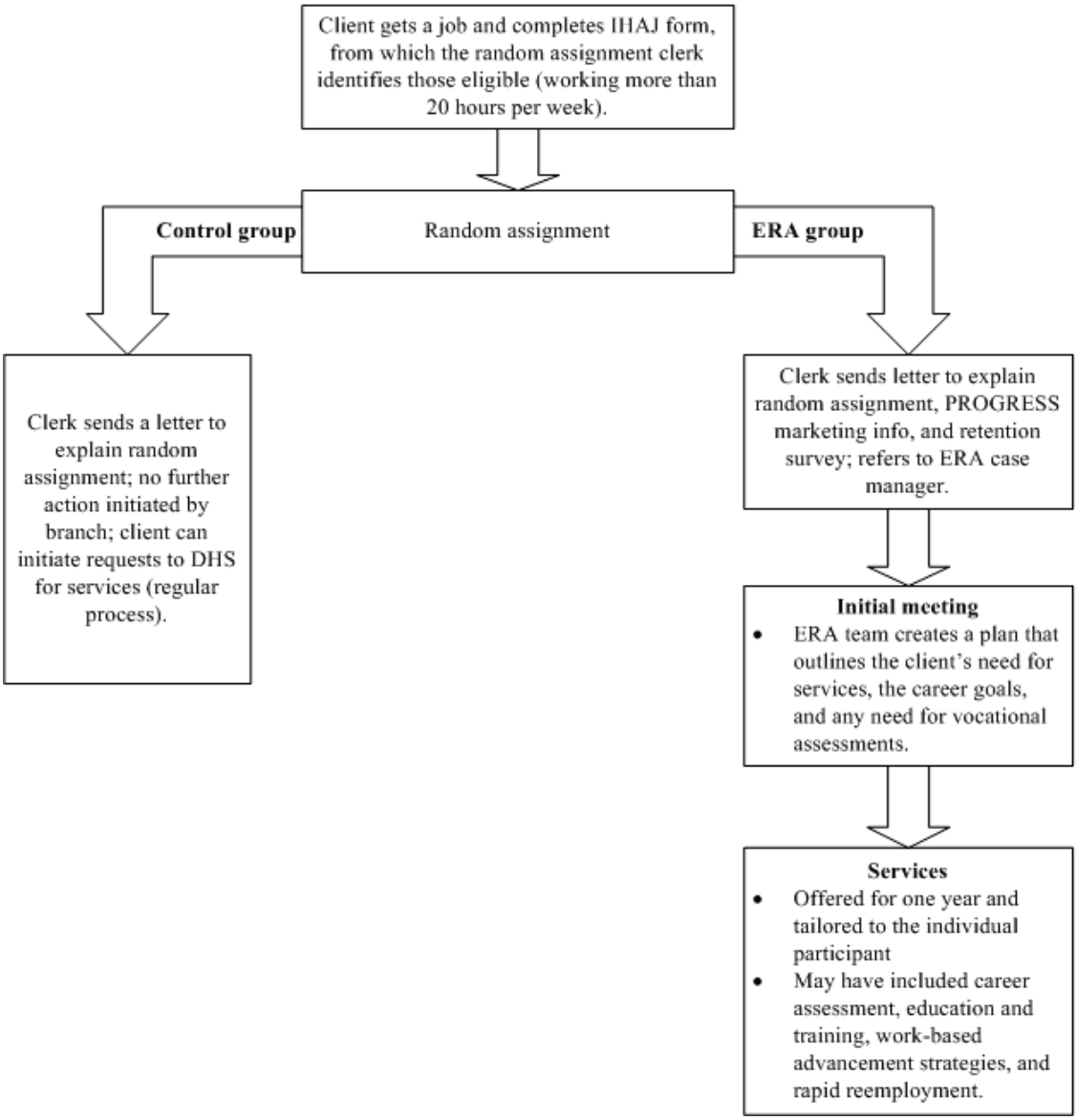
[1]If the baseline information on the I HAVE A JOB form was incomplete, a clerk contacted the client. According to PROGRESS management, 22 percent of all individuals who were randomly assigned did not complete the form fully and had to be contacted.

[2]When random assignment clerks were unsuccessful in making phone contact with prospective clients, DHS case managers would conduct home visits. If case managers found the clients at home and receptive to meeting, they explained the evaluation, asked whether the clients were interested in participating, and confirmed that the clients were still working and had not reapplied for TANF. Random assignment was then conducted at the DHS office, and a letter or a phone call notified these clients of their research status.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Figure 1

Overview of Study Design in Eugene



Growth") and were given an initial appointment to meet with ERA staff. (Figure 2 gives an overview of the random assignment process in Medford, which occurred between February 2002 and April 2004.)

In both sites, participation in ERA services was voluntary. As indicated by the two descriptions of random assignment, however, generally Eugene clients first were randomly assigned and then were invited to join the PROGRESS program, while random assignment in Medford took place after the program had been introduced to prospective participants. As is discussed below, the sequencing of random assignment in Eugene posed particular challenges to the site when it sought to market its services to prospective participants.

The Research Questions

Key research questions addressed in this report include:

- **Implementation.** How were the Eugene and Medford ERA programs implemented? What services and messages did the programs provide and emphasize? How did career consultants spend their time?
- **Participation.** Did these voluntary programs succeed in engaging a substantial proportion of people in services? What types of services did people receive? To what extent did the programs increase service levels above the levels that would normally be received, as represented by the control group's behavior in each site?
- **Impacts.** Within a one-and-a-half-year follow-up period, did the programs increase employment and earnings, boost employment stability and wage growth, and improve job characteristics for people assigned to the ERA group relative to those assigned to the control group?

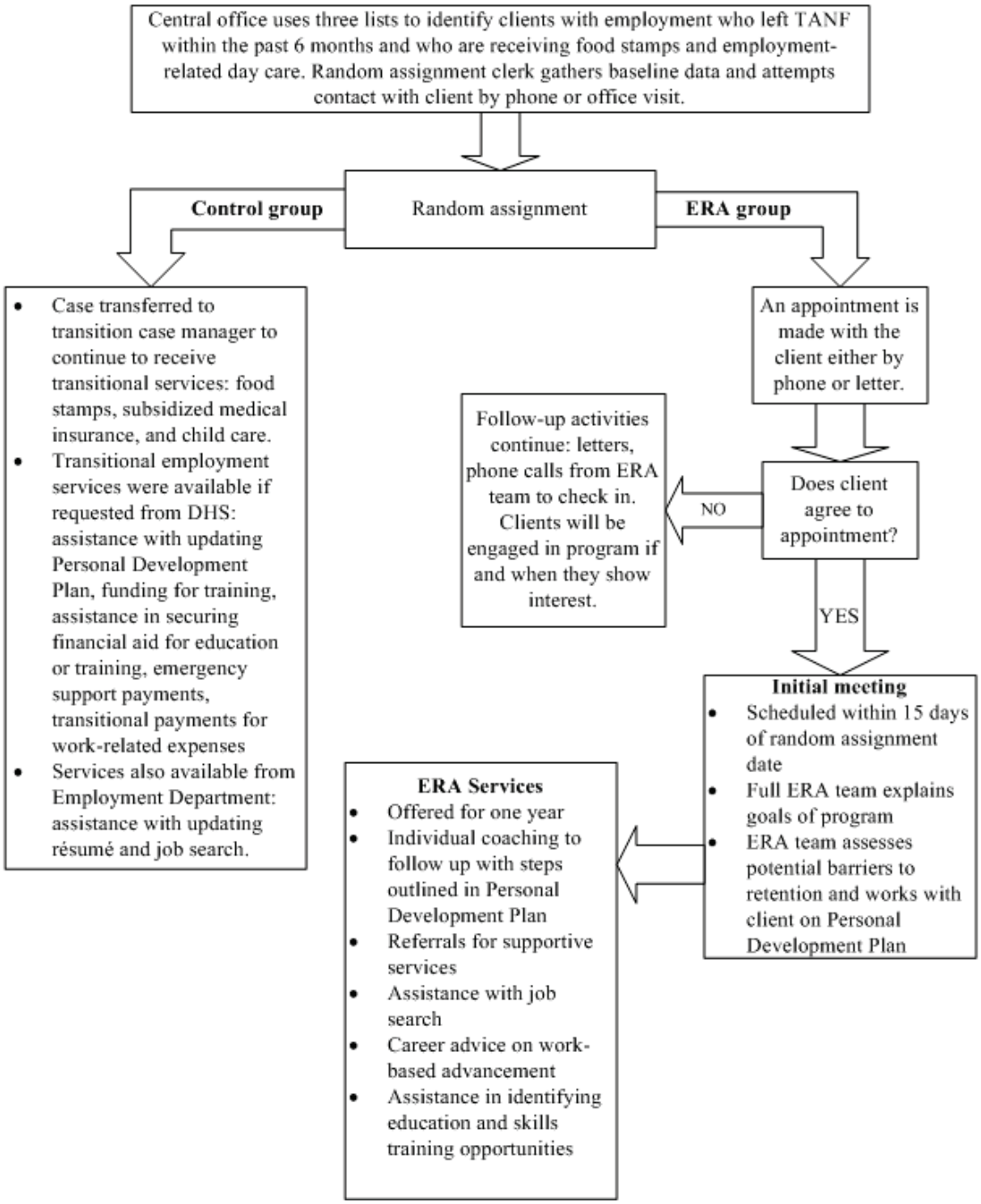
The Counterfactual: What Are the Eugene and Medford ERA Programs Being Compared With?

People who were randomly assigned to the control groups — who represent the *counterfactual* for the study — could not participate in the Eugene and Medford ERA programs but could take part in other programs and use other services that promote or support employment, job retention, and career advancement. Some control group members were required to participate in JOBS if they became unemployed and then reapplied for TANF. Also, like their ERA program group counterparts, control group members were eligible for food stamps and for extended child care and Medicaid benefits. They could seek out these services on their own or could be referred to them by welfare agency staff other than ERA program staff members. Likewise, they could seek out or be referred to other nonprogram services that were offered

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Figure 2

Overview of Study Design in Medford



elsewhere in the community — for example, at the government-funded Workforce Investment Act (WIA) One-Stop Centers that offer a variety of services to help job-seekers in a single location or at community colleges, adult schools, and other education providers and employment and training organizations.

Data Sources

The data sources for the analyses presented in this report are described below.

Baseline Data

Basic demographic, education, and TANF assistance data were collected by employees at DHS either from DHS computer systems, from interviews with study participants, or from forms that the participants completed.[3] This information was used to describe the study population and to identify subgroups for which results are analyzed separately.

Administrative Records

The effects of the two ERA programs on employment and earnings were computed using automated unemployment insurance (UI) wage records data, and their effects on public assistance were computed using automated TANF and food stamp administrative records. One and a half years of follow-up administrative data (six quarters beyond the quarter of random assignment) are available for all sample members.

Implementation Data

Information on program operations was available from a variety of sources, including interviews with staff, reviews of participants' case files, focus groups with program and control group members, observations of interactions between staff and clients, program assessments, and a "time study" of ERA staff (which tracked their activities to determine how they used their time).

The ERA 12-Month Survey

Information about sample members' participation in program services and about their employment, income, and other outcomes was gathered by the ERA 12-Month Survey, which was administered to a subset of ERA program and control group members approximately 12 months after random assignment.

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[3]Interviews were commonly conducted at the point of random assignment, whereas forms and administrative records data could have been up to six months old at the time when someone was randomly assigned.

The Research Sample

The focus of this report is on study participants in single-parent households. In Eugene, a total of 1,137 single parents were randomly assigned between June 2002 and June 2004. In Medford, a total of 1,164 single parents were randomly assigned between February 2002 and April 2004.[4]

The survey sample was drawn from a subset of cohorts in the full sample (those randomly assigned from October 2002 through October 2003 in Eugene and from January through October 2003 in Medford). The survey sample in Eugene contains 550 members, while the survey sample in Medford totals 428. Results of the survey response analysis for Eugene can be found in Appendix F; results of the response analysis for Medford are in Appendix G.

The Eugene and Medford ERA Programs: Two Sites Examined in One Report

The Eugene and Medford ERA programs had many similarities that make it useful to cover their implementation stories and to report on their interim outcomes in a single report. Besides having been operated in the same state, the two programs were located in small cities of that state. They operated during virtually the same time period: the Eugene program, from June 2002 through July 2005; the Medford program, from February 2002 through July 2005. Both programs targeted employed workers who were former TANF recipients — although, as noted, the Medford program also sought to serve two additional target groups.

In addition, in designing and implementing ERA services, both sites built on longstanding relationships between the state welfare and workforce, or WIA (federally funded Workforce Investment Act), agencies. Both were funded primarily by JOBS, the state's welfare-to-work program, and both were managed by partnerships that included the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS), which funded outside agencies to be part of the project: in Eugene, Lane Community College (LCC), which was already managing a WIA-funded job center; in Medford, The Job Council, a nonprofit service provider. These outside partners helped to operate the programs, drawing on the services and expertise of their existing workforce networks.

[4]Results for individuals in two-parent households, which constitute about 18 percent of all those randomly assigned in Eugene and about 30 percent of all those randomly assigned in Medford, will be analyzed and presented in a separate paper on two-parent households covering all ERA sites in which two-parent households were included. Results for study participants who had missing data on family status are included in this report on single parents.

Table 1 compares the ERA programs in Eugene (PROGRESS) and Medford (TAAG) and provides a fuller picture of their differences and similarities.

Context: The Local Economies

Eugene

Eugene was one of four ERA programs based in Oregon — in addition to Medford, programs were operated in Portland and Salem[5] — and one feature that Eugene shared with the other Oregon programs was the challenge of operating in unfavorable local economic conditions.

In some respects, the economic problems that faced the Eugene program seem unexpected: the city of Eugene has a large public sector base dominated by the University of Oregon and Lane Community College (LCC), where growth and contraction are moderate during times of economic expansion and retrenchment. At the county level, the economy is fairly diverse: in 2003, most of the county's labor force was employed in wood product manufacturing, health care, tourism, retail trade, professional services, and construction.[6] Yet, despite this diversity and despite the cushion of public sector employment, Oregon cities like Eugene felt the national recession keenly.[7] During the period when ERA operated, Oregon had one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation. In 2003, when the national unemployment rate was 6 percent, the rate in the Eugene region was 2 percentage points higher.[8] By the time that the ERA program ended, the local economy had improved, but the unemployment rate was still higher than the national average.

In a feature of the economy that could benefit working-poor families, the state's minimum wage was among the highest in the nation: $7.50 in 2005. For staff of the ERA program, however, that high minimum wage was a steep hurdle to jump when they sought to find jobs that paid more than the minimum wage for people whose skill levels were low.

Medford

The local economy in the Medford region was not particularly favorable to the TAAG program's career advancement agenda. During the time when TAAG operated, the Rogue Valley (the region that encompasses Medford) faced significant unemployment. In 2003, this

[5]Portland's Career Builders Program is discussed in Azurdia and Barnes (2008), and Salem's VISION program is the subject of Molina, Cheng, and Hendra (2008).

[6]U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census (2003).

[7]City of Eugene Web site: http://www.eugene-or.gov.

[8]Oregon Labor Market Information System (2003).

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Table 1

Comparison of the Eugene PROGRESS and the Medford TAAG Programs

	Eugene (PROGRESS)	**Medford (TAAG)**
Program goal	Both programs hoped to provide *working* individuals with ongoing retention and career advancement services.	
General description	Voluntary, postemployment program that provided retention and career-focused case management services. PROGRESS included supportive services and public benefit eligibility functions as an integral program component.	Voluntary, postemployment program that provided retention and career-focused case management services. TAAG provided work-related support services, but staff did not determine eligibility for transitional services such as food stamps, subsidized medical insurance, or child care.
Target population	Employed TANF leavers, most of whom were single mothers and were underemployed.	Working-poor population in receipt of public benefits provided by DHS; could include employed individuals participating in the Oregon Food Stamp Employment and Training and the Employment Related Day Care programs as well as employed TANF leavers. Most of the participants were single mothers.
Welfare history	85 percent of the sample members had a history of TANF receipt.	Close to half had a history of TANF receipt.
Random assignment		
Process	Individuals randomly assigned from an "I Have a Job" form required of newly employed TANF applicants and TANF leavers working at least 20 hours per week. If form was complete, individuals were randomly assigned without being contacted or confirming their interest in participating.	Individuals randomly assigned from one of three lists maintained by DHS. Individuals were called to confirm they were employed and were not receiving or had recently applied for TANF, to inquire about their interest in participating in TAAG, and to collect additional information for the baseline information form.
Organizational structure		
Lead agency	Oregon Department of Human Services; Children, Adult, and Families Division	
Funding	TANF	TANF (Funding cuts during program operations resulted in a reduction in staff hours and client resources.)
Service management and delivery	DHS and Lane Community College (LCC) jointly managed the program.	DHS and The Job Council jointly managed the program.
Staffing design	Three teams comprising a case manager (employed by DHS) and a career development specialist (employed by LCC) were located in one of three local DHS branch offices. Each member of the team carried distinct responsibilities; the case manager provided ongoing public benefits and supports; the career development specialist provided career advancement and retention services.	Team comprising staff from four agencies: DHS, The Job Council, the Employment Department, and Rogue Community College. Staff shared caseloads and responsibilities, and initially each member of the team served as a generalist. Later on, staff specialized in distinct areas: retention, advancement, support services, and reemployment.
Location of services	DHS branch offices: West Eugene, McKenzie, and Spring-field	The Job Council

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

	Eugene (PROGRESS)	**Medford (TAAG)**
Services	Program emphasized work-based education and training-based approaches to advancement. Frequent contact was emphasized, and assistance was tailored to clients' career interests and personal circumstances.	Program emphasized work-based education and training-based approaches to advancement. Frequent contact was emphasized, and assistance was tailored to clients' career interests and personal circumstances. Assistance accessing public benefits was purposefully divorced from TAAG service delivery.
Initial meeting	PROGRESS team created a career development plan that outlined the client's need for services, career goals, steps to achieve them, and any need for vocational assessments.	TAAG team collectively met with client during the first meeting. During this initial meeting the team assessed potential barriers to retention and worked with client on Personal Development Plan, which outlined client's goals and steps to those goals.
Services provided at subsequent meetings	Tailored to the individual participant. Services may have included career assessment job coaching, education and training, and work-based advancement strategies. Funding was not available for education and training, however, so staff worked with clients to access grants, scholarships, and financial aid for this purpose if clients were interested.	Tailored to the individual participants. Services may have included individual coaching, referrals for supportive services, assistance with job search, career advice, and assistance in identifying short-term skills training opportunities and education. Limited funding was available for long-term education, so staff worked with clients to access grants, scholarships, and financial aid for clients interested in education or training lasting longer than 12 months.
Job retention and advancement services	Career development specialists were the key facilitator of retention and advancement services. The expectation was that their knowledge of the labor market and of local training opportunities would help clients develop and pursue logical career paths.	Retention and advancement services were tailored to clients' long-term employment goals and individual circumstances. Originally the TAAG team had plans to reach out to area employers, but this component was not fully realized.

region reported an unemployment rate of 7.7 percent; by 2004, the local economy was rebounding from a recession, but, in December 2004, regional unemployment was still high: 6.1 percent. (At that point, the state's unemployment rate, 6.7 percent, was still higher, but the national rate of 5.1 percent was markedly better.)

Furthermore, even though local economic conditions improved after the recession, the types of jobs available in the region seemed to offer little room for advancement for low-skilled workers. Between 1980 and 2000, the Medford economy underwent significant restructuring. The region, once dependent on the lumber and wood-product manufacturing industries, experienced a 28 percent decline in employment in these sectors between 1990 and 2000.[9] Over this decade, jobs in retail trade and health services increased 41 percent, and today these sectors, along with tourism, have come to be still more important to the region's economy. Thus, the region offered fewer well-paid jobs to workers whose skills and education were limited.

Target Populations and Characteristics of the Research Samples

Eugene's ERA program targeted people who were employed (with "employed" being defined as at least 20 hours of work weekly) and who had left the TANF program. Originally the site randomly assigned only workers who had recently exited the welfare system. In late 2002, however, when it appeared that the site might not meet its goals for sample sizes — owing to not enough former recipients' finding jobs — the site expanded the target population to include people who had left TANF for employment for up to one year before the program began.

As discussed, the Medford ERA program did not confine itself to serving former welfare recipients; it also targeted working people who were participating in the Oregon Food Stamp Employment and Training Program and the Employment-Related Day Care Program. The three groups could, but did not always, overlap with one another.

Table 2 presents selected characteristics of the two sites' research populations at baseline, the time of random assignment. Sample members at both sites were mainly female, white U.S. citizens whose primary language was English. Individuals in both site samples were more educated than most in the ERA study: only 20 percent of the members of each sample did not hold some kind of education credential.

Over 60 percent of sample members in both sites made $7.00 to $9.99 an hour as of study entry, with slightly more Medford than Eugene sample members earning $10.00 or more

[9]U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research (2002).

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Table 2

Selected Baseline Characteristics of Single-Parent Sample Members

Eugene and Medford

Characteristic	Eugene	Medford
Gender (%)		
Male	7.6	8.9
Female	92.4	91.1
U.S. citizenship (%)	99.3	100.0
Primary language (%)		
English	99.6	99.7
Spanish	0.4	0.3
Other	0.1	0.0
Race/ethnicity (%)		
White, non-Hispanic	84.8	89.9
Black, non-Hispanic	3.0	1.4
American Indian/Alaska native	1.9	1.7
Hispanic	6.3	4.6
Asian/pacific islander	1.2	0.4
Other race/ethnicity	0.5	1.6
Mixed race	2.1	0.4
Age (%)		
Younger than 20	9.1	6.1
20 to 30	52.9	44.8
31 to 40	26.9	33.7
Older than 40	11.1	15.5
Average age (years)	29.5	31.3
Education (%)		
GED	22.5	21.5
High school diploma	44.0	40.3
Technical/associate's degree/2-year college	10.6	14.2
4 years (or more) of college	3.3	3.0
None of the above	19.6	21.0
Housing status (%)		
Rent, public housing	7.7	0.5
Rent, subsidized housing	16.1	24.1
Rent, other (unsubsidized)	58.9	58.8
Own home or apartment	2.5	5.4
Emergency or temporary housing	2.0	3.9
Other, living with friends/relatives	12.8	7.4

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Characteristic	Eugene	Medford
Current cash assistance status (%)		
Applicant	32.5	0.7
Recipient	56.8	1.6
Neither applicant nor recipient	10.7	97.7
Total prior AFDC/TANF receipt (%)		
None	12.8	37.4
Less than 3 months	13.3	15.0
3 months or more and less than 2 years	43.8	32.3
2 years or more and less than 5 years	20.0	9.3
5 years or more and less than 10 years	7.6	4.3
10 years or more	2.6	1.7
Months employed in past 3 years (%)		
Did not work	7.5	0.9
Less than 6	15.0	6.0
7 to 12	19.5	11.3
13 to 24	29.3	18.1
More than 24	28.7	63.7
Currently employed (%)	99.6	97.8
Hours worked per week (among those currently employed) (%)		
Mostly part time	31.6	30.7
Mostly full time	52.1	59.3
About the same	16.2	10.1
Hourly wages (among those currently employed) (%)		
$5.15 or less	0.4	1.8
$5.16 to $6.99	24.5	20.0
$7.00 to $9.99	66.2	63.8
$10.00 or more	8.8	14.4
Number of children (%)		
0	0.0	0.0
1	47.5	44.9
2	33.1	32.2
3 or more	19.4	22.9
Age of youngest child (%)		
2 or younger	44.3	34.9
3 to 5	22.9	24.0
6 or older	32.8	41.2
Sample size (total = 2,301)	1,137	1,164

SOURCE: Oregon baseline information.

NOTE: Results are for sample members who were randomly assigned from February 21, 2002, through June 30, 2004.

per hour. About 64 percent of Medford sample members had worked for two years of more at the time they entered the study — a proportion more than twice that in Eugene (29 percent).

Two striking differences between the two samples at random assignment are that the Eugene sample members were less likely than the Medford sample members to have had a previous spell of receiving TANF benefits and were more likely to have more extensive work histories.

Roadmap of the Report

The next section of this report further describes Eugene's ERA program and its implementation, and that is followed by a section that does the same for the Medford program. The report's concluding section provides information about the two ERA programs' early impacts on levels of participation and service receipt and on employment, earnings, job characteristics, and other outcomes.

The Eugene ERA Program and Its Operations

The Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) program in Eugene, Oregon — called Progress towards Retention, Opportunities, Growth, Enhancement, and Self Sufficiency (PROGRESS) — was a voluntary program for former recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits. PROGRESS is one of 16 ERA models around the country (the Medford, Oregon, model that is also examined in this report is another one) that are part of a random assignment research study being conducted by MDRC, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization. The study focuses on the implementation and impacts of ERA programs.

PROGRESS services were offered to former welfare recipients after they had started work. Using three teams of case managers and career development specialists, based in three different branches of the welfare office, PROGRESS:

- Helped clients take advantage of support services
- Offered clients coaching focused on helping them keep jobs and advance in their careers
- Worked to help clients become reemployed as soon as possible after they lost jobs

This section of the report provides additional detail on the PROGRESS program and reports on how it operated over time. It begins with a series of discussions giving background on the program and then presents implementation findings, including results from a study of how program staff spent their time. It concludes by discussing the services that were available to control group members in the Eugene ERA test.

Origins and Goals of the Eugene PROGRESS Program

As is true for a number of the ERA models, Eugene's PROGRESS program was not an adaptation of an existing program but began with the onset of the ERA project. Besides being a new venture, PROGRESS represented a new relationship for its joint managers, the welfare department (the Department of Human Services, or DHS) and Lane Community College (LCC). The two agencies had worked together in the Workforce Network, a local consortium of agencies providing services through the WIA (Workforce Investment Act) system, the major government-funded system to help unemployed people find jobs. Still, PROGRESS was the first time that DHS and LCC collaborated in operating a service program. Although officially DHS contracted with LCC to deliver the program's career advancement services, in practice the partners shared responsibility for PROGRESS operations.

Prior to the start of PROGRESS, LCC had already been playing a role in the local workforce system. It had been operating a local WIA-funded One-Stop Center — one of the national network of WIA centers that offer job-seekers a range of employment-related services at one site. Still, neither LCC nor the welfare department came to PROGRESS with experience in providing career advancement or job retention services to low-income workers after they found jobs. As in many other ERA locations, special services to promote job retention and career advancement had rarely been available previously to low-wage working families.

In another related sign of a possible need for new approaches, according to program staff, few TANF clients had been using the LCC One-Stop services to look for jobs. Thus, in joining DHS to design and operate the ERA program, LCC hoped to take advantage of TANF funding to serve a broader population than it previously had served. Meanwhile, from DHS's perspective, the new collaboration was a way to give a group of its clients — former welfare recipients — greater access to the expertise and resources of the WIA system.

These interests of the two institutions are reflected in the two goals that they set for the ERA program: (1) to provide working individuals with ongoing job retention and advancement services, which had not been available in the past at either the welfare or the workforce agencies; and (2) to join forces in order to leverage resources from the welfare and workforce agencies on behalf of former TANF recipients.

The Structure of the Eugene ERA Program

To deliver on the twin goals for the program, Eugene's designers established three teams, with each team consisting of one case manager, who was employed by DHS, and one career development specialist (CDS), who worked for LCC. The CDS focused on career counseling and helping clients move up career ladders.[10] In contrast to the situation in a number of other ERA programs, the CDSs not only had counseling backgrounds but also had good working knowledge of the local labor market and of local services and institutions.

The case manager worked on getting clients access to support services like food stamps and what are known as "extended benefits" — primarily child care, help with transportation, and Medicaid subsidies that are available for a period of time after someone leaves TANF for work. To receive these benefits, working clients were to check in monthly with their case managers. While both team members referred clients to agencies in the community to help them

[10]In contrast to the design in other ERA programs, CDSs in PROGRESS were not formally responsible for job development or much other direct outreach to employers. As is discussed below, other agencies in the Workforce Network were mainly expected to contact employers.

solve problems related to housing, substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health, and other personal and family matters, case managers took the lead in making these referrals.

Each ERA team was colocated in a separate DHS branch office — one in the West Eugene branch, a second in the McKenzie branch, and a third in the Springfield branch. The composition of the team and its colocation were intended to give clients a chance to get help from staff who had expertise in both the welfare system and the workforce investment system.

The management of PROGRESS was shared equally by DHS and LCC, with each agency assigning one person to the management team. The DHS program manager was located at the McKenzie branch DHS office, and the LCC program manager was based at the community college.

The pool for program participants consisted of former welfare recipients who had gone to work and who had been contacted about PROGRESS. As noted in the report's Introduction, however, these former recipients were almost always randomly assigned to program and control groups before, not after, they had been told about the research study. This is because, as also discussed, staff identified those who were eligible for random assignment by using a form that all TANF applicants and recipients completed to report changes in employment and wages, in order to continue to receive transitional services. Following random assignment, which occurred between June 2002 and June 2004, staff contacted people who were assigned to the program group to inform them that they were eligible for PROGRESS services.

Following is a summary of what was learned about the implementation of PROGRESS.

Findings from the Implementation Study in Eugene

This summary opens with discussions of the organizational characteristics of the PROGRESS program: its institutional culture, its staffing and management, and its funding. While these discussions touch on some aspects of the program's approach to services, the second subsection, "The Eugene ERA Program in Action," gives a more complete picture of how PROGRESS worked with clients. The last subsection focuses in more detail on how the program sought to promote employment retention and career advancement.

Organizational Issues

Institutional Culture

- **Staff of the two agencies that were involved in the project initially struggled to adapt to each other's institutional cultures and work styles.**

As was true in some of the other ERA programs, staff who came from the WIA system — and, in the case of the Eugene program, these were the career development specialists (CDSs) — sometimes found it difficult to transition into the welfare system's work environment. Part of the difficulty was adjusting to the PROGRESS service population: people facing barriers to career advancement that tended to be steeper than the ones that typify WIA system users. For example, one PROGRESS CDS said that she had felt insufficiently prepared to address the many substance abuse problems she encountered in the program. For their part, the DHS case managers reported that it could be an adjustment to work with CDSs who were not prepared for the challenging and sensitive issues that arose in the welfare office.

Another source of stress was that the CDSs were unfamiliar with the rules and regulations of the welfare system. For example, one CDS often disagreed with her teammate (the DHS case manager) about the extent to which a client "deserved" the emergency payments or supportive services that the welfare office had to offer. To the CDS, the bureaucratic processes that the welfare system imposed on clients' getting access to these kinds of benefits seemed to place obstacles in the path of helping that person use supports that she was entitled to; to the case manager, however, these were merely the regular procedures that the system expected her to follow.

As is discussed next, over time, the team members worked through their differences and became strong partners. But both sides agreed that more up-front information and training about each agency and its work culture would have shortened the learning curve. For example, the CDS who was frustrated by the welfare agency procedures that she had to follow eventually concluded that her frustration would have been tempered if she had initially been given more training about the system's rules and expectations.

- **Case managers and CDSs generally worked well together, functioning as true teams.**

Once PROGRESS had matured, each member of the team of two displayed a high level of trust in and communication with her counterpart staff member, recognizing the different strengths that each peer brought to the project. One case manager, for example, said that her CDS partner offered a wealth of information that she otherwise would have been unable to tap. Another case manager said that she was grateful that she could work in the same office as her CDS partner: "It's really helpful to have her right there." The project managers agreed that the staff members from the two systems grew to appreciate and work well with one another.

Team members stressed the importance of their presenting a unified front to clients. Whenever possible, clients were introduced to the case manager and the CDS as a single team. Especially after program workloads increased, it sometimes became difficult to schedule intake interviews at which both team members talked with clients at the same time. But the team

members did prefer to meet jointly with clients during the first meeting, so that they could take turns explaining their respective roles and the kinds of help each of them could offer. According to the teams, one advantage of solidarity is that it helped them avoid giving what they called "good-cop, bad-cop" impressions to clients.

- **The teams generally felt that they did not receive enough support from the DHS offices where they were outstationed.**

Program staff said that often other staff and managers at the branch welfare office where they were housed did not fully recognize and respect PROGRESS. Case managers working for PROGRESS reported that their DHS colleagues in branch offices did not understand the more intensive and comprehensive nature of the services that they were providing. One particular point of tension came at the beginning of the program, when caseload numbers for the PROGRESS case managers were still low. At that stage, many of the other case managers felt that their PROGRESS counterparts were not pulling their weight or contributing to the job-placement numbers that the office was supposed to work toward. As the caseloads of the PROGRESS case managers gradually rose to reach the levels of other DHS staff, this source of conflict abated. Still, case managers reported sometimes feeling isolated in their branch offices.

Besides tensions with line staff members, there were also some complaints about upper-level DHS managers. According to some of the CDSs, these managers did not always extend enough support to the DHS case managers on their teams. Similarly, the PROGRESS CDSs reported that their branch DHS supervisors sometimes overlooked their frustrations and that their own PROGRESS managers did not always have the leverage to advocate for them with the office supervisors. According to one PROGRESS program manager, part of the problem was that DHS branch supervisors were required to focus on the primary objectives of the welfare agency — benefits and eligibility issues and outcomes for the regular welfare-to-work employment program — leaving them little time to address the special issues of concern to the PROGRESS career advancement and job retention program.

Some of the tensions likely could have been avoided if more efforts had been made to attune other welfare staff members to PROGRESS. One PROGRESS program manager observed that if staff at the welfare offices had been given regular updates about the program and its successes, they would have been encouraged to recognize them. The manager also believes that these kinds of updates could have reduced some of the feelings of isolation that PROGRESS staff reported.

Staffing and Management

- **The team arrangement facilitated PROGRESS service delivery.**

For several reasons, pairing the CDS and case manager in a team that was based in a DHS branch office helped staff provide comprehensive and personalized services more easily than would have otherwise been the case. First, the proximity of case managers and CDSs promoted very important information sharing about clients, enabling both team members to keep abreast of clients' situations.

Second, the colocation made it easier for clients to get access to services: they did not have to travel to different agencies; instead, they could resolve problems and follow procedures related to eligibility for benefits and support services in the same place where — and more or less at the same time when — they were advised on how to advance their careers and secure education and training.

Third, the arrangement helped the program keep clients engaged in employability services. Since clients were required to check in with their case managers for the support services, the case managers were often able to reconnect people who were not availing themselves of employment services to their CDSs.

- **PROGRESS case managers often had much bigger workloads than their case manager counterparts elsewhere in the welfare agency.**

Once the program had moved beyond the relatively low caseloads of the start-up period, the caseloads of the PROGRESS and regular DHS case managers were often about the same size — most typically, about 75 people. But compared with their peers in the DHS system, case managers on the PROGRESS teams tended to do much more work to serve the same number of people. Two major factors contributed to the discrepancy. First, when PROGRESS participants lost jobs, PROGRESS case managers, who continued to work with these clients, were expected to process their TANF reapplications without any assisting support staff.

Second, unlike the regular DHS case managers, the PROGRESS staff rarely had cases that could be considered inactive. For example, a regular DHS case manager might have no reason to reach out to a person on the caseload who was receiving the extended Medicaid benefits that the TANF system makes available to someone who leaves welfare for work, but a PROGRESS case manager would be expected to be in regular contact with such a person to check in about the benefits and at the same time to determine whether the client needed help to keep a job or to take steps to improve her income.[11]

[11]Most of the DHS case managers had 30 to 35 active TANF cases, with the rest of their cases tending to be people receiving the extended Medicaid benefit, who did not need consistent services. In contrast, the PROGRESS case managers had approximately 35 active TANF cases — primarily, participants who had returned to welfare after losing jobs — and 35 to 40 cases related to extended child care or Medicaid benefits.

(continued)

- **At program midpoint, a rise in caseload sizes contributed to a dip in PROGRESS staff morale.**

At the peak of the program operations period, around June 2003, caseload sizes grew to over 100 per PROGRESS staff person. Compounded by some difficulties engaging clients in services (discussed below) and by the lack of recognition of PROGRESS among the mainstream DHS staff (discussed above), this expansion of the caseloads set off a degree of demoralization. By March 2004, PROGRESS staff reported to MDRC that they were feeling burnt out and overwhelmed. The situation improved only when random assignment for the MDRC research study ended and caseload sizes fell back down to their previous levels.

- **The three PROGRESS teams mostly operated independently of one another.**

Although there was very good communication between the CDS and case manager at each branch office, there was somewhat less collaboration among the three teams. With the exceptions of monthly all-team meetings, of joint sponsorship of workshops offered every few months to clients who were having trouble becoming reemployed, and of sharing expertise on training, grants, and scholarships, the teams mostly worked on their own, with each team using its own style.

In retrospect, some team members and program managers said that there had been difficulties in working separately from the other teams at other branches. Some staff members commented that it would have been preferable if all team members had been located at the same place — an arrangement that these staff said would have allowed them to build on each others' strengths and to pool resources to help clients. (A couple of staff members who made this observation mentioned the idea of rotating program staff through the three different branch offices.) The CDSs, in particular, felt that keeping all the CDSs together would have been helpful because when challenging employment-related issues or cases arose, it would have been easier for the three CDSs to offer ideas or advice to one another.

- **PROGRESS was well managed, with the management team holding frequent staff meetings, monitoring staff performance, and giving staff feedback on service delivery.**

The two PROGRESS program managers worked closely with one another and with the staff teams. While PROGRESS staff did function autonomously on a day-to-day basis, they

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The child care cases were all active because PROGRESS case managers needed to dispense these benefits monthly. And even though they did not need to make monthly calculations for the extended Medicaid benefits, as noted, they were expected to be in contact with clients receiving these benefits, to offer them job retention and advancement services.

described their managers as running a "tight ship." Indeed, the staff members were held to specific performance benchmarks for the number of client contacts, take-up rates for program activities, and the time frames within which contacts were to occur. Furthermore, program managers regularly monitored staff performance in reaching these benchmarks.

The managers held frequent all-staff meetings — first weekly and later, when the program matured, once a month. The meetings were opportunities for the managers to give staff updates about policy and procedural matters and for staff to exchange ideas about how best to work with clients. The managers also used the meetings to solicit staff input on the program's design and methods of service delivery, and, in keeping with this approach, the managers made many program decisions jointly with staff.

The managers also conducted periodic case file reviews with each team. The reviews focused on random samples of approximately 10 cases. The progress of each case was evaluated against the benchmarks for engaging clients (for example, number of client contacts, levels of services provided, and wage and advancement outcomes). In describing how the reviews worked, one program manager said that he evaluated the team's "timeliness of developing a plan, accessing other resources, [and] the things they've developed for clients." The case review meetings also gave staff a chance to discuss particularly challenging cases with one another and with the managers.

Funding

- **Funding for PROGRESS was sufficient to meet its basic needs.**

PROGRESS was funded in part by the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program, Oregon's welfare-to-work program. Although JOBS funding was reduced during the 2001-2003 and 2003-2005 state bienniums, these cutbacks were not felt as acutely in Eugene as in other Oregon ERA sites. One reason why is that the size of TANF caseloads in the area fell during this period, and PROGRESS was able to tap into savings in TANF support services to acquire funding for its employment-related support services. Also, the local branch DHS offices had made a commitment to fund the PROGRESS case manager positions as an in-kind contribution to the program; hence, PROGRESS did not risk losing these positions when statewide funding cuts for welfare services were passed down to local DHS offices. The program was also supported by funding from the U.S. Department of Labor that was made available to Oregon for ERA. Together, all these funding sources allowed the Eugene site to maintain its original levels of staff and services throughout the PROGRESS program period.

- **Additional funding for two purposes — for technology and for additional staffing, including support staff — might have helped the program function more smoothly.**

From an operations perspective, PROGRESS had adequate technology to support its work, with the case managers using DHS's tracking system to monitor clients' participation. But when asked for advice about how to run similar programs in the future, the CDSs and program managers said that a more detailed management information system (MIS) or database would have helped them do a better job of charting clients' progress and helping clients advance their careers. As one staff member expressed it, "It would have been really nice to have a management information system to really make this work, to categorize by job and then when job leads come up, you could sort and send people a note and let them know [that you're] thinking about them."

Professional staff also said that the program could have used more support staffing. Only one support staff member helped with random assignment (in contrast, the Medford ERA program assigned three support staff members to this function), and as caseloads grew, there were no funds in the DHS budget to expand support for research-related functions. Also, PROGRESS case managers were not given extra help to process TANF eligibility for program participants who had lost jobs. Staff and managers told MDRC researchers that it would have been extremely useful if case managers had had some or more support staff assistance in these areas and that the help would have freed up some of the case managers' time to work more intensively with clients on job retention and career advancement issues.

The Eugene ERA Program in Action

Marketing and Intake

- **Staff had to convince people who had already been assigned to the research study's program group to actively participate in PROGRESS.**

As noted in the Introduction, random assignment into the study's two research groups in Eugene took place prior to discussion of the services offered in PROGRESS. This differed from the practice in the Medford ERA program, in which prospective participants were asked about participating even before random assignment and were randomly assigned only if they were interested in possibly receiving services. The procedure in Eugene imposed a greater marketing challenge on the PROGRESS staff, who sought to engage everyone.

- **Getting clients in the door for a first meeting to learn about PROGRESS was seen as a critical part of the marketing effort.**

After someone had been randomly assigned, the random assignment clerk informed the person's PROGRESS case manager and CDS that that had happened so that they could invite the person to an intake meeting. Clients were eligible for the program for a year after random assignment, but staff concentrated their outreach energies on the first 90-day period, working

hard to contact clients during those three months to schedule them for initial meetings. Staff generally concluded that if clients came to the first meeting, they would participate in the program at some point, if not immediately.

To encourage clients to attend intake meetings, two of the PROGRESS teams sent out welcome letters, along with an information packet and a notice of a scheduled appointment for the client to meet with them. These teams then usually called the clients to follow up. Members of the third team also used mailings but mainly relied on phone calls, which they viewed as the superior outreach strategy.

- **Staff used a variety of marketing messages to encourage clients to join PROGRESS. Complementing general selling points, staff tried to personalize their marketing of the program.**

While each PROGRESS team encouraged people to participate in a slightly different way, key underlying themes of their diverse marketing messages centered on the value of advancing in a career, the kind of help the CDS could provide, and the voluntary nature of the program. Discussing the role of the CDS, one case manager said that clients liked the idea that they could work with someone from a workforce agency like LCC, rather than just someone from the welfare agency. Along these lines, many staff members emphasized the difference between PROGRESS and the regular welfare program. They also stressed that the program was voluntary. Some staff told clients that they could participate in the program as much or as little as they liked but could always count on the PROGRESS team to be there for them.

During the intake meeting, the teams tried to find out details about their clients' current employment situations and what they liked and disliked about their jobs. Usually the team members could identify something that motivated the client and could use it to market the program. (Most often, they found that the driving force was the client's aspirations for her family.) One staff member who used this approach said that she began by learning a little about the client's life and then looked for ways to explain the program, based on what seemed to make that person "tick."

Ongoing Engagement of Clients

- **As PROGRESS caseloads grew, CDS staff had a harder time keeping in regular contact with clients.**

All the PROGRESS teams energetically reached out to clients to engage them on an ongoing basis. As noted, clients who were working were required to have brief monthly check-ins with case managers in order to continue to receive such supports as extended child care and Medicaid benefits. During these meetings, case managers often tried to find out about clients'

employment situations and encouraged those who were ready to do so to begin working more closely with the CDSs on career advancement.

For their part, CDS staff maintained logs of weekly client contacts to keep track of whom they had seen and how frequently. In the later part of the program, the team tried to send monthly preprinted postcards to nonparticipants, highlighting program benefits.

Early in the program period, the PROGRESS team achieved a high level of client engagement in services. An early assessment of operations (April 2003) showed that the PROGRESS teams were meeting their benchmarks for the number of initial contacts that they were expected to make and that they had exceeded the benchmark of having 60 percent of clients receive at least one additional service after the intake interview, by 11 percentage points.

But as caseloads and workloads expanded over the course of the program period, staff found themselves unable to be as proactive as they had been at the outset. One CDS described herself as being in "survival mode" for keeping up with her cases. If caseloads had been smaller, she observed, she would have been able to work more intensively with clients. One problem was keeping up with clients who had passed the point of being in the program for 90 days. CDSs reported that they were in regular contact with most clients for the initial 90 days but that after those three months had ended, they did not follow up consistently.

- **PROGRESS staff reported that two types of clients were given the most attention: clients in crisis and motivated clients.**

Staff naturally responded to clients who had problems like the sudden loss of a job or a family crisis that required immediate attention. At the other end of the spectrum, they also responded to clients who sought out help to improve their careers. Thus, since clients in crisis were unlikely to be focusing on career advancement, it was primarily the motivated clients who took advantage of the program's help on this front.

According to staff, the "in-between" group — clients who were not initiating contact because they were working and were not in crisis — could have benefited the most from PROGRESS. Staff hypothesized that this group could have been more motivated to advance if staff had had more time to engage them. One staff person said, "The people who deserve my attention don't get it at all — [they] are doing what they need to do but are just struggling to make it."

Case Management in Eugene: Relationship-Building

- **PROGRESS staff built good rapport with clients.**

Personalized case management was central to the PROGRESS program. An observation made by one staff member underscores a view widely shared in this ERA program (as it was in many others): "The whole difference of whether or not they [clients] are going to participate depends on the rapport that you build with them." CDSs emphasized the importance of being "cheerleaders" in their interactions with the clients, focusing on their skills, talents, and positive qualities and supporting them as they tried to achieve stability in their lives — and, consequently, in their jobs. One staff member stated that, in working with clients, she also drew on her own life because she had "a tough personal history" and "people will be able to relate to that."

The field research confirmed the strength of the client-staff relationships. For example, the researchers observed a number of staff-client meetings that began with clients and staff catching up on each other's children and or on what each person had done on holidays. When the CDSs and case managers talked with researchers about clients, it was clear that they had an in-depth understanding of clients' personal circumstances and of how these circumstances affected participation patterns and career goals. Field observations and other interactions with staff in the course of the research study indicated that, as a group, staff had strong interpersonal skills. And in focus groups that were part of the research study, PROGRESS participants spoke highly of the PROGRESS team, particularly of their CDSs. Some participants described staff as their "advocates."

Staff tried hard to "read" their clients, using their interpersonal skills to assess clients' personalities and needs. One staff person explained that her approach to a particular client was "not known until . . . a couple contacts. . . . [My] strategy is different with each client." In one sign that staff had confidence in their ability to size up a client's strengths and needs, in the mid-to-late stages of the program, some staff stopped using the formal Income Improvement Survey that PROGRESS had developed for the intake interview. These staff members concluded that that it was better to get the same information on a client's skills, goals, and barriers to employment that they could gather by using the survey by holding more informal conversations with that person.

- **Trust was a crucial ingredient of the staff-client relationships.**

"You really have to get the trust ironed out," said one PROGRESS staff member. "They call you, and then you follow through, and they realize that you're going to be there for them." She went on to give her full recipe for building rapport with clients: "So it's trust, honesty, and humor."

According to staff, one key ingredient of the trust that they established with clients was that the clients felt safe to disclose sensitive and personal issues. They said that many clients also felt that they could be open with staff about ongoing and new challenges both in their work

lives and elsewhere in their lives. Underscoring the importance with which she viewed trust in the client-CDS relationships, one CDS described her relationship with a client who was experiencing anxiety and parenting problems. The client knew, said this CDS, that she could "give me anything, and I will help find an answer and support her."

One reason why clients came to trust the PROGRESS team was that the program was distinct from the regular welfare system. Staff reported that PROGRESS clients appreciated the way in which the team extended itself to them more fully than the regular welfare agency; they were grateful, one staff member said, that PROGRESS staff did not see them as "just part of the system." One CDS, who said that she believed in giving people a fresh start, reported that she avoided reading a client's welfare case file before the intake interview. That way, she said, she did not go into an initial meeting with preconceived notions of a client's "issues." She referred to a file only later and then only if she suspected that it could shed light on a particular problem that the client was having.[12]

> *As the intake interview proceeded, the CDS began to get a sense of Rosa. With an appearance affected by a degenerative tooth disease, this client seemed to lack self-confidence, even to have low self-esteem. Rosa, the CDS concluded, needed "to be coaxed not intimidated." Still, the CDS decided to take a risk. Although it was the first time that the two had met, she raised the issue of Rosa's health condition in a way that she hoped was both straightforward and sensitive. She asked Rosa how she felt the condition had affected her ability to find jobs — and then she gave Rosa a few different suggestions for treatments. The CDS was pleased that her candor seemed to have been the right approach: Rosa's responses indicated that she felt supported, not ashamed, by the up-front discussion of her medical condition and that she was grateful for the chance to face a hard problem directly.*

- **Staff tried to be as flexible as possible about when and where they would talk with clients.**

PROGRESS staff members took evening calls and tried to accommodate clients' schedules by meeting them outside the branch offices. For example, besides holding sessions at the offices, some CDSs made themselves available to clients by holding weekly "office hours" at Lane Community College, thus giving their clients another place where they could stay in touch. High caseloads and workloads did impose limits on the ability of team members to find special times and places to meet their many clients. (Another limitation was an LCC policy that prevented CDSs from making home visits unless they were accompanied by a DHS case

[12]The following vignette and similar profiles that appear in the remainder of this section and in the next section, about the Medford ERA program, describe situations either observed in the course of the field research or discussed in researchers' interviews with staff. All names used in these examples are pseudonyms.

manager.) But to the extent that staff did manage to adjust their schedules for clients, they found that clients had fewer reasons to cancel appointments.

Clients who had stopped participating in PROGRESS for a while knew that they could contact the program when they felt they needed help — and sometimes they did just that. For example, one client lost touch with the program soon after her first meeting with her case manager. However, because that one and only meeting had established good rapport between the two, when the client lost her job, she was quick to call the case manager. The case manager sent the client on to the CDS, who, in turn, said that she was immediately "able to prove useful" by giving the client job leads and tips on how to follow up on them. The CDS and the client began to meet regularly, and the client soon found a job.

Reemployment Services

- **Many clients had lost their job by the time they first met with the PROGRESS team, and staff often found themselves focusing on help with job searches.**

Staff's energetic recruitment of randomly assigned clients resulted in strong attendance rates for intake interviews. But some PROGRESS clients who came to the interviews had lost jobs in the interim between random assignment and the meeting. The problem was particularly acute in the Springfield branch office, which, according to case managers, was serving a population with steeper employment barriers than clients who came to the other two offices. The April 2003 review showed that 35 percent of Springfield clients — compared with 17 percent and 24 percent in the other two branches — were unemployed at the time of the intake interview. In fact, however, the overall rate for the three offices was high: 27 percent of clients were coming to the interview having lost a job.[13]

The high rates of clients who had lost jobs by the time of their intake interviews meant that staff were often doing something different from what had been anticipated — starting, in effect, from square one to help clients find jobs, rather than guiding them to stay in the labor market and move up career ladders. In the words of one staff member: "It just turned out that way. It's not what I signed up to do."

- **PROGRESS staff rose to the reemployment challenge.**

[13]For the program as a whole, the lags between random assignment and intake interviews were slightly longer than projected. For example, the April 2003 assessment showed that 59 percent of clients (compared with the benchmark of 70 percent) had been seen within 30 days of random assignment. These somewhat longer-than-expected lags may have contributed to the higher-than-expected rates of early unemployment.

If a client lost a job, the team applied itself energetically to helping that person find a new one quickly. Newly unemployed clients were enrolled for up to 30 days in what the program called "rapid reemployment services," which involved counseling and coaching to help them find jobs. (If clients did not find jobs during that period, they were referred again to the regular welfare services and were ineligible for PROGRESS until they found work.)

In addition to offering individual counseling and coaching, PROGRESS responded to the reemployment problem by sponsoring a series of Work in Progress classes, which, like the counseling, focused on job searches and also included analyses of why clients had lost jobs. The classes were conducted every couple of months over the course of a week, at a location central to the three branch offices. Approximately 10 to 12 people participated in each class.

One client who had become very discouraged after having lost a job was referred to a Work in Progress class. "The class really helped her realize that she could speak," recalled the CDS, adding that the experience had boosted the client's confidence as she began to look for a new position.

Promoting Job Retention and Career Advancement

- **Individualized plans were used to guide a person's activities in the program.**

In their initial meetings with clients, the PROGRESS team worked with them to create "retention and career plans," which outlined clients' service needs, career goals, and any needs for vocational assessments. Subsequent meetings were to focus on conducting those assessments and on helping clients move toward the goals that they had set for themselves.

When additional help was needed to address personal or work-related problems, the program had access to outside resources and referrals. For example, if a client disclosed a mental health problem, that person could consult a psychologist who was on-site at the Eugene office for a couple days a week. For clients dealing with domestic violence, DHS also had a relationship with a women's shelter.

- **PROGRESS staff put a premium on quickly helping clients overcome impediments to employment.**

If the individualized plan showed that a client was facing specific barriers to finding or keeping a job, the teams tried to address the problem immediately, so that they and the client could move on to advancement issues as soon as possible.

- **Staff were adroit at helping clients address personal or family problems without losing sight of employment goals.**

Field researchers' observations of client-staff interactions showed that PROGRESS staff listened and responded sympathetically to a range of clients' concerns — from the difficulties of quitting smoking to the need to find emergency child care. However, instead of focusing exclusively on these problems as stand-alone issues, staff tried to relate them to the larger objectives of finding, keeping, and advancing in jobs.

> *When Charlene came into the office for her appointment with her CDS, she was clearly preoccupied about a recent dispute with her landlord. In response, the CDS offered her some advice about renter's insurance and then gave her the phone number of the local Renter's Advocacy Group. In part because the CDS had made it clear that she would try to help Charlene resolve the dispute only once, Charlene herself had taken steps to contact the Renter's Advocacy Group, and so the discussion of the rental problem took no more than 10 minutes. As soon as this part of the conversation was over, the CDS redirected the discussion toward what Charlene was planning to do to move up a career ladder.*

- **Staff found it very useful to make service or employment-related referrals that were more than just the name of an agency.**

Staff often made what they called "enhanced referrals." This means that they gave a client who needed help solving a personal or family problem the name of a specific staff member at an agency, someone with whom PROGRESS had already met and who had agreed to help PROGRESS clients.

Besides opening the door to a client at a particular agency, these relationships made it easier for PROGRESS staff to follow up with staff of the agency to find out whether the client had, indeed, contacted the organization and whether the client had been served there. The unusually strong knowledge that CDSs had of local resources and institutions facilitated their ability to establish these kinds of relationships with other groups.

PROGRESS staff regularly made enhanced referrals to WorkNet, a job fair where employers presented job openings and job-seekers delivered "live résumés," speaking to the group about their skills and experiences; and to Job Finders Club, a networking and information-sharing forum for job-seekers. In another example of an enhanced referral, one CDS helped a client set up an informational interview — and prepare questions for the meeting — with an LCC career counselor who had been a former colleague of the CDS and who had experience in art therapy, the client's career interest.

- **Staff tried to intervene whenever they surmised that a client might leave or lose a job.**

PROGRESS staff usually found out about clients' potential job losses at check-in meetings. They used a number of approaches to try to head off a job loss. One important strategy was the cheerleading, or generalized encouragement, that was mentioned above. Also, especially if clients had unstable work histories, staff tried to talk with them to pinpoint reasons why they often lost jobs. Staff also tried reasoning with clients to persuade them not to leave positions too hastily. For example, one CDS said that she asked clients about how it feels to walk out of a job ("good") and about the later feelings of not having a job ("not good"). In some instances, staff contacted employers to help clients' diagnose any problems that were putting them at risk of losing their jobs.

- **Standard welfare-system supports were useful in helping clients keep jobs, but some clients could have used more transportation assistance.**

PROGRESS drew on the welfare system's extended benefits to ensure that lack of transportation and child care did not lead to job losses. Clients were also able to tap into the welfare system's emergency funds for solving housing crises, making car repairs, and meeting other needs that clients can claim to help them keep jobs (up to $1,000 per client). Generally, these supports were found to be adequate, but some clients who lived a distance from Eugene (where many jobs were located) struggled with transportation expenses. They found that the welfare system did not fully compensate them for the gas needed to commute to work and that the alternative of bus travel was very time-consuming.

> *In order to keep her job at a daycare center, Thea needed training on how to handle child abuse and neglect. But she was unable to get this training at LCC because she had an unpaid tuition debt at the college. The CDS found a worker in the local child welfare division of DHS who was willing to conduct a one-on-one training with Thea that qualified her to continue working at the center.*
>
> * * *
>
> *When Barbara told her CDS that she was about to get fired from her job as a caregiver, the CDS asked for and was given Barbara's permission to contact the employer to find out more about the situation. The employer refused to consider letting Barbara stay on because she thought that Barbara simply did not have the skills needed for the job. But the employer invited the CDS to sit in on Barbara's termination meeting, as long as Barbara agreed. Barbara did agree to including the CDS in the meeting, and, together, the employer and the CDS were able to turn the session into a learning experience, giving Barbara a much clearer understanding of how she had fallen short on the job. Subsequently, Barbara moved on to another position that was a much better fit for her skills than caregiving, and she is now also enrolled in a training course at Lane Community College.*

- **PROGRESS staff were unusually skilled in weaving together efforts to help clients keep jobs and encouragement to advance their careers.**

Observations of client-staff meetings and early reviews of progress in reaching program benchmarks indicated that the Eugene program had a stronger and more consistent focus on career advancement than other ERA programs. In a sign of the strong focus on advancement, an MDRC program assessment conducted during the first six months of PROGRESS operations found that, in 40 percent of the case files reviewed, the clients had participated in more than one advancement activity and that, on average, clients participated in three such activities.

Staff — who worked with clients simultaneously on job search and on retention issues and career advancement — began raising advancement issues in their very first meetings with clients, and they managed to convey an advancement message in almost all subsequent meetings. For example, a staff member would often talk with a client about the importance of keeping a job and then would move on to focus on that person's long-term career goals. Or, in an illustration of the team approach, a case manager might check to be sure that the client had all of her support services in place — a situation that would help her keep a job — while the CDS would talk with the client about advancement routes. The CDSs made sure to suggest actions — for example, finding emergency child care or dealing with a potential eviction or an abusive partner — that helped clients proceed beyond any immediate crisis and refocus on advancement. Even the Work in Progress classes for job-seekers incorporated advancement-related topics, with class leaders discussing career ladders and how clients' skills could help them advance to dream jobs.

- **Although the CDSs had slightly different approaches to working with clients on advancement issues, certain strategies were used throughout the program.**

One CDS was especially likely to talk with employers on behalf of PROGRESS clients; another was known for using a brainstorming exercise to help clients succinctly articulate their strengths and career interests. But the CDSs also had many common strategies to encourage clients to advance their careers.

Goals-Focused Career Coaching

In focus groups held as part of the research study, PROGRESS participants described CDSs not only as their advocates but also as their career coaches. Following are some of the key features of the career-coaching role.

- ***Staff first helped clients narrow down their interests and define their career paths.***

In intake meetings, the CDSs talked with clients about their employment histories, interests, and career and personal goals. As mentioned, especially in the earlier stages of the program, CDSs used the Career Information Survey to help identify clients' goals; they also used the iMatchSkills assessment test. Both tools were available online at the LCC One-Stop Center.

CDSs also created some of their own tools to facilitate discussions of goals — for example, goal diagrams, job search strategy assessments, skills statements, and worksheets that asked clients to identify and express their personal and professional strengths. In addition, one CDS often used the personal statements that clients had written for scholarship applications to help them pinpoint their goals.

> *The meeting between Mary Jo and her CDS began by focusing on Mary Jo's tough new home situation, which involved a discussion of how Mary Jo should handle the visitation rights of her children's father. As they talked, the CDS set a tone of moral support and encouragement, reminding Mary Jo of her strengths: her "stick-to-it-iveness," compassion, and intelligence.*
>
> *Then the CDS gave Mary Jo an assignment for their next meeting, a task that the CDS thought would help her view her strengths more concretely. She asked Mary Jo to create a chart that would present some of her accomplishments — for instance, her completion of Certified Nursing Assistant training or the way that she had cared for her sister's children so that her sister could go to work and school — along with a list of the activities that had led to each accomplishment. The CDS knew that the chart would also help Mary Jo write a personal essay to be included in an application for a scholarship. Thus, Mary Jo left the meeting with an assignment that could reinforce both her self-confidence and her career advancement goals.*

- ***CDSs next worked with clients to develop clear advancement plans.***

"It's really key for clients to have an understanding of what they need to do and what the next steps are," said one staff member. Observing how CDSs did this, researchers noted that these staff members had a good sense of how to guide clients to take meaningful and manageable steps without overwhelming them. In the words of one staff member, CDSs tried to "set clients up for success" by creating small, achievable tasks that led clients toward larger career goals.

In every meeting that the CDSs held with clients, they helped them create work plans that outlined a few tasks consistent with their employment objectives. (To facilitate this exercise, staff usually asked clients to fill out a worksheet, "My Career Ladder," which asked them to identify a goal, the steps

they needed to take to achieve it, and the potential barriers to taking each of these steps.) Besides developing the new work plan and giving clients a copy of it at the end of the session, staff were sure to review the work plan that had been generated at the previous meeting and to praise clients for their accomplishments in carrying out the tasks that had been included in their last work plan. In all career-coaching meetings observed as part of the research study, it was clear that clients had indeed completed their assigned work-plan tasks.

Just as important as helping clients articulate potentially achievable goals, CDSs directed clients away from goals that were unrealistic. Staff steered clients away from inappropriate plans and seemed to manage to do so without being either overly discouraging or prescriptive. One example of how a CDS tactfully helped a client see that her plan was impractical occurred when a CDS counseled a client who had to support twins on her earnings from a low-wage job. The client said that her goal was to cut back to part-time hours and finish beauty school. The CDS, who was aware that becoming a beautician was not a good long-term option for supporting two children, carefully discussed the consequences of this possible choice with the client and helped her to think about a different career path.

Education and Training

As former TANF recipients who had found jobs, many PROGRESS participants could draw on program funds to support short-term training (lasting no more than 12 months). However, PROGRESS could not itself provide funds to support longer-term education and training.

Although few clients reportedly participated in education and training, staff believed that these services — particularly vocational and skills training programs — could be very worthwhile. They encouraged clients to take advantage of various training courses, with the most popular being short-term computer training and a Certified Nursing Assistant certificate program.

- ***Staff were persistent about trying to connect clients to WIA services, but relatively few clients used them.***

  PROGRESS staff had the capacity to find opportunities for their clients to take part in employment-related workshops through the Workforce Network (the One-Stop network of providers) and through LCC. To acclimate clients to WIA services, staff often met with clients at the One-Stop to show them what services were available there and how to access those services; some

staff even sat in on the workshops with those clients who did sign up for them. PROGRESS staff were also given some degree of access to One-Stop's attendance system, allowing them to track whether clients attended WIA workshops and, thereby, to encourage clients to stay with these services. In general, however, WIA services were not geared to providing the type of one-on-one intensive services to working individuals that were available through the PROGRESS program, nor was it easy for people who were already working — including PROGRESS clients — to access training dollars from the WIA system. Thus, despite PROGRESS staff's efforts to encourage clients to take advantage of WIA-funded services, few PROGRESS participants did so.

> *Sondra, who had been given full-tuition assistance to earn a massage certificate at LCC, was worried that a career in the massage industry would not provide her with enough income to be economically self-sufficient. But her CDS advised her to view the training as only one step on her career development path. Being a massage therapist, the CDS pointed out, could be a good short-term option for Sondra because it would allow her to work part time while she went to school.*

- ***There were instances of CDSs who worked with some clients to find support for longer-term education — an effort that was relatively labor intensive.***

In interviews for the research study, two of the three CDSs said that they selectively encouraged the pursuit of education for those clients who, they thought, were most likely to succeed in school. Helping these clients apply for scholarships and financial aid often took several meetings.

> *Marsha reviewed her iMatchSkills assessment results with her CDS, who told Marsha that she had never seen someone earn such high scores on the assessment for the potential to work in the social services field. Marsha was delighted not only with her scores but with the cheerleading from her CDS. The feeling that her skills and interests had been validated motivated her to contact her former employer at Head Start about job openings. Moreover, the meeting reinforced her interest in returning to school to pursue a joint degree in early education and juvenile justice. At her next meeting, Marsha and her CDS discussed the possibility of her enrolling in classes at LCC, and her CDS subsequently told her about scholarships that might be able to help her do that.*

Work-Based Advancement

The PROGRESS team stressed work-based advancement strategies for clients who were uninterested in education or who had not advanced after they had acquired new skills. Strategies included leading clients to sources of job leads and suggestions about how they could move up in their current jobs — for example, by taking on additional job responsibilities or hours in order to show their employers that they had a strong work ethic.

- ***In keeping with the way PROGRESS had been designed, staff generally did not interact directly with employers.***

  In contrast to the practice in other ERA programs, PROGRESS staff were not expected to do job development; that was considered the responsibility of other members of the Workforce Network, particularly the Oregon Employment Department (OED). In general, PROGRESS staff were not expected to be on the frontlines of initiating close relationships with employers. The main exception was that some staff did contact employers when clients were at risk of losing their jobs. (Also, as is discussed below, one CDS did choose to initiate more contact with employers than had been anticipated.)

  On the whole, PROGRESS staff saw themselves as the intermediaries between clients and employers, coaching them on how to talk to employers or how to conduct a job search using leads supplied by OED. In retrospect, some staff members said that they would have liked to have worked more closely with employers but that, in some cases, they had not had enough time for reaching out to employers and that, in other instances, clients would not give them permission to do so.

  One CDS, however, decided that it was useful to be in close touch with employers, and she did more outreach to them than called for by the original program design. Looking back on this work, she said that she had been able to talk through clients' hesitations about her calling employers, explaining to them how the contact could benefit them. (Eventually, to short-circuit these kinds of hesitations, when she introduced the program to prospective participants, she came to describe her contacting employers as a regular feature of PROGRESS.) The CDS said that employers appreciated her interventions, seeing them as a way to help someone perform better on the job. Using this kind of intervention, the CDS helped one client earn two successive $1.00 per hour raises by encouraging a body-shop employer to arrange on-the-job training to teach the client how to operate a brake-press machine.

- ***With some clients, staff felt that they hit very real limits on efforts to promote career advancement.***

  Staff reported that many participants simply were not stable enough — in their personal or professional lives or both — to participate in an advancement program. One program manager said that all the tools that PROGRESS developed were not always enough: "If someone gets to the point where they're on TANF, all the easy solutions didn't work; [they've] hit [their] last resort." In these instances, the manager added, program strategies like assessments and the development of individualized career plan were not enough to make a difference.

- ***Potential loss of government benefits if income were to rise too much was sometimes a disincentive to clients' efforts to advance.***

  Focus groups with program participants revealed that clients were very aware of the eligibility rules for government benefits and the consequences of exceeding the income thresholds. Discussants described how they tried to avoid the conundrum of making more but being worse off. One person said that the strategy that he and his spouse were using was that he should not advance at his job: "[We're] holding back to make sure we don't fall off the cliff." Another had actually considered asking for a wage decrease in order to qualify for benefits: "[If] I made $100 less, then I would qualify for every benefit." Several discussants reported that they delayed reporting any wage increases until seven days into the month that the wages had been raised so that any decrease in benefits would not go into effect until the following month.

How PROGRESS Staff Spent Their Time

In almost all the ERA tests, a separate "time study" was done, to ascertain how program staff spent their time. Following are the main findings from this special study of the Eugene ERA program.

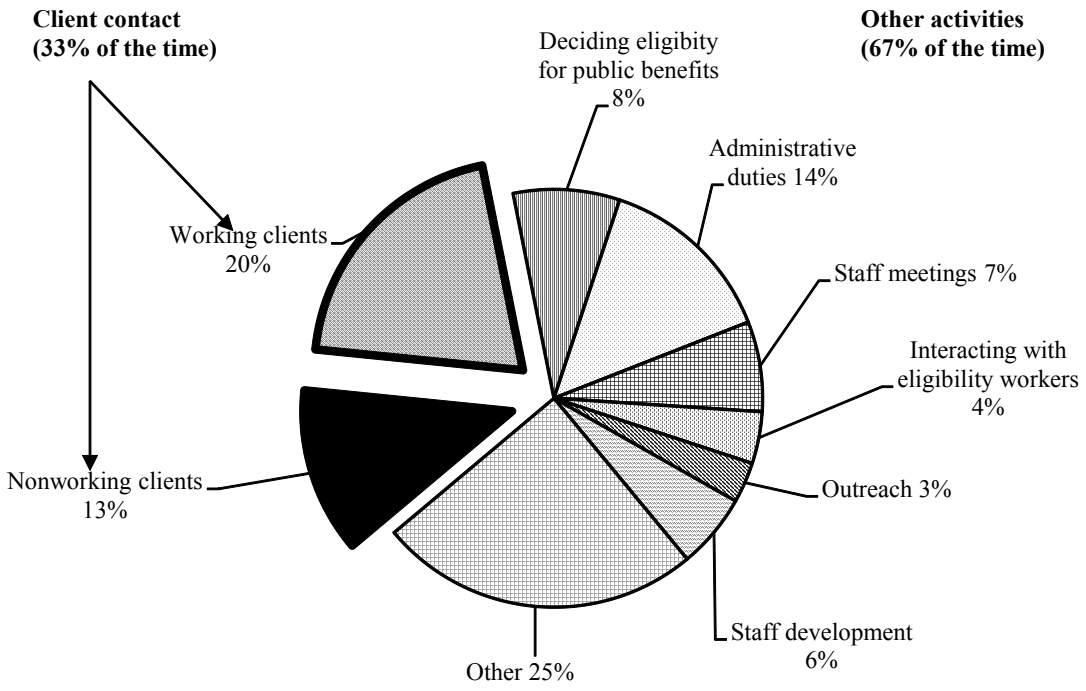
- **Staff spent approximately a third of their work time in contact with clients, mostly with working clients.**

PROGRESS staff spent about 33 percent of their daily work time in contact with clients — 20 percent with working clients and 13 percent with nonworking clients. The remaining 67 percent of their time was divided among a number of activities, including administrative duties (14 percent of total time), eligibility decisions for public benefits (8 percent), staff meetings (7 percent), and a variety of duties characterized as "other," which includes job development,

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Figure 3

Summary of How Eugene ERA Staff Typically Spend Their Time



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the ERA time study.

contacts with other workforce agencies, paperwork related to applications for training or financial aid, travel to and from meetings and program activities, and interactions with CDSs or employment counselors concerning particular clients (25 percent of total time). (Figure 3 summarizes how PROGRESS staff spent their time.)

As shown in Table 3, staff had an average of around 7 client interactions a day, with each of the interactions lasting an average of almost 18 minutes. Staff had more contacts with working clients than with nonworking clients, but they spent the same amount of time per interaction, on average, with working and with nonworking clients.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Table 3

Extent of Contact Between PROGRESS Staff and Clients

Eugene

	All Case Managers
Percentage of work time spent in contact with	
Any client	32.9
Working clients	20.3
Nonworking clients	12.7
Average number of client contacts per day per staff member	
Any client	6.6
Working clients	4.3
Nonworking clients	2.3
Average number of minutes per contact with	
Any client	17.9
Working clients	18.2
Nonworking clients	18.5
Number of PROGRESS staff time-studied	6

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the ERA time study.

NOTE: PROGRESS staff include case managers and career development specialists.

- **Clients were generally more likely to initiate contact with PROGRESS staff, and most contact occurred over the phone.**

Table 4 shows that PROGRESS clients initiated contacts with the program about 58 percent of the time. While this indicates a strong level of voluntary engagement in the program, the 42 percent of contacts that were initiated by staff suggest that staff nevertheless did have to work hard at outreach.

The CDSs were more likely to initiate client contact than the case managers (not shown in tables), and most contacts with clients occurred over the phone: 68 percent of all client contacts. Staff met with clients in person — in the office — 27 percent of the time (Table 4).

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Table 4

Description of Contact Between PROGRESS Staff and Clients

Eugene

	All Case Managers
Percentage of all client contacts that were:	
In person	27.2
Office visit	26.9
Home visit	0.3
Employer visit	0.0
Visit elsewhere	0.0
Not in person	72.8
Phone contact	68.1
Written contact	4.2
Other type of contact	0.4
Percentage of all client contacts, over a two-week period, that were initiated by a/an:	
Staff person	41.9
Client	57.7
Other person	0.4
Number of PROGRESS staff time-studied	6

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the ERA time study.

NOTE: PROGRESS staff include case managers and career development speicialists.

Table 5 summarizes the topics covered during contacts between PROGRESS staff and clients. Several topics were raised often, and staff raised them about as often with working as with nonworking clients. More than a third of all contacts included a general check-in discussion. Confirming the field research finding that staff worked hard to get to know clients and their individual situations, close to a third of all contacts included a discussion of personal or family issues. Staff addressed supportive service issues with working and nonworking clients in about 19 percent and 17 percent of all contacts, respectively.

Not surprisingly, government assistance and ongoing eligibility issues took up much more of the time spent with nonworking clients: close to 31 percent of all contacts with nonworking clients and close to 20 percent of contacts with working clients. Discussions about career goals and advancement were more likely to occur during interactions with working clients (22 percent of contacts for working clients, compared with 14 percent of contacts for nonworking clients) (Table 5).

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Table 5

Topics Covered During Contact Between PROGRESS Staff and Clients

Eugene

	Working	Nonworking
Percentage of all contacts that included the following topics:[a]		
Initial client engagement	12.6	2.7
Supportive service eligibility and issues	19.3	17.0
General check-in	35.1	35.8
Screening/assessment	5.2	3.8
Address on-the-job issues/problems	6.1	3.6
Address personal or family issues	31.9	30.7
Explore specific employment and training options	11.3	5.5
Discuss career goals and advancement	22.2	14.2
Assist with reemployment	6.0	32.1
Discuss issues related to financial incentives or stipends[b]	NA	NA
Schedule/refer for work experience position[b]	NA	NA
Enrollment in government assistance and ongoing eligibility issues	19.7	30.7
Assistance with the EITC	1.2	0.8
Participation/sanctioning issues	6.4	3.7
Schedule/refer for screening/assessment	0.4	1.6
Schedule/refer for job search or other employment services	1.9	5.5
Schedule/refer for education or training	0.7	0.5
Schedule/refer for services to address special or personal issues	3.3	3.4
Providing job leads or referrals[b]	NA	NA
Number of PROGRESS staff time-studied		6

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the ERA time study.

NOTES: NA = not applicable.

PROGRESS staff include case managers and career development specialists.

[a]Percentages total over 100 percent, since more than one topic could be recorded for each client contact.

[b]This measure was not included in the time-study instrument in Eugene.

Control Group Services in Eugene

- **At the start of program implementation, it was assumed that control group members did not have access to the types of enhanced case management or retention and advancement services that were available to PROGRESS clients.**

Before becoming employed, members of both the program and the control group participated in JOBS, the mandatory welfare-to-work program in Oregon. As part of JOBS, TANF applicants were given an orientation to WIA and were introduced to the One-Stop Center. (TANF applicants were also told that, depending on the outcome of random assignment, they would be potentially eligible for the PROGRESS program when they found jobs.) Once employed, both the program and the control group were eligible for the same TANF transitional services, such as extended child care and medical coverage benefits. The difference was that marketing and outreach about these services to employed clients in the control group was limited, whereas PROGRESS clients had a PROGRESS case manager who focused on making sure that they were receiving all the supports for which they were eligible. It was expected that the extra effort and contact that PROGRESS staff made with clients would produce a difference in the extent to which clients accessed these funds.

Another reason that it was expected that control group members would not have access to the enhanced case management or retention and advancement services that were available to employed PROGRESS participants is that the JOBS program did not provide postemployment services — and, at the onset of the study, staff and managers reported that very few regular TANF clients received in-depth services or training either through the One-Stop or elsewhere in the WIA service network. In addition, it was thought that the "enhanced referrals" that were made available through PROGRESS would make more clients aware of existing resources and would encourage them to use them.

- **It appears that control group members had greater access to services than was expected.**

Interviews held during later site visits, some observations made in the focus groups, and results from a survey of program participants suggest that PROGRESS operated in a service-rich environment.[14] To start, since CDSs made referrals to and drew on community resources, members of the program and control groups could potentially access the same services. Furthermore, before TANF recipients who participated in the JOBS program were assigned to the research sample, they were given information about the One-Stop and WIA services. Thus, it is

[14]The ERA 12-Month Survey is discussed in the report's final section, "Early Impacts of the Eugene and Medford ERA Programs," and Appendixes F and G present survey response analyses for the two sites.

conceivable that control group members may have remembered these resources and sought them out on their own. After they had found jobs, motivated control group members who were proactive and who asked their DHS case managers for other employment and training services would have been referred to the One-Stop for additional assistance. While the One-Stop did not offer services that were specifically designated for employed people, it did hold workshops that focused on choosing a career and thinking about long-term advancement.

In addition, a number of discussants in focus groups for control group members spoke about the popularity of LCC's Women in Transitions (WIT) program and its individualized services. Some discussants described WIT as a program "every woman knows about." Some mentioned referrals that WIT had given them to supportive services and to training at LCC. One person attributed her success in finding a job to the help that a WIT counselor had given her in identifying her career interests. Finally, a handful of control group members who had part-time jobs received assistance from a job developer at the Oregon Employment Department that was intended to help them find full-time employment in order to leave TANF cash assistance. (This service later ended owing to state budget cuts.)

The Medford ERA Program and Its Operations

The ERA program in Medford, Oregon — called "Transition, Advancement and Growth" (TAAG) — operated from February 2002 through July 2005. It was a voluntary, postemployment program aimed at working-poor people who were former welfare recipients and/or who were receiving public benefits, such as food stamps and subsidized child care from the state Department of Human Services (DHS). The program's aim was to help participants keep their jobs and advance in the labor market.

Like the PROGRESS program in Eugene (discussed in the preceding section), TAAG was one of 16 ERA models around the country that are part of a random assignment research study being conducted by MDRC, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization. The study focuses on the implementation and impacts of ERA programs.

This section of the report provides details on TAAG and gives a picture of its operations over time. After opening with background information on the program, the section then presents implementation findings, including results from a study of how TAAG staff spent their time. The section concludes with a discussion of the services that were available to control group members in the Medford ERA test.

Origins and Goals of the Medford TAAG Program

TAAG was modeled after a previous Medford program of the late 1990s — called "Retention, Advancement, and Transitional Services" — that had been targeted to long-term welfare recipients. The earlier program had been operated by several organizations that were members of the Southern Oregon Regional Employment Compact (SOREC), a consortium of agencies that offer employability services to disadvantaged residents of Southern Oregon. DHS, which was part of the compact, was the lead agency for the program. Seeking to build on the program's positive track record in serving long-term welfare recipients, DHS and another SOREC member — The Job Council, a nonprofit service provider — joined forces to design a new initiative. The TAAG ERA program that emerged from the planning process was viewed as the logical next step for DHS's welfare-to-work program — trying to assist former welfare clients to go beyond just finding a job by helping them to both maintain employment stability and progress in the labor market.

Unlike some employability initiatives, TAAG was to be a program with services heavily shaped by clients' own career interests and support needs. The staff would learn about clients' goals, while clients would be presented with options for achieving them. (Staff sometimes described TAAG as being "customer-driven.") Especially because TAAG was structured

as a voluntary program, its designers viewed clients as being responsible for their own actions and outcomes, choosing which options and services were best for them and whether and when to follow through on those options.

The Structure of the Medford ERA Program

The Service Team

TAAG services were provided by a five-member service team, often called "the TAAG team." It consisted of staff members from four partner agencies: a case manager (from DHS), a job counselor and a job coach (both from The Job Council), a learning plan specialist (from Rogue Community College), and an employment specialist (from the Oregon Employment Department) — all supervised by a project manager (or, later in the program period, by two co-managers). Three of the five team members worked nonstandard hours — in the early morning, in the evening, and/or during weekends.

Team members had been handpicked for TAAG by senior managers of the partner agencies involved in the program. In selecting team members, managers placed a lower priority on seniority or credentials — although all staff had either a bachelor's or a master's degree — and instead focused on key personal qualifications. Managers looked for staff members who could work independently, knew the range of local programs available to low-income groups and would be a resource to clients, could look beyond clients' barriers to employment and focus on their strengths, and could think creatively about how to work with clients to accomplish project goals. Another key criterion was that staff members be team players. The team that was ultimately chosen included former staff members of the Retention, Advancement, and Transitional Services program along with people who had worked on other employment-related programs with one or more of the partner agencies.

Staff offered case management to clients in a variety of areas, including job searches, job coaching, budgeting and financial planning, career advice, conflict resolution, assistance in identifying training and education opportunities, assistance in applying for financial aid, and referrals to supportive services. According to TAAG's original plan, team members were also expected to reach out to employers on behalf of their clients. Clients were assigned not to a single case manager but to the entire team.

Program Flow

As noted in this report's Introduction, prospective TAAG clients first were introduced to the program and its services, were asked whether they wanted to participate, and then were randomly assigned either to the program group, which was eligible to receive TAAG services,

or to the control group, which was not eligible for the ERA program but could seek services from other providers in the community. TAAG services were offered to clients for up to a year after their random assignment.

Following random assignment, which occurred between February 2002 and April 2004, program group members were sent a welcome letter that gave further information about TAAG; confirmed a one-hour appointment, or intake interview, with TAAG team members; and included a short survey that the client was requested to complete and bring to the first meeting. The survey asked more specific questions than had been gathered during random assignment about the client's current employment situation — for example, where the person worked and how long he or she had been there, the number of hours worked per week, the person's mode of transportation to and from work, and any work-related goals that the person would like to achieve over the upcoming six months.

Originally, the plan was for the TAAG team first to assist clients in stabilizing their employment situations and then, only after they were working, to help them advance, either by moving up in their current jobs or finding better ones. Also, as originally designed, TAAG was intended to offer services to clients in three sequential phases. In the first phase — estimated to last approximately six months — clients would be given help in stabilizing their employment and personal situations. Once clients' personal issues had been addressed and they had stable jobs, staff would work actively to address advancement-related goals. Clients would then move to the second phase of service delivery, during which the onus would be placed on them to be more independent and proactive about their participation in the program and about realizing their goals. In this phase, the team proposed to make follow-up calls and respond to inquiries, but the services would be less intensive. In the final phase of services, the team proposed to have an open-door policy, helping clients identify supports if they needed that assistance but otherwise having minimal contact with them.

Separation of TAAG and Services Related to Public Benefits

TAAG services were delivered at The Job Council's administrative offices, which were half a block away from the DHS office and directly across the street from a One-Stop Career Center operated by The Job Council. (One-Stops, which are funded by the federal Workforce Investment Act, or WIA, are centers located throughout the United States that offer job-seekers a variety of employment-related services in one setting.)

With TAAG services based at The Job Council, clients who needed to apply for or were receiving public benefits such as food stamps, transitional child care, or subsidized medical insurance were referred to the DHS office for assistance. This physical and procedural delinking of public benefits and TAAG services was a conscious decision of TAAG's designers. The separation was intended to help the program focus on its career-advancement agenda and to

promote the empowerment of clients to decide which career options were best for them. Rather than being viewed as enforcers of the eligibility rules for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, it was hoped that staff would be seen as facilitating clients' own goals for advancing their careers.

Funding Cutbacks

Partway through program operations, TAAG was confronted by funding cuts. During the 2001-2003 state biennium, the budget deficit for the Children, Adult and Families division of DHS reached more than $30 million, and, by the following biennium (2003-2005), the gap had grown to almost $82 million. The result was overall cutbacks for TANF-related services, leading to reductions in DHS funding of approximately 29 percent in the time between the 2002 and 2004 budgets. The implications of these cutbacks are discussed in the section below entitled "Findings from the Implementation Study in Medford."

Management

Management of TAAG went through several phases. For about half the time when random assignment was taking place, TAAG was managed by a staff member from The Job Council, who devoted most of his time to the program. When he left Medford and the program, his responsibilities were divided between two people: another staff member of The Job Council, who was responsible for the program's supervisory and personnel matters; and a TAAG case manager, who was in charge of overseeing day-to-day program operations. Together, these two staff members spent time amounting to approximately a half-time managerial position.

A third managerial change occurred toward the end of the program period, when, owing to funding cuts, the TAAG case manager reverted to full-time service provision. That left The Job Council staff person, who had been devoting only about 10 percent of his time to the effort, as the sole TAAG manager.

Findings from the Implementation Study in Medford

The following are key findings from the MDRC implementation study of the TAAG program. Several topics are explored: organizational issues, how the program worked with clients overall, and how staff sought to promote employment retention and career advancement.

Organizational Issues

Institutional Culture

- **A long history of collaboration among the agencies on the service team translated into strong collegial relationships among TAAG managers.**

As noted above, the agencies that managed TAAG had already worked together as members of the Southern Oregon Regional Employment Compact (SOREC). Formed in 1991, the compact consisted of a group of agencies that had agreed to cooperate with one another, to colocate staff at each others' agencies, and, whenever possible, to bid jointly on employment-related service contracts and opportunities. MDRC field research interviews suggest that this partnership created strong and lasting relationships among member agencies. Interviewees described SOREC as establishing a culture of collaboration that sharply reduced much of the competition that manifests itself when agencies vie for limited program funding to serve similar clienteles. Field research suggested that the collaborative spirit that had been built up over the more than 15 years of the compact's existence carried over into TAAG: managers from the different partner agencies maintained a shared commitment to the project and cooperated to solve problems.

Staffing

- **Members of the TAAG team functioned as a true team.**

MDRC field interviews and program assessments found a strong esprit de corps among TAAG team members. For example, in their interactions with clients, team members did not differentiate themselves by agency affiliation but instead presented themselves as a united group. The TAAG message to clients was that they had access to a full complement of staff members, all of whom wanted to help them realize their career goals.

Several factors contributed to the strong cooperative spirit among frontline staff members. First and most simply, the colocation of services in one office facilitated easy communication and camaraderie. Second, as noted, being a good team player had been one of the criteria used to select program staff members. Third, the strong working relationships that had already been established between the home agencies and their managers who had come together to operate TAAG translated into harmony among frontline team members.

The cross-organizational tensions between welfare and workforce staff that were experienced by teams in some other ERA tests did not surface in Medford. Staff from DHS speculated that the Medford model of not having TAAG staff deliver public benefits allowed the site to avoid some problems. Specifically, TAAG staff from The Job Council did not have to confront the eligibility rules and regulations that guide DHS's public benefits programs, and

thus they did not find themselves in the position of having to decide whether to advocate for a client's interests with a welfare agency colleague when DHS mandates struck them as unduly restrictive or punitive.

- **Team discussions and decisions played an important role in refining the TAAG program model.**

Initially, staff were given little formal training on how to deliver services focused on career advancement. Instead, before the provision of services was under way, the team spent time revising and enhancing the materials from the predecessor program — the Retention, Advancement, and Transitional Services program — to shape a guiding document for TAAG. Some of this work centered on deciding how to manage client flow and how to sequence services. Team members also discussed the program's philosophy and, based on those discussions, made suggestions to the program managers on how they might best achieve TAAG's dual job retention and career advancement goals.

- **TAAG team members were given formal training, although not at the earliest stages of their work together.**

At a point when TAAG services were being offered in a pilot stage of the program, MDRC hired several consultants to provide successive rounds of training to staff in the TAAG program (along with staff in the other Oregon ERA programs).[15] The training focused on marketing services, ideas for engaging clients, and working with employers. It also gave the trainees tools and techniques to help clients identify and move toward career advancement goals. As is discussed further below, this training gave team members valuable help as they sought to sharpen the focus of their efforts on job retention and career advancement.

- **TAAG clients did not have dedicated case managers but instead could work with whichever staff members were available. Over time, however, the program did move toward more staff specialization.**

Although each TAAG staff member had a different job title, connoting specific expertise, staff saw themselves as generalists — especially during the program's early phase — with all team members being able to perform the same or similar functions. Thus, team members did not necessarily stress their particular area of expertise when they met with clients.

One of the potential benefits of this nonspecialized arrangement was that it was designed to give TAAG clients — most of whom were expected to be working and to have

[15]In addition to Eugene's program, also discussed in this report, ERA programs were operated in Portland and Salem. Portland's Career Builders Program is discussed in Azurdia and Barnes (2008), and Salem's VISION program is the subject of Molina, Cheng, and Hendra (2008).

limited time to meet with team members — flexibility in scheduling appointments with TAAG staff. In a client's first meeting with the TAAG team members, staff stressed the convenience of this structure. Another advantage was that clients could have more control about which team members they chose to work with, and some clients did form relationships with certain staff members and tended to seek out those people for help.

As the program's caseloads grew, staff responded by adhering more to their respective areas of expertise. For instance, the employment specialist devoted attention to helping clients look for work, while the job counselor concentrated on job retention services. The job coach became more focused on helping clients advance in their careers, and the DHS case manager worked particularly on troubleshooting problems that arose when clients tried to get access to supportive services. Also, staff began dividing up responsibilities for following up with specific clients. Still, program practice never shifted to each staff member's formally being given a discrete caseload. Team members continued to be open to working with any client who came into the office.

Program Management

- **TAAG's first management arrangement, which lasted for about a year, generally worked very well, with the manager using a number of practices designed to keep the program focused on its goals.**

The first manager, who staff viewed as a hands-on leader, held regular meetings to review the team's overall progress in achieving program benchmarks. He also held regular case conferencing sessions, in which, as a way to help team members maintain their focus on career advancement goals, he reviewed each case with them. The reviews gave staff a way to troubleshoot problems that arose in connection with particular cases and to think about how to apply the techniques to promote career advancement that they had learned about in training sessions. In the early stages of the program, the manager also spent time publicizing and explaining the TAAG program and giving periodic reports on its progress to its managing partner agencies — an exercise that helped to maintain TAAG's visibility at the agencies.

This first TAAG manager consulted with MDRC to develop a series of performance benchmarks — for instance, benchmarks for TAAG participation rates, for how well clients were following through on steps they had outlined in their Personal Development Plans (written plans produced at the outset of the program; discussed in greater detail below), and for other similar indicators. With outside help, the manager also facilitated the development of a client database, which allowed staff to keep up to date on which clients had come in to receive services within the past 30 days and which ones should be encouraged to return.

- **Subsequent managerial arrangements provided less oversight to the TAAG team.**

As discussed above, when the original program manager left, his responsibilities were divided between a TAAG case manager and a manager from The Job Council, who together spent considerably less time than the first manager on supervising and overseeing the program — about half-time, in contrast to the nearly full-time work of the original manager; the manager from The Job Council was responsible for personnel and supervisory matters but devoted only 10 percent of his time to this work. Both the TAAG team members and the managerial staff were clear that there was a sharp contrast between the earlier and later managerial arrangements.

The new structure weakened the cohesion of the teams because managers had less time than originally planned to dedicate to staff meetings, case conferencing, and troubleshooting difficult cases. Likewise, there was less time to provide daily supervision to team members. The shortage of supervision was manageable for seasoned staff members but was more problematic for staff who joined the team later in the program period and who were given relatively little guidance to help them fully understand TAAG's mission.

In addition, field research interviews suggested that staff were not completely clear about which one of the new managers to approach about particular program issues. Interviewees also felt that once the original manager was no longer with the program, staff at their respective home agencies were less aware of — or sometimes even completely unaware of — TAAG.

The final managerial arrangement, with only 10 percent of one person's time devoted to management, left the program with very limited oversight.

Funding

- **State funding cuts adversely affected TAAG operations.**

The severe funding cuts to the TANF program midway through the program period led to a shrinkage of funds available for the primary TAAG contract, which was between DHS and The Job Council. The cutbacks also caused several other problems.

To start, Rogue Community College could no longer afford to dedicate special time of the employment specialist or the learning plan specialist to serving TAAG clients. The office of the learning plan specialist was moved to the community college campus, and while TAAG staff could still refer clients to her, the arrangement was clearly much less convenient. The employment specialist would see TAAG clients if they came to her office but could not give them priority. Another problem was that TAAG — which had a dedicated source of TANF funding to help clients pay for tools, equipment, clothing, emergency services, and short-term training — saw this funding reduced in the wake of the state budget crisis.

In addition, salaries of TAAG staff were cut to 90 percent of their original levels. At the same time, The Job Council responded to the cutbacks with layoffs that affected TAAG. In July 2003, it laid off ten non-TAAG staff from its overall staff, and, in December 2004, another eight non-TAAG staff members were terminated. Because one non-TAAG Job Council staff member had more seniority than a TAAG team member, she took over the team member's position even though that person's performance had been satisfactory. One TAAG staff member left the project early to find a more stable job, and other team members began looking for new jobs. In general, the staff layoffs affected the morale of TAAG team members as they saw their friends and colleagues laid off in two successive rounds of staff reductions. Unfortunately, the budget cuts and staffing changes occurred at a point when the program was maturing and team members were beginning to feel well acclimated to their roles.

- **Funding from the U.S. Department of Labor helped to fill the gap but not completely.**

Responding to the funding crisis — and particularly to concern that Oregon might need to withdraw early from the ERA study — DHS approached the U.S. Department of Labor for funding and was successful in securing resources that allowed the state to continue to participate in the evaluation. While federal funding came at a critical moment and helped the state to continue to participate in ERA, the TAAG program was not able to return to the resource level that it had enjoyed at the start of the service delivery period.[16]

The Medford ERA Program in Action

Client Intake and Engagement

- **The first meeting with TAAG clients was designed to send them the message that their goals and aspirations deserved staff's attention.**

At the initial intake sessions, clients met with, at minimum, the job coach, job counselor, and case manager. Often the learning plan specialist and the employment specialist would join the meeting, especially if clients had told the random assignment clerk that they were interested in education and training and/or in exploring better job opportunities immediately. Bringing the power of several staff members to bear on this first meeting was a conscious program decision. The team described the approach as "stack[ing] the deck in [a client's] favor by having three or more team members at the first appointment in an attempt to present as many options as possible for the client to consider." According to program documents, the team's

[16]Federal Department of Labor funding was also provided to the Eugene program to somewhat offset the effects of the state budget shortfall at that site.

strong presence was intended to have "the psychological effect of confirming to the client[s] that they were valuable and worth the investment of time and resources. 'You are working; therefore, we will foot the investment.'" (Subsequent meetings were usually held with one team member — often the staff person with whom the client felt most comfortable working.)

The intake meeting had a broad agenda: staff informed clients of TAAG services, learned more about their interests and job circumstances, sought to build rapport with them, and probed to find out sources of clients' motivation for making positive changes in their lives. The meetings culminated with the production of Personal Development Plans (PDPs), which clients and staff worked on together. The PDPs delineated concrete steps that the clients intended to take toward realizing their personal and professional goals. At the end of the meetings, clients were given copies of their PDPs along with dates and times for follow-up appointments.[17]

> *Janice filled out the short survey that had been sent to her before her first TAAG appointment, answering questions about her goals and employment history. At the meeting, she discussed those topics with TAAG staff. She told staff that she was earning $35 per hour as a computer tutor to senior citizens but that she was working only three hours per week. Her goal, she said, was to increase her hours. The meeting also revealed that Janice was $30,000 in debt and that her car was unreliable for getting to and from work. Together, Janice and TAAG team members brainstormed about what she needed to do to increase her work hours. At the end of the meeting, Janice had signed a PDP with three immediate action steps. She would (1) work with TAAG staff to create a flier to market her computer tutoring services; (2) check out options for repairing her car, while TAAG staff looked into the availability of DHS funding to help with the cost of repairs; and (3) complete a debt-reduction/managing finances worksheet.*

Medford program documents provide a useful summary of the underlying philosophy of the PDP — and in a sense of the entire program:

> *The plan is a reciprocal document which allows the client to be empowered should a member of the Transition [TAAG] Team not complete their end of the bargain. This again adds value to the program and vests the client in investment outcomes. . . . The Transition Team attempts to direct [clients] to focus on their role, and not the role of the State or public assistance in aiding them to self-sufficiency. When [clients] realize that they control their future and employment, they take personal accountability for their own successes and failures.*

[17]The following vignette and similar profiles that appear in the remainder of this section and in the preceding section, about the Eugene ERA program, describe situations either observed in the course of the field research or discussed in researchers' interviews with staff. All names used in these examples are pseudonyms.

- **TAAG staff took a proactive approach to recruiting clients into the program and involving them once they were there.**

Given the TAAG philosophy of letting clients make their own choices about whether and how to participate in the program, staff sometimes hesitated to be too aggressive in their efforts to market the program and engage clients. But staff also believed — and were further persuaded by MDRC's experience with welfare-to-work programs — that voluntary programs for former welfare recipients generally required an interventionist role in engaging clients. Thus, while the team tried to balance giving clients room to decide for themselves whether and how to participate, they were ultimately proactive in this area.

Results of a study of how TAAG staff members used their time (discussed in more detail below) show that the TAAG team was more proactive in reaching out to clients than staff in other ERA programs. Across all other ERA programs, the percentage of client contacts that were initiated by a staff member ranged from a low of 26 percent to a high of 68 percent. In Medford, close to 80 percent of all client contacts were initiated by TAAG staff rather than by clients.

The team sought to meet with clients within 15 days after they had been randomly assigned. In addition to the welcome letter, described above, all clients received phone calls to confirm their first meetings. These gestures were intended to give clients a message that TAAG was a different type of social service program, one that sought after and welcomed people.

To help keep clients engaged, especially when they missed meetings, the TAAG team phoned or sent postcards to remind them that the team was available to them. At minimum, TAAG staff attempted to contact clients monthly. Anyone who did not respond to this outreach within 90 days was placed into "the parking lot," meaning that staff would occasionally try to call them but that outreach to them was less of a priority than outreach to more responsive clients. (As discussed below, toward the end of the program, after staff cutbacks, the team tended to do minimal outreach to this group.) Nonetheless, staff pursued clients energetically, making at least six attempts to get in touch before assigning them to the parking lot.

- **The TAAG team worked hard to build rapport with clients.**

As mentioned, staff were persistent in trying to discover what would motivate particular clients to make changes in their work lives. Often team members would spend up to an hour in the initial meeting to pinpoint what exactly would inspire clients to take new steps. The most common source of motivation appeared to be children — for example, wanting to provide more for children or to set a good example for them. When later some clients started to drift away from the program, team members reminded them about the particular reasons that they had said they had for pursuing their career goals.

Overall, TAAG staff took a strength-based approach to interactions with clients, identifying for them how they were already on the road to self-sufficiency. In focusing on clients' skills and demonstrated capacities rather than on their barriers or deficiencies, the intent was to show clients how they could translate these strengths into achieving their goals. Team members also tried to maintain a positive and upbeat tone in their meetings with clients, almost functioning as cheerleaders. Field research observations of client-staff interactions indicated that staff did, indeed, establish good personal relationships with clients, extending sympathy and support to help them cope with problems.

Partway through the program, staff made subtle modifications in their tone and style of working with clients. Staff decided that their initial approach to meetings with clients had been somewhat too informal. To change their message, they tempered their cheerleading somewhat, trying to convey that they did believe in clients but being more specific about what they could offer clients. Similarly, they also tried to maintain a welcoming and friendly spirit without giving the impression that the meetings were exactly the same as a social situation.

Reemployment Services

- **TAAG reemployment services consumed more time than expected.**

Results from the staff time study (discussed in more detail below) show that reemployment matters were a subject of discussion in a substantial portion — slightly over one-quarter — of all staff-client contacts in TAAG. Some clients had already lost their jobs in the interim between random assignment and the first meeting with the TAAG team.

The job coach and the employment specialist took the lead in working with unemployed clients on job searches. The coach helped these people diagnose the problems that had led to the job losses. Meanwhile, the employment specialist spent time with them gathering any additional information about their employment histories, skills, and career interests that would facilitate a job search. Using this information, the specialist consulted the Oregon Employment Department's job-listing database and gave clients printouts of appropriate openings to follow up. Staff also helped clients prepare résumés and fill out job applications.

If the employment specialist did not hear back from a client to whom she had given job leads — and especially if the client had promised to call her — she notified other TAAG team members to contact the client. Clients who did not find employment quickly were referred to the DHS office to apply for TANF.

Some clients who were referred back to DHS to apply for TANF and enroll in the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program — Oregon's regular welfare-to-work program — subsequently found employment but never returned to TAAG. The program lacked

a formal system for tracking these reemployed clients so that they could be invited back for help with job retention and advancement. Without this impetus to do so, many of these clients did not independently take the step of revisiting the TAAG office or otherwise getting in touch with the TAAG team.

Employment Retention and Career Advancement Services

- **TAAG team members used a variety of strategies to help clients stay employed.**

Team members coached clients on how best to maintain stable employment. For example, when clients told staff about on-the-job problems that could lead to their being dismissed or leaving, staff counseled them on ways to resolve conflicts and avoid unnecessary confrontations. Staff often advised clients not to leave jobs before they had found new ones, urging them to consider the big picture of how unemployment could harm their families. Like other TAAG clients who had already lost their jobs, people who were thinking of quitting were often referred to the employment specialist, who, in this case, would try to expedite a search for a new position while someone was still working.

Another job retention strategy was working with clients to put together a household budget, which help the family to make ends meet with wages from the client's current job. Staff also referred certain clients to substance abuse and mental health services to address problems that were a major impediment to job stability.

Still another source of assistance to clients in danger of losing jobs was the funding pool for TANF supportive services, with resources that were available, at staff discretion, to TAAG participants. The funds could be used, for example, to help clients secure more reliable transportation, making it less likely that they would be let go for missing work. However, staff used the funds sparingly — for example, to help clients pay for rent or utilities only at points when families were at risk of being evicted or having their utilities shut off.

- **Early on, TAAG staff found it hard to set boundaries between helping clients address personal problems and providing counseling that focused most directly on job retention.**

In the early stages of the program, job retention services became conflated with assisting clients to address personal problems, with the TAAG team initially being focused on removing the barriers that clients had that were seen as standing in the way of job retention. Interviews with program staff revealed that staff initially spent a great deal of time working with clients to solve personal problems — sometimes crises — some of which clients said were getting in the way of their holding onto jobs and some of which simply emerged as clients

talked with staff about their lives. For example, one staff member spent a great deal of time and effort calling auto repair shops to find a mechanic who could fix a client's car, rather than asking the client to do this. Or if clients were at risk of eviction, some staff members not only would offer them emergency funding to pay a deposit on a new residence but also would get involved in the details of helping them find new housing. In the process, TAAG staff reported that they were beginning to feel overwhelmed by the range of issues they were attempting to address, leaving them concerned about how they would be able to manage larger caseloads as the research sample grew. Furthermore, staff commented that they felt that, by helping to address personal problems, they had inadvertently made it easier for clients to become dependent on staff to address other personal issues.

- **TAAG staff eventually learned how to shift away from trying to solve personal problems and to focus more on job retention strategies.**

One MDRC consultant who was mentioned above in connection with TAAG training worked with staff to help them reorient themselves to addressing client problems that were most directly relevant to job retention. For example, staff began to focus more of their job retention efforts on the strategies that have just been described — job coaching and conflict resolution, supportive services, providing job search assistance to clients poised to quit, working on household budgets, and referring some clients to mental health and substance abuse services.

Data suggest that staff were successful in making this shift. According to a separate "time study," Medford TAAG staff discussed personal or family issues in 26 percent of their contacts with clients. Over half of those discussions (14 percent of all contacts) concerned budgeting issues, which, as noted, were considered directly relevant to job retention efforts. In contrast to the proportion of contacts spent on personal problems, many more of the interactions — 45 percent of all contacts — focused on career goals and advancement.

Progress notwithstanding, striking the right balance between personal counseling and working on employment matters remained an ongoing challenge. Staff reported in field research interviews that there always was some difficulty in ensuring that their efforts to help clients solve personal problems did not overtake other aspects of the program. Looking back on the program experience, one staff member described a major challenge as helping clients stay motivated to see past their current crises. Another staff member commented that it was hard to get out of the "fixing" mode, observing: "In the short run, it is easy to fix things for [clients]. In the long run, it is better to not."

> *When Jonas enrolled in the TAAG program, he was working at a low-paying job at a call center. He told staff that his 7-year-old child was the major reason why he wanted to find a better job and earn a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. TAAG team members learned that Jonas had serious barriers to better employment — a felony record, no driv-*

er's license, and a history of alcohol and drug abuse. But Jonas was both receptive to TAAG services and determined. With TAAG's help, he was able to move decisively toward his goals: TAAG guided him to get child support established; to take the CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) tests to measure his skill levels in math, reading, and writing; and to work with a rehab facility to get the documentation he needed for a driver's license. Staff, who regularly assured Jonas that, despite his history, he would be able to find a better job, ultimately, helped him take advantage of WIA-funded on-the-job training with a manufacturing company. Later, after a successful interview for a permanent job at that company, Jonas was hired. By attending orientations for a GED program, Jonas also started to pursue his goal of earning that credential.

- **In part because working on advancement issues was a new endeavor for most TAAG staff, delivering these services did not come naturally.**

In field research interviews, staff stressed that they had found it difficult to make the transition to working on advancement issues. Delivering advancement services did not come naturally for members of the TAAG team, since advancement was a new endeavor for most of them. In interviews with staff as well as during an assessment of pilot services, staff commented on the difficulties that they had in making the transition. "We didn't have a clue," said one staff member, referring to the team's initial understanding of what advancement services consisted of. Another staff member talked about the program's early implementation period as a time when the team did not have enough tools or skills to truly help clients with advancement.

Part of the difficulty was that progress for individual clients was often slow. Moreover, clients' goals were diverse, meaning that the definition of "success" would vary from person to person. A TAAG manager diagnosed the problem:

In the past, when staff worked with unemployed clients, success was defined as helping them find a job. In this project, when they are working with employed clients, it's harder for staff to define success. It can be frustrating for them on a day-to-day basis because the benchmarks for success aren't as tangible.

The manager gave an example of a client who had decided to call a TAAG staff member before quitting a job, rather than leaving it without discussion. This, the manager said, was progress for the client, but, the manager acknowledged, "It is hard [for the staff member] to view this in success terms."

- **Staff eventually became more proficient career advancement coaches.**

Again, the intervention of a consultant trainer was helpful. To start, the consultant helped TAAG staff expand what had come to be their working conception of advancement.

Success was defined as helping clients increase their wages, hours, or benefits in their current positions — or, for that matter, helping them to find work that did not improve pay or benefits but that, compared with their previous positions, was in industries or on career tracks that were closer to their dream jobs.

The consultant gave staff activities that they could use with clients to help them take an advancement step (for example, ways to earn a raise or a promotion). In addition, the consultant helped staff revise the contents of the PDP, adding short- and long-term goals to the document so that staff could identify the "baby steps" clients were making toward reaching their long-term goals.

The consultant's help was fortified by the program's adaptation of a client database, discussed above, that helped staff track their progress in helping clients meet career advancement benchmarks. Together, the training and benchmarks gave staff new skills and strategies that fed into their evolving view of themselves not as traditional case managers of welfare clients but as career advancement coaches.

As they worked with the consultant, staff decided that the original conception of focusing first on job retention and only later on career advancement had been flawed. They came to believe that it was unrealistic to expect that career advancement help would be offered only after clients stabilized their jobs because, given the many immediate problems that clients face, coaching on advancement could be put off into an ever-receding future. In many cases, staff decided, retention and advancement services should be provided concurrently.

Results from the staff time study show that career goals and advancement were typically discussed in 46 percent of all contacts with nonworking clients. This finding suggests that the TAAG team addressed advancement in all stages of clients' employment experiences, regardless of their work status, and that staff provided an advancement message to many clients.

- **TAAG staff used a variety of strategies to help clients advance.**

The TAAG staff took two general approaches to advancement: assisting clients to advance in their current jobs or helping them identify better ones. Regardless of approach, clients were counseled to pursue work-based or human capital approaches. Some clients were coached on how to talk with their employers to ask for more hours, pay raises, or promotions. Clients were also taught about workplace behaviors that could make them strong candidates for advancement opportunities. Others were given help with identifying short-term vocational skills training that would allow them to attain the skills needed to advance at their current jobs or to move to new positions in an industry of their choosing. Still other clients were encouraged to go back to school to pursue education (GED, Adult Basic Education, or college degrees) to better position them to achieve their long-term career goals. Clients who wanted to move out of their

current jobs and/or find new career paths were counseled on how to do that. Many of these clients were directed to the Career Information Services and O*NET automated databases, which could help them determine both their career interests and possible career paths that would fit those interests.

- **Despite limited program resources to support education and training, staff did encourage these activities.**

A modest amount of funds was available to TAAG to help pay for short-term training courses — for example, a one- or two-day computer skills or clerical training course — or for books for such courses. Also, in the earlier stages of the program, the learning plan specialist at Rogue Community College (RCC) worked with clients to identify training and education opportunities available at RCC and at other local institutions and helped them fill out financial aid forms and applications (including forms for grants and loans available to TAAG clients from an RCC scholarship fund), to tap into WIA training funds, and to register for RCC classes. Later in the program, cutbacks reduced the already modest funding that had been provided for short-term training activities, and, as noted above, once the cuts had taken effect, the RCC learning specialist was no longer on site at TAAG. Staff reported that another constraint on education and training was that many clients found it difficult to combine these endeavors with the demands of parenting and working.

Notwithstanding their perceptions of these difficulties, team members did regularly promote the idea of training and education as keys to career advancement. In some cases, staff said, they viewed this encouragement as planting seeds that might later grow.

Client survey results suggest that almost one-third of the TAAG clients at least started an education or training activity within the year after random assignment. Furthermore, as discussed in more detail in the report's final section, more TAAG program group members than control group members reported such activity, with the increase being driven primarily by more TAAG clients enrolling in college courses, compared with the control group.[18]

> *Jackie had been working at a retail store but was bored by the job. Her goal, as defined in the Personal Development Plan that she developed with TAAG staff, was to find a more challenging job with better pay. Following up on a TAAG job lead, Jackie was hired as a bank teller, and shortly thereafter her wages were raised by 50 cents per hour. Jackie and members of the TAAG team continued to meet to strategize about what she could do to put herself in line for a promotion to senior teller. To keep Jackie's motiva-*

[18]The ERA 12-Month Survey is discussed in "Early Impacts of the Eugene and Medford ERA Programs," and Appendixes F and G present survey response analyses for the two sites.

tion up, TAAG team members continually offered her encouragement and support and were sure to celebrate all her career achievements.

- **The TAAG team initiated a seminar that was relevant to both job retention and career advancement and that attracted a modest number of participants.**

The seminar *To Work and Back* was introduced partway through the program period. The sessions were held in three- to four-week modules during lunch hour and were designed to provide a group setting in which clients could troubleshoot with one another and with TAAG staff about job-related problems and in which staff could encourage clients to adapt work behaviors that would help them keep their jobs and earn promotions. Seminar topics included on-the-job dress codes, the value of punctuality and other aspects of the work ethic, and seeing oneself through the lens of an employer. Some half-dozen clients attended any one session.

- **Contrary to original expectations, TAAG team members seldom contacted clients' employers.**

At the start of TAAG, the program design called for staff to approach employers on behalf of clients. This aspect of TAAG was never fully implemented, as staff left the decision on whether to follow up with employers to the clients. Interviews with staff suggested that few clients wanted TAAG staff to contact their employers and that staff respected the wishes of clients in this regard. Data from the client survey confirm that interaction with employers was limited: almost 9 out of 10 clients who had been employed since they were randomly assigned (89 percent) reported that TAAG staff had never contacted their employers.

Lucia, a former welfare recipient and TAAG client, hated the low-wage job where she worked overnight shifts at a support service organization. She thought about returning to school to earn a bachelor's degree — she already had an associate's degree — and about finding work elsewhere, but she had not yet taken these steps. Then Lucia lost her job, became depressed, and decided to e-mail the TAAG team with an appeal: "Please help me out of my rut." The team was responsive. Staff helped Lucia apply for supportive services; gave her job leads, especially for state and county positions; helped her fill out a lengthy — and intimidating — application for one position; and prepped her for job interviews and followed up with her on how the interviews had gone. They also encouraged her to take classes toward a bachelor's degree. Lucia finally found a job serendipitously — as a bartender and cook — without TAAG's help. But besides paying enough to allow her to support her family, it was a job that she called her "life's love," and it had been the TAAG team who had encouraged Lucia to look for fulfilling work. Advancement in this case took a different path than the one that Lucia and the team had envisioned, but they all agreed that moving into a better-paying position that she loves had been genuine career advancement.

Clients' Responses to the Team's Outreach and Engagement Efforts

- **TAAG staff were successful in engaging clients in program services at the outset — but later were much less so.**

MDRC's early assessment of pilot operations in Medford showed that 92 percent of people who had been randomly assigned to TAAG had scheduled an intake appointment within 15 days of random assignment and that 68 percent of those randomly assigned had attended a first meeting. A somewhat later case file review of 101 TAAG clients, conducted in January 2003, found that 73 percent of people who had been randomly assigned to the TAAG program had completed an intake appointment. Moreover, 70 percent of that group had had at least one follow-up meeting with a TAAG staff member. Likely, the energetic outreach and rapport-building that are described above contributed to these strong initial outcomes.

As the program progressed, however, client engagement and participation suffered. In March 2005, MDRC found that only 19 percent of the clients whose cases were reviewed had had a significant degree of participation in TAAG.

One factor that may have contributed to the drop-off in participation was an unclear message, given to some clients in the program's latter stages, about whether TAAG offered financial help. Staff reported that as random assignment was winding down, they felt a certain amount of pressure to meet goals for filling the research sample. They surmise that some prospective clients who were contacted about participating in TAAG may have asked whether the program would give them financial assistance and that some staff members — who would have been eager for these clients to attend an intake meeting and join the sample — may have told these people that they should come to the meeting and ask that question to the TAAG team. Clients, in turn, could have heard that noncommittal invitation as confirmation that the program did offer financial aid, and when they found out otherwise at the intake meeting, they may have decided to stop participating.

Because team members believed that it was difficult to change the mindset of this group, their outreach efforts started to lose momentum. The attitude that it was better to leave clients alone if they showed little interest in participating — in other words, if they had been assigned to parking-lot status — became more prevalent.

The shift in clientele coincided with the drop in the size of the TAAG team. The result was that there were fewer staff members to share the responsibility for making contact with an apparently less motivated group of clients.

Focus Groups: One Window onto Reactions to TAAG Services

Focus groups that were conducted with selected members of the program group as part of the study shed additional light on why TAAG might have had a mixed record in engaging clients in job-retention and career-advancement services.[19]

- **Some TAAG participants were wary that earning more could leave them and their families less well off.**

Focus group participants were well aware that eligibility rules, particularly for Medicaid and child care subsidies, can function as a disincentive for career advancement. "If you make a little too much money," said one discussant, "then you're dropped." Another discussant observed: "I could make $100 more and lose $500. [It] . . . would be helpful if I moved up a lot; but if you only move up a little bit, you would move backwards." As in the Eugene ERA program, some clients mentioned purposely trying not to advance on the job or thinking about asking for wage decreases in order to qualify for public benefits.

- **The focus groups also revealed some concerns about the program.**

In general, TAAG services were designed to be tailored to each client's interests and individual circumstances; there was not a similar package of services offered to everyone. In practice, this approach may have led to inconsistencies in the services offered to clients. Some focus group discussants said that the program had helped them access education and training opportunities, but others did not know that this kind of assistance was an option. Discussants in one focus group were surprised by the different resources that each person had heard about from the same TAAG team. One participant had taken classes to learn computer software, while others said that they wished they had known that these classes were available.

Most discussants felt that support was the main (and sometimes the only) service that TAAG was able to offer. Some discussants described TAAG team members as "nice" but unable to follow through with concrete assistance. There were several comments about what kind of help was felt to be missing. Some discussants said that they wished TAAG had better facilitated their job search by advocating on their behalf — in the words of one person: "someone just to open the door . . . if you don't have networking in town, you're just a number." Others talked about the need for assistance in completing résumés and job applications and about a need for staff to contact employers (an observation that must be viewed in the context of staff reports, discussed above, that clients seldom asked for this intervention). Several discussants said that they thought they could get better employability services elsewhere.

[19]Focus groups were also conducted with some control group members.

Looking back on the experience, one TAAG team member agreed that the program had not given people enough concrete help. As she put it, TAAG "did not build anything of substance." The team, she added, was often offering only information, and clients did not always know what to do with it.

Several discussants — some of whom were older than the typical TAAG participant — said that, rather than building a new career, they just wanted to (in the words of one discussant) "enhance what we have." According to this person, "When we're 45, 50, we don't want to change our whole lives around."

How TAAG Staff Spent Their Time

- **Some results of the staff time study have been reported above. This section places those findings in the context of the overall time study and reports additional findings on how staff used their time.**

The proportion of TAAG staff time spent with clients was somewhat lower than in number of ERA programs. But TAAG staff spent more time in each client contact and were more proactive in reaching out to clients.

As shown in Table 6, TAAG staff spent 27 percent of all their time in contact with clients. Across all ERA programs, staff time in contact with clients ranged from a low of 14 percent (one program) to a high of 39 percent (several others). As noted in the preceding section covering the Eugene ERA program, staff there spent 33 percent of their time with clients (Table 3).

Although the Medford staff spent somewhat less of their time interacting with clients than staff in a number of programs, when TAAG team members did interact with clients, the average length of time spent per contact was considerably longer (52 minutes) than in other ERA programs (15 to 32 minutes). On average, TAAG staff had almost five client interactions per day, most with working clients (Table 6).

Besides the greater amount of time spent per interaction, the TAAG team also appeared to be more proactive in reaching out to clients than staff in other ERA programs. As reported above in the section "Client Intake and Engagement," close to 80 percent of all client contacts were initiated by the TAAG staff rather than by clients. Furthermore, TAAG staff were more likely to meet in person with working clients than with nonworking clients, suggesting that the schedules of working clients did not limit staff's capacity to interact with them. Very likely the nonstandard hours of three of the five team members — who, as noted, worked early morning hours, evening hours, and/or during weekends — gave staff more access to working clients.

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Table 6

Extent of Contact Between TAAG Staff and Clients

Medford

	All Case Managers
Percentage of work time spent in contact with	
Any client	27.4
Working clients	21.6
Nonworking clients	5.9
Average number of client contacts per staff member	
Any client	4.5
Working clients	3.4
Nonworking clients	1.1
Average number of minutes per contact with	
Any client	51.9
Working clients	51.9
Nonworking clients	41.5
Number of TAAG staff time-studied	5

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the ERA time study.

NOTE: TAAG staff include career counselors, a job coach, and a case manager.

Also, as shown in Table 7, contacts with TAAG clients were almost as likely to occur in person (48 percent of all client contacts) as by phone or in writing (52 percent). In-person contacts were, on average, longer (82 minutes of a staff member's day) than contacts by phone or in writing (33 minutes of a day).

- **TAAG staff also spent more time discussing advancement and career goals than staff in most other ERA programs.**

The 45 percent of all client contacts spent on discussions of career goals and advancement that is reported above indicates a stronger focus on this topic in the Medford program than in many other ERA programs — and, as also reported, this focus extended to nonworking clients (career advancement was discussed in 46 percent of contacts with this group). Besides these discussions, Table 8 shows that client contacts took a variety of forms.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Table 7

Description of Contact Between TAAG Staff and Clients

Medford

	All Case Managers
Percentage of all client contacts that were:	
In person	48.3
Office visit	47.0
Home visit	0.8
Employer visit	0.5
Visit elsewhere	0.0
Not in person	51.7
Phone contact	40.6
Written contact	11.1
Other type of contact	0.0
Percentage of all client contacts, over a two-week period, that were initiated by a/an:	
Staff person	79.4
Client	19.8
Other person	0.8
Number of TAAG staff time-studied	5

- **Staff time that was not spent with TAAG clients was distributed across a variety of activities.**

As shown in Figure 4, the 73 percent of staff work time that was not spent on client contacts was spent on administrative duties (23 percent), client outreach (12 percent), job development (8 percent), staff meetings (7 percent), paperwork for training and financial aid applications (5 percent), and "other" activities (18 percent). The eclectic last category consisted of work that included interacting with staff of other workforce organizations and DHS eligibility workers, seeking out community services and education and training opportunities, and consulting with other TAAG staff about specific clients.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Table 8

Topics Covered During Contact Between TAAG Staff and Clients

Medford

	Working	Nonworking
Percentage of all contacts that included the following topics:[a]		
Initial client engagement	38.7	14.3
Supportive service eligibility and issues	1.8	7.4
General check-in	13.2	33.9
Screening/assessment	20.1	5.7
Address on-the-job issues/problems	5.7	1.2
Address personal or family issues	21.1	22.5
Explore specific employment and training options	5.8	11.1
Discuss career goals and advancement	41.5	46.3
Assist with reemployment	20.0	30.0
Discuss issues related to financial incentives or stipends[b]	NA	NA
Schedule/refer for work experience position[b]	NA	NA
Enrollment in government assistance and ongoing eligibility issues	0.9	0.0
Assistance with the EITC	5.7	14.3
Participation/sanctioning issues	0.0	0.0
Schedule/refer for screening/assessment	14.8	6.1
Schedule/refer for job search or other employment services	24.1	13.5
Schedule/refer for education or training	3.6	2.5
Schedule/refer for services to address special or personal issues	3.8	3.7
Providing job leads or referrals[b]	NA	NA
Number of TAAG staff time-studied		5

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the ERA time study.

NOTES: NA = not applicable.

TAAG staff include career counselors, a job coach, and a case manager.

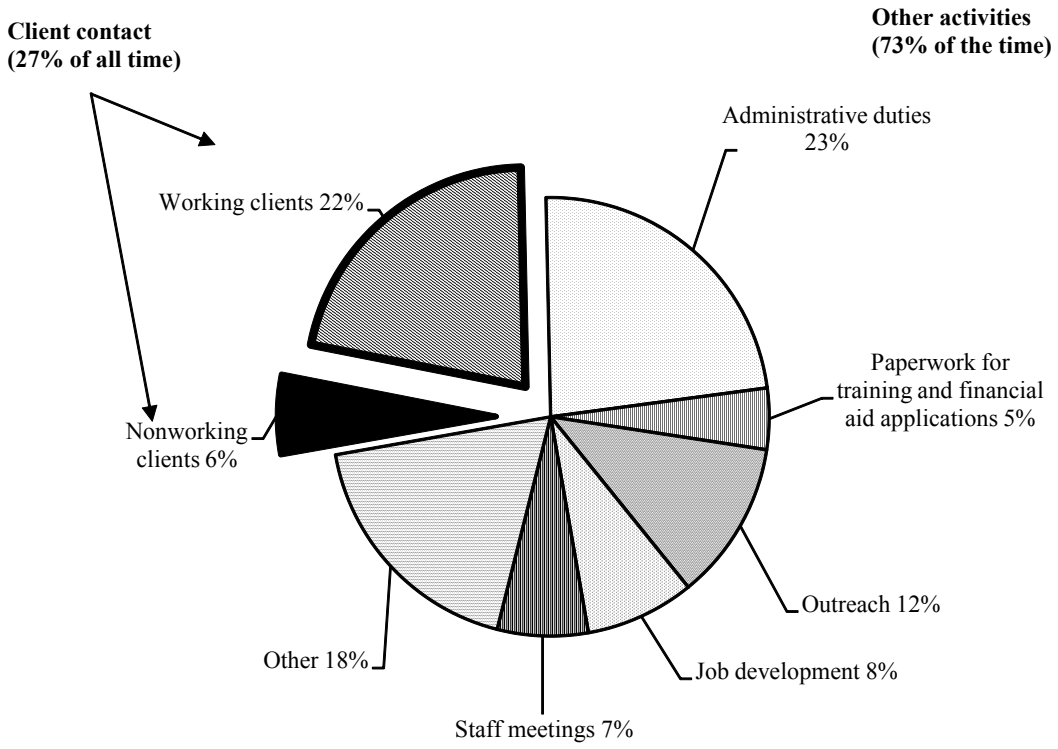
[a]Percentages total over 100 percent, since more than one topic could be recorded for each client contact.

[b]This measure was not included in the time-study instrument in Medford.

The Employment Retention and Advancment Project

Figure 4

Summary of How Medford ERA Staff Typically Spend Their Time



SOURCE: MDRC calculations for the ERA time study.

Control Group Services in Medford

In early discussions with the TAAG program designers, it appeared that there were limited retention and advancement services available to control group members in Medford. In fact, there were a number of employment services that control group members could access that were similar to services offered to TAAG clients. To gain access to these services, control group members had to know what to ask for and had to take the initiative to seek the services out on their own.

- **Some services were available for control group members through the DHS office.**

To understand the services available to control group members through DHS, it is important to understand the process that DHS used to close a TANF case at the point when a recipient found employment and usually became ineligible to continue receiving a TANF cash grant. At that time, the case was transferred from an ongoing case manager to a DHS transition case manager. The transition case manager remained responsible for handling eligibility functions related to other public assistance programs, such as food stamps, subsidized medical insurance, and transitional child care for up to one year.[20] In order to access these services, clients had to take the initiative to contact their transition case manager.

The transitional services available to control group members included up to $1,000 of financial aid for training and work-related emergency support payments (for instance, rent, if a client were at risk of being evicted, or funds for transportation and car repairs). During the one-year period when control group members who had left TANF were assigned to transition case managers, they could also set up meetings with these staff members to receive help in accessing community resources or developing a Personal Development Plan (PDP; discussed above).

But, given that the caseloads carried by the transition case managers were high (between 250 and 300 cases per case manager), control group members had to be proactive and aggressive in seeking out this type of assistance, and they had to know what type of help to request. Nevertheless, discussions with senior DHS managers indicated that, despite the heavy caseloads, many transition case managers were aggressive about providing additional services and support to control group members, suggesting that this proactive posture may have lessened the distinction between the services available to program group members in TAAG and to control group members.

[20] After 12 months, the cases of clients who continued to receive public benefits such as food stamps, medical insurance, or subsidized child care were transferred from the transition case managers to other DHS staff responsible for maintaining administrative eligibility functions for these other programs. Once the case was transferred, clients did not have access to additional services and case management support.

- **Control group members in Medford could also find services in the community.**

Control group members who were former TANF recipients could use the services of the Oregon Employment Department, where they could get help to update their résumés, look for jobs, and access other community resources. In addition, all Medford control group members (as well as TAAG clients) could access services on their own from a number of places throughout the community. For example, one discussant in a focus group said that Goodwill's Family Strengthening Services gave her practical help in conducting a job search.

One source of help was a well-known One-Stop Career Center conveniently located at a downtown mall. Focus groups with TAAG clients suggest that the One-Stop served as a direct competitor with TAAG, offering similar services, such as job search assistance and help completing job applications.

Toward the end of the program delivery period, a decision was made to outstation a TAAG team member at this One-Stop Center to provide services to both TAAG clients and the public at large. It is thus conceivable that some services used at the One-Stop by both control group and TAAG group members were actually delivered by a TAAG staff member.

In short, while the availability of retention and advancement services was not advertised to control group members, motivated members of the control group could package together services that were similar to those available to TAAG clients — except for the intensive case management.

Early Impacts of the Eugene and Medford ERA Programs

The Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) programs in Eugene and Medford, Oregon, are described in the preceding two sections, and this section now compares the ERA group's and the control group's use of case management services and their participation in job search, education, and training activities in each site. The section also examines whether the ERA programs in Eugene and Medford affected employment retention and advancement, job characteristics, receipt of public assistance, and total income.

The discussion focuses on the differences between the experiences of individuals in the ERA group and the control group in both sites. It uses data from the ERA 12-Month Survey, information on statewide quarterly earnings in unemployment insurance- (UI-) covered jobs, automated data from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, and data about food stamp payments. The differences in average outcomes between individuals in the ERA group and those in the control group represent the effects, or impacts, of the ERA programs in each of the two sites.

The ERA 12-Month Survey was administered to a subset of ERA and control group members in both sites approximately 12 months after their dates of random assignment.[21] Data from the survey on the use of case management and other ERA services are central to the interpretation of the economic impacts of the programs. Survey responses were also used to learn about job characteristics and other outcomes for respondents. It should be noted, however, that Medford ERA group survey respondents entered the study with higher earnings and more recent employment, on average, than Medford survey respondents in the control group — a difference that suggests that there is some bias in the Medford 12-month survey results. Thus, in the analyses discussed in this section, more weight is given to Medford results that are based on other data sets than is given to Medford's survey results.[22]

Early Impacts on Participation and Receipt of Services

As noted in the preceding two sections about the ERA programs in Eugene and Medford, the control group members were not able to receive postemployment services from the

[21]Random assignment in Eugene occurred between June 2002 and June 2004; in Medford, it occurred between February 2002 and April 2004.

[22]These sources of information include findings from the implementation study and from administrative records. The implementation study and the administrative records findings are not biased by program-control group differences in individuals' background characteristics. See Appendix G for further analysis and discussion of responses to the ERA 12-Month Survey in Medford. (Appendix F presents similar information about the survey respondents in Eugene.)

ERA program but were able to participate in education, training, or other employment-related activities that were available in the community. If control group members lost their jobs and returned to welfare, they could receive services through the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program — Oregon's regular welfare-to-work program, which was operated by the state's Department of Health and Human Services (DHS).

- **ERA group members in Eugene were just as likely as their control group counterparts to have had contact with a case manager or an employment program within the year following random assignment. In Medford, ERA group members were more likely than control group members to have had such contact.**

As Table 9 shows (also see Boxes 1 and 2), about 86 percent of the control group members in Eugene reported having had contact with a case manager or staff from an employment program within the year following random assignment. This high level of contact is not surprising, since study participants in Eugene were recent welfare leavers, who often need to contact welfare agencies to maintain medical coverage, food stamps, or child care benefits. Although the Eugene program did not increase the likelihood that individuals would have contact with a case manager or staff from an employment program or increase the average number of contacts, ERA group members in Eugene did have slightly more in-person contacts, on average, compared with control group members, and they were more likely to have had at least 30 contacts, indicating that some ERA group members had a higher intensity of contacts. As is discussed further below, while ERA had no impact on the overall number of client-staff interactions, it is possible that the quality of contacts was different for ERA group members than for control group members.

The percentages of ERA group and control group members reporting contact with staff were lower in Medford than in Eugene yet were still higher than in most other ERA programs. While the Medford program served a population that was generally not receiving TANF, many sample members were covered by Medi-Cal and/or were recipients of food stamp and/or child care subsidy benefits from the state and, therefore, may have contacted staff for redetermination of eligibility for these. In both Medford and Eugene, most contact with staff took place in offices, and a smaller number of contacts took place in other locations, such as the sample member's home, school, or training program.

In Medford, 73 percent of the ERA group, compared with 62 percent of the control group, reported contact with staff from an employment program within the year following random assignment. Compared with control group members, ERA group members in Medford also had a higher average number of contacts, and a higher percentage of them met in person with their ERA case managers.

Box 1

Measuring Participation in Eugene and Medford

In order to interpret the results of a random assignment evaluation, it is critical to understand the "dose" of services that each research group receives – in this case, the ERA group and the control group. In many studies, this is relatively straightforward, because the "treatment" is easy to measure (for example, the number of hours of training or the dollar value of incentive payments). In contrast, in many of the ERA programs, including the Eugene and Medford programs, services were delivered mostly in one-on-one interactions, during which staff advised, coached, or counseled participants. This type of service is inherently difficult to measure.

In addition, to accurately measure a program's *impact* on service receipt, it is important to collect data in the same way for both the ERA group and the control group. In practice, this means that survey questions cannot refer to the ERA program in particular but, instead, must ask in general about the kinds of services that ERA provided in order to understand the services that individuals in ERA accessed compared with the services accessed by the control group.

MDRC sought to measure service receipt in three main ways, using the ERA 12-Month Survey. Each approach has both strengths and limitations, and each contributes to the overall analysis:

- First, the survey asked whether respondents in each group participated in "traditional" employment-related services, such as job search workshops and training classes, and how many weeks they participated (Table 11). These services are relatively easy to measure, but they were not the heart of most ERA programs, including the Eugene and Medford programs.
- Second, the survey asked how frequently respondents in each group had had contact with staff members from employment or social service agencies and where those contacts took place (Table 9). These questions are more central to the ERA programs, but it is difficult to determine which types of staff the respondents were referring to. For example, contact with a worker who determines food stamp eligibility was likely to be quite different from contact with an ERA case manager. Moreover, it may have been difficult for respondents to recall the number of such contacts over a one-year period.
- Third, the survey asked whether respondents in each group received assistance in a variety of specific areas, some of which — such as "finding a better job while working" — were central to ERA (Table 10). These questions were fairly straightforward, but they did not provide any information about the amount of service that was received in each area.

Box 2

How to Read the Tables in This Report

Most tables in this report use a similar format, illustrated below. The rows of data show a series of participation outcomes for the ERA group and the control group in Eugene. For example, the table shows that about 75 (75.2) percent of the ERA group and about 68 (68.4) percent of the control group participated in any employment-related activity.

Because individuals were assigned randomly either to the ERA group or to the control group, the effects of the program can be estimated by the difference in outcomes between the two groups. The "Difference" column in the table shows the differences between the two research groups' participation rates — that is, the program's *impacts* on participation. For example, the impact on participation in any employment-related activity can be calculated by subtracting 68.4 percent from 75.2 percent, yielding 6.8 percentage points.

Differences marked with asterisks are "statistically significant," meaning that it is quite unlikely that the differences arose by chance. The number of asterisks indicates whether the impact is statistically significant at the 1 percent, 5 percent, or 10 percent level (the lower the level, the less likely that the impact is due to chance). For example, as shown below, the ERA group had a statistically significant impact of 7.9 percentage points at the 10 percent level on participation in a job search activity. (One asterisk corresponds to the 10 percent level; two asterisks, the 5 percent level; and three asterisks, the 1 percent level.) The p-value shows the exact levels of significance.

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

	Eugene			
Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Participated in any employment-related activity (%)	75.2	68.4	6.8	0.115
Participated in a job search activity (%)	74.8	67.0	7.9 *	0.072
Group job search/job club	56.5	49.4	7.1	0.139
Individual job search	68.6	62.3	6.3	0.167

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Table 9

Impacts on Contacts with Program Staff in Year 1

Eugene and Medford

Outcome	Eugene ERA Group	Eugene Control Group	Eugene Difference (Impact)	Eugene P-Value	Medford ERA Group	Medford Control Group	Medford Difference (Impact)	Medford P-Value
Any contacts with case manager/employment program since random assignment[a] (%)	83.4	85.7	-2.3	0.518	73.0	62.4	10.6 **	0.045
Average number of contacts with staff/case manager	21.4	17.5	4.0	0.114	9.9	6.5	3.4 **	0.038
In person	7.1	5.7	1.5 *	0.089	3.8	2.1	1.7 ***	0.009
By telephone	14.3	11.8	2.5	0.190	6.2	4.4	1.8	0.152
Total number of in-person and telephone contacts (%)								
No contact	15.2	14.8	0.4	0.910	30.6	37.6	-7.0	0.186
1-6	20.1	22.7	-2.6	0.521	31.7	31.5	0.1	0.983
7-15	23.5	31.5	-8.1 *	0.065	24.1	20.7	3.4	0.481
16-30	17.7	15.5	2.2	0.546	5.6	6.0	-0.4	0.880
Over 30	23.6	15.5	8.1 **	0.036	8.1	4.2	3.9	0.137
Talked with staff/case manager in past 4 weeks (%)	44.6	39.0	5.6	0.244	23.9	24.7	-0.8	0.867
Ever met with staff/case manager (%)	76.9	75.4	1.4	0.735	58.1	47.2	11.0 **	0.050
At home	7.3	5.0	2.3	0.343	3.9	0.8	3.1 *	0.060
At workplace	2.1	2.9	-0.8	0.623	5.3	2.4	2.9	0.171
At staff/case manager's office	75.2	73.5	1.7	0.687	56.5	45.9	10.6 *	0.057
At school/training program	9.5	12.8	-3.3	0.288	10.8	5.0	5.8 *	0.054
At other places	5.5	3.1	2.4	0.226	2.2	4.7	-2.4	0.246
Staff/case manager talked with respondent's employer (%)								
Never	86.4	86.3	0.1	0.971	90.1	87.9	2.2	0.531
Once or twice	6.6	7.9	-1.3	0.618	7.4	4.9	2.6	0.333
More than twice	3.5	1.1	2.4 *	0.095	1.4	2.6	-1.2	0.455
Don't know	3.5	4.7	-1.3	0.519	1.1	4.6	-3.6 *	0.064
Sample size (total = 785)	220	220			167	178		

(continued)

Table 9 (continued)

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

NOTES: See Appendix B.

[a]This measure includes respondents who said "yes" on the client survey to either of the following questions: "Have you had any experiences with programs or organizations that help people find or keep jobs since your random assignment date?" "Since your random assignment date, have you had any contact, in-person or by phone, with a case manager or a staff person from an employment, welfare or other agency?" However, subsequent survey questions regarding the number and location of contacts were asked only of respondents who said "yes" to the latter question. Therefore, there are some respondents who reported contact but were not asked about the number and location of contacts.

In both sites, very few program group members reported that their case managers ever talked with their employers. Less than 14 percent of sample members reported any such interactions.[23]

- **ERA group members in both Eugene and Medford were more likely than their control group counterparts to report that they had received help with employment retention and advancement or job preparation.**

Table 10 shows that 38 percent of ERA group survey respondents in Eugene — compared with 22 percent of control group survey respondents — reported that they had received help keeping a job or advancing to a better one. This suggests that the Eugene program had a fairly large impact on the extent to which individuals received help with employment retention and advancement. The ERA program increased the receipt of several types of retention or advancement help, including help finding a better job while the person was working, help with career assessment, and help with other activities while working.

While the Eugene program's impacts on receipt of help with retention or advancement were fairly large, the absolute percentage of ERA group members in Eugene who received help in these areas — 38 percent — was modest. As described in the preceding section entitled "The Eugene ERA Program and Its Operations," ERA staff in that site focused attention on clients who became unemployed, were in crisis, or were motivated and initiated contact with the program. These patterns may explain why only 38 percent of ERA group members in Eugene received help with retention or advancement.

The Eugene program also increased the proportion of individuals who received help with job preparation. However, these impacts were more modest than those for receipt of help with job retention and advancement. As shown in Table 10, 50 percent of ERA group survey respondents in Eugene received help with job preparation, compared with 40 percent of control group survey respondents.

In the Medford program, 25 percent of the ERA group survey respondents reported having received help with job retention and advancement, compared with 16 percent of control group survey respondents. While the Medford program did produce a modest impact on the receipt of such help, the overall proportion of ERA group members who received this help was fairly low. The Medford program also generated a modest increase — of about 7 percentage points above the control group — in the percentage of program group members who received help enrolling in job readiness or training activities.

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[23]Previous studies have found that some former welfare recipients feel uncomfortable if case managers contact their employers (for example, see Ranjarajan and Novak, 1999).

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Table 10

Impacts on Areas in Which Respondent Received Help

Eugene and Medford

	Eugene				Medford			
Outcome (%)	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Received help with support services	65.9	58.6	7.3	0.110	38.6	39.0	-0.4	0.942
Finding or paying for child care	55.3	50.6	4.8	0.297	35.4	35.4	0.0	1.000
Finding or paying for transportation	34.5	27.3	7.3	0.108	8.9	8.5	0.5	0.875
Received help with basic needs	57.7	50.0	7.8	0.110	40.2	37.5	2.7	0.623
Housing problems	30.0	25.5	4.4	0.312	21.1	17.8	3.3	0.470
Access to medical treatment	38.3	34.0	4.3	0.356	21.3	23.2	-1.9	0.689
Financial emergency	23.0	20.2	2.8	0.485	15.2	9.9	5.3	0.148
Received help with public benefits	79.8	73.8	6.0	0.148	55.3	66.1	-10.7 **	0.046
Getting Medicaid	48.4	47.1	1.3	0.791	35.8	34.9	0.9	0.862
Getting food stamps	78.0	71.1	6.9	0.105	50.9	61.8	-10.9 **	0.045
Received help with job preparation	50.3	40.1	10.2 **	0.036	25.9	19.6	6.3	0.164
Enrolling in job readiness or training	23.5	20.1	3.4	0.395	12.5	5.2	7.3 **	0.019
Looking for a job	37.7	28.7	9.0 *	0.054	19.5	13.2	6.3	0.128
Finding clothes, tools, or supplies for work	31.6	24.4	7.2 *	0.098	11.5	10.6	0.9	0.788
Received help with retention/advancement	38.2	21.8	16.4 ***	0.000	24.6	16.3	8.3 *	0.063
Finding a better job while working	15.4	6.9	8.6 ***	0.005	10.9	3.2	7.7 ***	0.007
Other activities while working[a]	18.0	6.5	11.5 ***	0.000	10.3	2.7	7.5 ***	0.006
Career assessment	17.8	9.5	8.2 **	0.015	16.3	7.2	9.2 ***	0.009
Dealing with problems on the job	9.6	5.8	3.8	0.147	5.8	4.1	1.7	0.478
Addressing a problem in keeping a job	11.5	9.0	2.5	0.399	4.3	6.1	-1.8	0.483
Sample size (total = 785)	220	220			167	178		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from responses to the ERA 12-Month Survey.
NOTES: See Appendix B.
[a]This measure includes other activities, such as life skills and child development classes.

The ERA programs in Eugene and Medford did not produce increases in the receipt of other types of help, such as help with supportive services, basic needs, and public benefits.[24]

- **ERA group members in Eugene were somewhat more likely than their control group counterparts to have participated in job search activities during the one-year follow-up period. In Medford, ERA group members were somewhat more likely than their control group counterparts to have participated in education and training over that time period.**

For both research groups and in both sites, the overall rate of participation in job search activities was much higher than expected for programs that targeted employed individuals. It is hypothesized that this trend is due to two factors: the high level of job loss among sample members following random assignment and, possibly, staff's efforts to help sample members seek and advance to better jobs.

In Eugene, as shown in Table 11, about 75 percent of ERA group members and about 67 percent of control group members participated in a job search activity in the year after random assignment. This 8 percentage point increase is modest but is consistent with the increase in the proportion of individuals who reported having received help looking for a job.

The Eugene program did not increase the rate at which individuals participated in education or training activities — either while they were working or while they were not working.

The Medford program did not increase the proportion of individuals who participated in a job search activity, but it did increase the proportion who participated in education and training activities, by 8 percentage points above the control group average of 22 percent, and this increase was primarily due to a higher rate of participation in employment and education activities among program group members who were working.

While the Medford program increased participation in education and training and the Eugene program did not, the extent to which control group members in both sites participated in education and training is striking. In both sites, over one-fifth of control group members engaged in education and training within the first year following random assignment. This suggests that a sizable minority of employed single parents will seek out and participate in

[24]The Medford program reduced the percentage of ERA group survey respondents who reported receiving help accessing food stamps by 11 percentage points below the control group average of 62 percent. Some of this difference, however, is likely due to the fact that ERA group survey respondents entered the study with higher average total earnings than all study participants, with the result that more of the ERA group survey respondents than the control group survey respondents were not eligible for food stamps. It is likely, therefore, that the survey overestimates the ERA-control group difference in receiving help getting food stamps.

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Table 11

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

Eugene and Medford

	Eugene				Medford			
Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever participated in any activity[a] (%)	81.0	74.0	7.0 *	0.087	63.3	55.8	7.4	0.178
Participated in any employment-related activity[b] (%)	75.2	68.4	6.8	0.115	48.0	43.8	4.2	0.435
Participated in a job search activity (%)	74.8	67.0	7.9 *	0.072	46.2	43.1	3.1	0.569
Group job search/job club	56.5	49.4	7.1	0.139	25.3	20.6	4.7	0.318
Individual job search	68.6	62.3	6.3	0.167	39.6	39.8	-0.3	0.959
Participated in an education/training activity (%)	22.0	24.9	-2.9	0.487	30.2	21.7	8.4 *	0.086
ABE/GED	3.5	4.7	-1.1	0.530	5.3	4.0	1.3	0.548
ESL	0.7	1.1	-0.4	0.672	1.0	0.2	0.8	0.324
College courses	14.0	18.7	-4.7	0.189	20.6	13.3	7.3 *	0.079
Vocational training	5.2	1.6	3.5 **	0.049	6.4	5.3	1.1	0.674
Participated in unpaid work/subsidized employment (%)	18.0	19.8	-1.8	0.627	8.6	7.7	0.8	0.776
Ever participated in an employment or education activity while working (%)	38.0	31.6	6.4	0.166	41.4	26.9	14.5 ***	0.006
Average number of weeks participating in:								
Job search activities	11.5	10.5	1.0	0.530	4.8	5.2	-0.3	0.769
Education/training activities	3.9	4.8	-0.9	0.408	6.6	4.4	2.2	0.137
Unpaid work/subsidized employment	2.2	2.8	-0.6	0.422	1.7	1.7	0.0	0.964
Sample size (total = 785)	220	220			167	178		

(continued)

Table 11 (continued)

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

NOTES: See Appendix B.
[a]"Any activity" includes employment-related activities, education/training activities, life skills, and other types of activities.
[b]Employment-related activities include job search activities, unpaid jobs, and on-the-job training.

advancement activities on their own initiative — without the active support of agency administrators or case managers.

Early Impacts on Employment Retention and Advancement, Public Assistance Receipt, and Total Income

This section turns to an analysis of impacts on employment retention and advancement, job characteristics, public assistance receipt, and total income. An impact on employment retention is defined as a change in an individual's attachment to the workforce over time and is not limited to the retention of a single job; for this report, an impact on advancement is defined as a change in hourly wages, hours, quarterly earnings, or working conditions.[25] `The impact results that are reported here are not the final word on the Eugene and Medford ERA programs, as MDRC will ultimately track employment retention and advancement outcomes for study participants for at least three years.

The average outcomes for control group members represent the benchmarks against which the ERA programs in Eugene and Medford were tested — that is, what happens when employed TANF leavers in Eugene and working-poor people with DHS benefits in Medford rely mostly on their own initiative to advance in their jobs, find better employment, or return to work following the loss of a job. Examples of such benchmarks are the average quarterly employment rate, a measure of cumulative employment; the average total earnings, a comprehensive measure of employment stability and/or advancement; and the average hourly wage, a measure of retention and/or advancement. Differences between the ERA and control groups on such benchmarks represent the effects, or impacts, of the Eugene and Medford programs.

As discussed above, the Eugene and Medford ERA programs produced small-to-moderate increases in participation in retention and advancement activities, job search, and education and training relative to the rates of control groups — an outcome that suggests that only small-to-moderate impacts on retention and advancement might be found. It is possible, however, that both approaches could result in more than small-to-moderate employment and earning gains even in the absence of large or systematic impacts on participation, because there may have been a difference in the quality of services received by program and control group members. For instance, in contrast to the services that control group members received on their own initiative, staff members in Eugene and Medford may have placed ERA group members in

[25]Medford ERA program staff defined advancement more broadly than did Eugene program staff — to also encompass improvement in job satisfaction, the length of commute between home and workplace, and in the amount of time the participant had to spend with his or her children. Impacts on such outcomes were not measured in the Medford ERA test.

better jobs or helped them enroll in education and training activities that offered better prospects for employment in stable and well-paying jobs.

The designs of the Eugene and Medford program models also assumed the availability of better jobs that would match the skills, credentials, and child care requirements of the populations served by the programs. As described in the report's Introduction, however, Oregon had one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation during the period of program operations, which may have made higher-paying jobs more difficult to find.

- **Control group members in Medford had higher earnings and employment levels than their counterparts in Eugene. This is consistent with the difference in target populations served by these two programs.**

Control group outcomes represent the benchmarks against which the ERA programs in Eugene and Medford were tested. Thus, the next several paragraphs and the control group column in Table 12 summarize control group members' UI-covered employment and earnings over the first year and a half following their date of random assignment. (The outcomes are based on calculations from quarterly UI wage records.)[26]

Average total earnings among control group members over the 1.5-year follow-up period were about $12,500 in Eugene and $15,000 in Medford. (These averages include zeros for those who did not work at all during this period.) The earnings level in Medford is among the highest found for all ERA tests, due to a combination of high wages and high employment rates.

In Medford, the average control group member was employed for 4.6 out of 6 follow-up quarters, which is the equivalent of an average quarterly employment rate of 77 percent. Nevertheless, a high average quarterly employment rate does not preclude spells with unemployment or underemployment. Among Medford control group members, 67 percent retained employment for at least four consecutive quarters (staying employed for four consecutive quarters is a key indicator of employment stability), and 26 percent were employed full time during an average quarter.[27]

Among control group members in Eugene, average quarterly employment was 67 percent, and 54 percent of the group retained employment for at least four consecutive quarters. In Eugene, 18 percent of control group members were employed full time during an average

[26]UI earnings data miss wages not reported to the UI system in Oregon. These include off-the-books jobs, some agricultural jobs, self-employment, and federal government jobs. Also, UI records usually do not measure job characteristics. Still, the coverage of UI wage data should be similar for ERA and control group members. In addition, the 12-month survey (discussed below) collected data on all types of jobs.

[27]Full-time employment is defined as working 35 hours or more per week over a period of 13 weeks per quarter.

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Table 12

Impacts on UI-Covered Employment and Earnings

Eugene and Medford

	Eugene				Medford			
Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Quarters 2-7								
Ever employed (%)	93.9	91.3	2.6 *	0.092	91.5	95.5	-4.0 ***	0.005
Average quarterly employment (%)	68.9	66.5	2.3	0.237	74.7	76.7	-2.0	0.275
Number of quarters employed	4.1	4.0	0.1	0.237	4.5	4.6	-0.1	0.275
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	56.1	53.9	2.1	0.457	64.8	66.5	-1.8	0.506
Total earnings ($)	12,800	12,471	329	0.586	14,800	15,325	-525	0.350
Earned over $15,000 (%)	39.3	35.9	3.4	0.221	44.6	46.0	-1.4	0.589
Total hours worked	1,360	1,301	59	0.309	1,524	1,606	-82	0.133
Average quarterly full-time employment (%)	19.2	17.8	1.4	0.365	22.4	25.8	-3.4 **	0.049
Average hourly wage ($)	8.56	8.34	0.2	0.340	8.66	8.80	-0.1	0.497
Average hourly wage (%)								
Less than $5.00[a]	0.5	1.1	-0.6	0.266	0.4	0.8	-0.3	0.464
$5.00 - $6.99	8.9	8.0	0.9	0.587	4.5	7.1	-2.7 *	0.050
$7.00 - $8.99	50.9	48.2	2.8	0.344	47.1	48.3	-1.2	0.675
$9.00 or more	33.6	34.1	-0.5	0.845	39.5	39.1	0.3	0.901
Quarter 7								
Ever employed (%)	63.5	61.9	1.6	0.577	70.5	71.4	-0.9	0.740
Total earnings ($)	2,208	2,050	159	0.238	2,443	2,477	-34	0.793
Sample size (total = 2,301)	563	574			590	574		

(continued)

Table 12 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from UI administrative records from the State of Oregon.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

This table includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the Oregon unemployment insurance (UI) program. It does not include employment outside Oregon or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs, some agricultural jobs, and federal government jobs).

[a]Those who did not work are not included in this category.

quarter. The higher earnings and employment levels in Medford, compared with Eugene, are likely due to the fact that the Medford study sample consisted of a population that was receiving food stamps or child care subsidies only, while the Eugene sample consisted of recent TANF leavers.

As discussed above, sample members in both sites were already working at the time of random assignment, although some were employed in jobs not recorded by the UI system in Oregon. Under these circumstances, employment levels can only remain steady or go downward over time. This pattern was evident in Eugene, where about 91 percent of the control group members were employed during the quarter of random assignment, and only 62 percent were employed in Quarter 7, the last quarter of the follow-up period. In Medford, about 93 percent were employed during the quarter of random assignment, and 71 percent were employed in Quarter 7. This employment decrease masks an extraordinary amount of job change that took place. For example, in Eugene the percentage of control group members still working with the same employers they had as of random assignment dropped to just below 20 percent by the last quarter.[28] This drop of some 70 percentage points underscores the extent to which reemployment services may have been needed.[29]

- **The Eugene and Medford ERA programs did not lead to increases in employment retention and advancement.**

As shown in Table 12, neither site's program generated a systematic increase above its respective control group in measures of UI-covered employment retention and advancement.

The Eugene ERA program did generate a small increase on one measure of employment retention: a 2.6 percentage point gain in the percentage of sample members who were employed at UI-covered jobs after their quarters of random assignment.[30] However, the program generated no other impacts on measures of cumulative employment retention or advancement. During the follow-up period, Eugene ERA group and control group members were about equally likely to be employed during an average quarter (69 percent compared with 67 percent, respectively), to be

[28]This assessment was made by analyzing the stability of employer identification numbers over time. The estimate of employment with the random assignment employer likely somewhat understates employment stability, because sometimes employment identification numbers change as a result of mergers or acquisitions (see Christopher T. King and Deanna T. Schexnayder, available on the University of Texas Web site: http://www.utexas.edu/research/cshr/pubs/html/Useoflinkeddata.htm#_ftn1).

[29]The pattern was similar among ERA group members and was similar for both groups in Medford. These results are shown in Appendix Table E.8.

[30]Recall that all sample members entered the study with employment. Thus, this small increase represents a small difference between the proportion of ERA program group members and control members who were still employed during Quarters 2 through 7, a group that may include some sample members who lost jobs after random assignment but found new ones by the end of Quarter 7.

employed for at least four consecutive quarters (56 percent compared with 54 percent), and to have earnings of $15,000 or more (39 percent compared with 36 percent).[31]

The Medford ERA program did not generate a statistically significant increase in employment retention and advancement for the program group. Instead, the program appears to have generated scattered small decreases: a 4.0 percentage point reduction in the percentage of sample members who were employed and a 3.4 percentage point decrease in the percentage of sample members who were employed full time at UI-covered jobs after their quarters of random assignment.

Most of Medford's decrease in employment appears to have been generated by ERA group members' leaving their initial employers at higher rates than their control group counterparts left their initial employers (Appendix Table E.3). This trend, however, was not offset by an equivalent increase in employment with another post-random assignment employer, which suggests that some ERA group members — and more of them than control group members — left their initial employers without having another job lined up.[32] It is not clear why this happened. The 12-month survey results for Medford show that the average ERA group member was more likely than the average control group member to participate in college courses. But further analysis does not support a hypothesis that ERA group members were more likely than their control group counterparts to trade employment for college. The implementation findings presented in the two preceding sections about the sites' ERA programs also do not provide an alternate explanation for what may have generated the negative impact on employment in Medford.

Looking beyond the "ever employed" measure, there were no impacts from the Medford program on other overall measures of employment retention or advancement. Thus, during the follow-up period, ERA and control group members were equally likely to be employed at a UI-covered job during an average quarter (75 percent compared with 77 percent, respectively), to be employed for at least four consecutive quarters (65 percent compared with 67 percent), and to have earnings of $15,000 or more (45 percent compared with 46 percent).

By the last quarter of the follow-up period, neither program was generating an increase in employment or earnings. This finding suggests that it is unlikely that the programs will lead

[31]Earnings of $15,000 or more over 18 months of follow-up represent relatively stable employment, given that an individual making the federal minimum wage ($5.15 per hour during program operations) and working 40 hours per week would make approximately $10,000 per year.

[32]Any employer that a study participant worked for during the quarter of random assignment is identified as an "initial" employer. Thus, study participants who changed jobs during the quarter of random assignment but who lost their jobs before Quarter 2 after random assignment do not appear as having worked with a post-random assignment employer.

to employment and earnings gains for the program group relative to the control group in later years.

- **The impacts of the Eugene program on UI-covered employment were somewhat stronger among those who entered the program with no recent employment in UI-covered jobs.**

The impact findings presented so far mask significant variation in program effects among different populations that make up the research sample. This variation was explored through a subgroup analysis that examined the effectiveness of the Eugene program among the 757 sample members who worked in UI-covered jobs during the year before entering the study (the "previously employed" subgroup) and among the 380 sample members who were not working in a job covered by the UI system (the "previously unemployed" subgroup).[33] A subgroup analysis of prior-year employment versus unemployment is less meaningful in Medford, since most sample members in that site were employed during the year before random assignment (88 percent).

Many ERA programs have performed better for sample members who had recent employment. (It is hypothesized that this may be because the recently employed are more stable in their careers and thus better able to benefit from advancement services.) In Eugene, however, the opposite seems to be the case. Table 13 shows that the program generated no impacts on cumulative measures of employment retention and advancement for the previously employed subgroup. But, as also shown in this table, for the previously unemployed subgroup, the Eugene program increased the percentage of ERA group members who were employed at some point during the follow-up period, by 9 percentage points above the control group average of 85 percent. This increase in employment is large. Since all sample members were employed at the time of random assignment, the increase must be attributable to better rates of employment retention and/or to reemployment among program group members.

The Eugene program also generated a moderate increase in average hourly wages among individuals in the previously unemployed subgroup, by about 90 cents above the control group average of $7.33. (These averages include zeros for those who did not work at all during this period.) Most of this increase, however, is due to the employment increase.[34] Increases in

[33]This analysis includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the Oregon UI program. It does not include employment outside Oregon or in jobs not covered by the UI system (for example, off-the-book jobs, some agricultural jobs, and federal government jobs).

[34]An estimate based on average total earnings and average total hours worked suggests that there is no difference in average hourly wages between ERA and control group members for the unemployed subgroup. The average hourly wage among ERA group members = $11,269 / 1,267 hours = $8.90 per hour; the average hourly wage among control group members = $10,227 / 1,139 hours = $8.98 per hour.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Table 13

Impacts on Employment and Earnings, by Employment Status in the Prior Year

Eugene and Medford

	Eugene				Medford			
Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Employed in prior year								
Ever employed (%)	94.2	93.9	0.3	0.865	93.2	96.7	-3.5 **	0.012
Average quarterly employment (%)	71.6	70.0	1.5	0.506	77.3	78.7	-1.4	0.440
Number of quarters employed	4.3	4.2	0.1	0.506	4.6	4.7	-0.1	0.440
Total earnings ($)	13,594	13,550	44	0.953	15,515	15,894	-379	0.526
Average hourly wage ($)	8.73	8.82	-0.1	0.743	8.92	8.98	-0.1	0.779
Sample size (total = 1,781)	366	391			525	499		
Not employed in prior year								
Ever employed (%)	93.9	85.3	8.7 ***	0.006	78.5	86.7	-8.2	0.240
Average quarterly employment (%)	64.0	58.9	5.1	0.180	54.5	61.9	-7.3	0.316
Number of quarters employed	3.8	3.5	0.3	0.180	3.3	3.7	-0.4	0.316
Total earnings ($)	11,269	10,227	1,041	0.322	8,972	11,583	-2,611	0.141
Average hourly wage ($)	8.25	7.33	0.9 **	0.013	6.80	7.43	-0.6	0.358
Sample size (total = 520)	197	183			65	75		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from UI administrative records from the State of Oregon.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

This table includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the Oregon unemployment insurance (UI) program. It does not include employment outside Oregon or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs, some agricultural jobs, and federal government jobs).

the percentage employed in Eugene were also found among sample members who, as of random assignment, had two years or more on welfare and among sample members who were without a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate when they were randomly assigned. Thus, it is hypothesized that the Eugene program was more effective for more disadvantaged sample members, perhaps because these individuals had more "room" for improvement or because they were more likely lose their jobs and, therefore, receive rapid reemployment assistance from the Eugene ERA program team. Besides the impacts already reported here, the Eugene program generated no other impacts on cumulative measures of employment retention and advancement among individuals in the previously unemployed subgroup.

- **Overall, the Eugene and Medford programs generated no improvements in employment outcomes measured in the ERA 12-Month Survey.**

Table 14 shows impacts on measures of job characteristics among survey respondents in Eugene and Medford who were working at the time of the survey interview. Since the results in Medford were affected by response bias (Appendix G), they should be viewed with some caution.

In an indication of what the employment status of program group members would have been in the absence of the program, the Table 14 shows that 93 percent of control group survey respondents in Eugene and 90 percent of control group survey respondents in Medford worked at some point after random assignment. In both sites, about 70 percent of control group respondents were working at the time of the survey interview.

Control group members in Medford had slightly better job characteristics than their counterparts in Eugene. Among control group members, 28 percent in Eugene and 31 percent in Medford were working at a "good job,"[35] defined as a job in which an individual works 35 hours or more per week and that either pays $7.00 or more per hour and offers health insurance or that pays $8.50 or more per hour. Although the percentages working in good jobs may seem low, they are fairly typical of the rates found for the ERA tests that enrolled only employed individuals. Although about 35 percent of the control group respondents in both sites were offered health insurance plans in their current jobs (Appendix Table E.10), less than 13 percent in Eugene and 23 percent in Medford actually enrolled in the plans. The most-cited reason for not enrolling was that the plan was too expensive.[36]

The ERA programs in Eugene and Medford generated no systematic impacts on the employment outcomes measured in the ERA 12-Month Survey. While the Eugene program did

[35]Johnson and Corcoran (2003).

[36]More information on job characteristics can be found in Appendix Table E.10.

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Table 14

Impacts on Characteristics of Current Job

Eugene and Medford

Outcome	Eugene ERA Group	Eugene Control Group	Eugene Difference (Impact)	Eugene P-Value	Medford ERA Group	Medford Control Group	Medford Difference (Impact)	Medford P-Value
Employment status (%)								
Ever employed since random assignment	94.3	92.5	1.8	0.456	93.8	90.1	3.7	0.221
No longer employed	29.7	23.0	6.7	0.119	19.8	19.6	0.2	0.964
Currently employed	64.6	69.5	-4.9	0.286	74.0	70.5	3.5	0.480
Current working status								
Full time[a]	48.6	50.1	-1.5	0.754	57.1	55.4	1.7	0.756
Part time	16.1	19.4	-3.3	0.377	16.9	15.1	1.8	0.676
Currently employed at a "good job"[b]	28.0	28.3	-0.3	0.945	38.8	30.5	8.3	0.105
Hours								
Average hours per week	21.8	23.1	-1.3	0.462	26.6	24.2	2.4	0.228
Total hours per week (%)								
Less than 30	16.1	19.4	-3.3	0.377	16.9	15.1	1.8	0.676
30-34	11.6	13.4	-1.8	0.573	8.7	13.2	-4.5	0.207
35-44	30.6	28.5	2.1	0.628	36.9	35.0	1.9	0.725
45 or more	5.4	8.2	-2.8	0.241	11.5	7.2	4.4	0.179
Average hourly wage (%)								
Less than $5.00	1.5	1.7	-0.3	0.831	3.7	2.7	0.9	0.643
$5.00-$6.99	2.8	5.4	-2.5	0.190	4.0	3.0	1.0	0.632
$7.00-$8.99	41.6	33.4	8.2 *	0.090	29.9	38.8	-8.9 *	0.097
$9.00 or more	18.8	29.0	-10.2 **	0.011	36.4	26.0	10.4 **	0.030

(continued)

Table 14 (continued)

Outcome	Eugene ERA Group	Eugene Control Group	Eugene Difference (Impact)	Eugene P-Value	Medford ERA Group	Medford Control Group	Medford Difference (Impact)	Medford P-Value
Earnings								
Average weekly earnings ($)	192	212	-20	0.2	253	213	40 **	0.049
Total earnings per week (%)								
Less than $200	13.0	16.1	-3.0	0.385	14.0	14.4	-0.4	0.917
$201-$300	23.3	19.9	3.3	0.403	16.5	21.6	-5.0	0.249
$301-$500	24.3	26.6	-2.3	0.584	34.9	31.8	3.1	0.544
$500 or more	4.0	6.9	-2.8	0.194	8.5	2.7	5.9 **	0.015
Benefits								
Employer-provided benefits at current job (%)								
Sick days with full pay	17.6	22.4	-4.8	0.208	28.6	25.4	3.2	0.502
Paid vacation	29.7	32.6	-2.9	0.507	41.3	37.1	4.2	0.407
Paid holidays other than Christmas and New Years	28.5	28.4	0.1	0.985	39.4	36.1	3.3	0.525
Dental benefits	23.5	28.7	-5.2	0.225	38.0	30.1	7.8	0.109
A retirement plan	19.1	27.7	-8.6 **	0.036	31.0	29.9	1.2	0.809
A health plan or medical insurance	28.8	35.7	-6.9	0.130	39.4	34.4	4.9	0.327
Schedule[c] (%)								
Regular	38.7	42.7	-4.0	0.401	52.1	39.9	12.2 **	0.027
Split	1.5	0.3	1.2	0.192	1.8	3.4	-1.6	0.391
Irregular	4.5	5.5	-1.0	0.623	6.0	9.0	-3.0	0.314
Evening shift	8.1	9.2	-1.0	0.707	5.4	8.4	-3.1	0.291
Night shift	4.7	3.0	1.6	0.380	2.9	2.9	0.1	0.965
Rotating shift	4.4	5.6	-1.3	0.559	3.9	4.8	-1.0	0.680
Other schedule	2.2	0.5	1.7	0.138	1.9	1.6	0.4	0.801
Odd Job	0.5	2.2	-1.7	0.135	0.0	0.6	-0.6	0.367
Sample size (total = 785)	220	220			167	178		

(continued)

Table 14 (continued)

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

NOTES: See Appendix B.

[a]For this measure, work is considered full time if the respondent reported working 30 or more hours per week.

[b]This definition of a good job is adapted from Johnson and Corcoran (2003). A "good job" is a job in which a respondent works 35 or more hours per week and either (1) pays $7 or more per hour and offers health insurance or (2) pays $8.50 or more per hour.

[c]A split shift is defined as one consisting of two distinct periods each day. An irregular schedule is defined as one that changes from day to day. A rotating shift is one that changes regularly from days to evenings to nights.

not generate any impacts on survey measures of job characteristics, there is some indication that the Medford program increased the percentage of ERA group respondents with hourly wages of $9.00 or more, the percentage with earnings over $500 per week, and the percentage working regular shifts.[37] But again, because response bias affected the results in Medford, these results should be viewed with some caution.

While the Medford program sought to affect other types of employment outcomes — such as job satisfaction, the length of the commute between home and workplace, and the amount of time that participants spent with their children — questions measuring these outcomes were not included in the survey. It is therefore unknown whether the program made a difference in these types of outcomes.

- **The Eugene program reduced the amount of TANF received, and the Medford program reduced the percentage who received food stamps.**

Table 15 shows impacts on public assistance and income during the year-and-a-half follow-up period. Public assistance data cover TANF and food stamps; income estimates include TANF, food stamps, and earnings.

As noted in this report's Introduction, individuals who obtain jobs are likely to become ineligible for TANF because of the low grant level in Oregon and because they usually get hired at minimum wage or higher. Especially because Oregon's $7.50 minimum wage is relatively high, these factors effectively place employed individuals above the maximum income threshold for TANF. Sample members — all of whom were employed as of random assignment — were therefore expected to spend very little time on TANF during the six-quarter follow-up period and, thus, to have relatively small average total grant amounts.

Moreover, in Eugene (but not in Medford), program group members who became unemployed and wanted to apply for TANF were required to first receive rapid-reemployment services, whereas their control group counterparts did not have such a requirement. ERA staff in Eugene would not accept an application for TANF until program group members had received rapid-reemployment services for up to 30 days, which were offered to all program group members who became unemployed. (If program group members participated in services and did not find a job, they could apply for TANF, but, like their control group counterparts, they would

[37]Recall that there is evidence that ERA group survey respondents, on average, entered the study with higher earnings and more recent employment than control group survey respondents — a pattern that suggests that there may be some bias in the 12-month survey results. Given this possible response bias and given that administrative records cover all sample members and are not biased by respondents' recollections of events, more weight should be given to the administrative records finding that the Medford program did not increase employment or earnings. See Appendix G for further analysis and discussion of responses to the survey.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Table 15

Impacts on Public Assistance and Income

Oregon

Outcomes	Eugene ERA Group	Eugene Control Group	Eugene Difference (Impact)	Eugene P-Value	Medford ERA Group	Medford Control Group	Medford Difference (Impact)	Medford P-Value
Quarters 2-7								
Ever received TANF (%)	38.7	41.9	-3.2	0.251	11.7	10.8	0.8	0.651
Number of months receiving TANF	2.4	2.9	-0.5 *	0.064	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.932
Amount of TANF received ($)	1,068	1,292	-224 *	0.065	298	301	-3	0.961
Ever received food stamps (%)	95.8	96.5	-0.7	0.542	89.7	92.6	-2.9 *	0.069
Number of months receiving food stamps	14.1	13.9	0.2	0.446	12.8	13.2	-0.4	0.233
Amount of food stamps received ($)	3,591	3,603	-12	0.916	3,050	3,100	-50	0.633
Total measured income[a] ($)	17,459	17,366	93	0.868	18,148	18,726	-578	0.279
Quarter 7								
Ever received TANF (%)	12.4	15.2	-2.8	0.168	4.1	4.9	-0.8	0.524
Amount of TANF received ($)	139	177	-39	0.138	53	55	-2	0.899
Ever received food stamps (%)	73.5	73.7	-0.2	0.944	66.9	69.7	-2.8	0.293
Amount of food stamps received ($)	544	556	-12	0.662	467	472	-5	0.841
Sample size (total = 2,301)	563	574			590	574		

(continued)

Table 15 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from UI, TANF, and food stamp administrative records from the State of Oregon.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

This table does not include employment outside Oregon or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs, some agricultural jobs, and federal government jobs).

[a]This measure represents the sum of earnings from jobs covered by the Oregon UI program, TANF, and food stamps.

then be subject to a 45-day assessment period, during which time they were subject to mandatory participation in the JOBS program.) Given the 30-day waiting period for TANF receipt for Eugene's program group, its ERA program was expected to generate a reduction in TANF receipt. The Medford ERA program, in contrast, was not expected to generate any effects on TANF receipt.

Almost all study participants in Eugene were employed and either had applied for or were receiving TANF benefits shortly before they were randomly assigned. While 57 percent of the Eugene control group members received TANF benefits during their quarter of random assignment,[38] only 22 percent or less were still receiving TANF benefits from Quarter 3 onward (Appendix Table E.9). In Medford, even fewer control group members received TANF benefits: 6 percent or less from Quarter 2 onward (Appendix Table E.9). As shown in Table 15, the average length of time that control group members received TANF benefits over the follow-up period was low in both Eugene and Medford (2.9 months and 0.7 month, respectively), and thus the average total TANF benefit received by control group members was relatively low in both sites as well ($1,292 and $301, respectively).

Almost all control group members received food stamp benefits in both Eugene and Medford, and they received them, on average, for between 13 months and 14 months. On average, control group members received a total of about $3,603 in food stamp benefits in Eugene and about $3,100 in Medford. While the rate of food stamp receipt at some point during the follow-up period was high (about 97 percent in Eugene and about 93 percent in Medford) compared with most ERA tests in which only employed individuals were enrolled, the rate of ever receiving TANF during the follow-up period was low (about 42 percent in Eugene and 11 percent in Medford). Table 15 shows that, during Quarters 2 through 7, the Eugene program reduced the amount of TANF benefits received among ERA group members by about 17 percent, or $224 below the control group average of $1,300. It is hypothesized that the reduction in the amount of TANF benefits may be due to a factor that was previously mentioned: the 30-day rapid-reemployment service offered to program group members only.

Most participants in both programs entered the study while receiving food stamps. It is therefore unlikely that the programs could have increased take-up rates for this benefit. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that usage could have risen because agency staff might have encouraged enrollees to continue combining work and food stamp receipt to maximize their income and maintain medical coverage for themselves and their children.

[38]The quarter of random assignment includes pre-random assignment outcomes for most sample members. For example, if a sample member was randomly assigned in February, that person's January outcomes, which preceded random assignment, are counted as part of that quarter. Thus, part of the reason why initial TANF receipt rates appear high in Eugene is that many sample members were receiving TANF immediately prior to random assignment.

The Eugene program did not generate a reduction in rates of food stamp receipt during Quarters 2 through 7 or in rates of TANF and food stamp receipt during the last quarter of follow-up, suggesting that it is unlikely that the program will lead to welfare reductions for the program group relative to the control group in later years.

The Medford program, as shown in Table 15, decreased the proportion of ERA group members who received food stamps at some point during the follow-up period, by 3 percentage points below the control group average of 93 percent.[39] It is unclear what may have generated this decrease. The program did not generate a reduction in TANF receipt rates during Quarters 2 through 7 or in rates of TANF and food stamp receipt during the last quarter of follow-up.

- **Neither program had an impact on total combined income from UI-covered earnings, TANF, and food stamps.**

Control group members' average total combined income from UI-covered earnings, TANF, and food stamps over the 1.5-year follow-up period was $17,366 in Eugene and $18,726 in Medford. UI-covered earnings represented about 72 percent of average total income in Eugene and about 82 percent in Medford. The average total income for control group members in Medford was about the same as in most ERA tests that enrolled only employed individuals.

The ERA programs in Eugene and Medford generated no impacts on total combined income from UI-covered earnings, TANF, and food stamps. In Eugene, the $224 reduction in the average amount of TANF received represented only about 1 percent of the average total combined income of about $17,459 among ERA group members, and it was too small to have had an effect on the average total combined income. Neither the Eugene nor the Medford program generated any other impacts on earnings or amounts of TANF and food stamps that, by themselves or combined, could have created an impact on total income.

The average total income shown in Table 15, however, underestimates total household income. A fuller measure of income — which includes earnings from jobs not covered by the UI system, income from other household members, child support payments, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and income from other sources — is available from the ERA 12-Month Survey (Appendix Table E.4). The ERA programs in Eugene and Medford did not generate impacts on this fuller measure of income either.

[39]The reduction in rates of food stamp receipt as measured by administrative records is consistent with a reduction in the percentage receiving help getting food stamps as measured by the 12-month survey.

Appendix A

Description of ERA Models

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table A.1

Description of ERA Models

State	Location	Target Group	Primary Service Strategies
Advancement projects			
Illinois	Cook County (Chicago)	TANF recipients who have worked at least 30 hours per week for at least 6 consecutive months	A combination of services to promote career advancement (targeted job search assistance, education and training, assistance in identifying and accessing career ladders, etc.)
California	Riverside County Phase 2 (Work Plus)	Newly employed TANF recipients working at least 20 hours per week	Operated by the county welfare department; connects employed TANF recipients to education and training activities
California	Riverside County Phase 2 (Training Focused)	Newly employed TANF recipients working at least 20 hours per week	Operated by the county workforce agency; connects employed TANF recipients to education and training activities with the option of reducing or eliminating their work hours
Placement and retention (hard-to-employ) projects			
Minnesota	Hennepin County (Minneapolis)	Long-term TANF recipients who were unable to find jobs through standard welfare-to-work services	In-depth family assessment; low caseloads; intensive monitoring and follow-up; emphasis on placement into unsubsidized employment or supported work with referrals to education and training, counseling, and other support services
Oregon	Portland	Individuals who are cycling back onto TANF and those who have lost jobs	Team-based case management, job search/job readiness components, intensive retention and follow-up services, mental health and substance abuse services for those identified with these barriers, supportive and emergency services

(continued)

Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

State	Location	Target Group	Primary Service Strategies
Placement and retention (hard-to-employ) projects (continued)			
New York	New York City PRIDE (Personal Roads to Individual Development and Employment)	TANF recipients whose employability is limited by physical or mental health problems	Two main tracks: (1) Vocational Rehabilitation, where clients with severe medical problems receive unpaid work experience, job search/job placement and retention services tailored to account for medical problems; (2) Work Based Education, where those with less severe medical problems participate in unpaid work experience, job placement services, and adult basic education
New York	New York City Substance Abuse (substance abuse case management)	TANF recipients with a substance abuse problem	Intensive case management to promote participation in substance abuse treatment, links to mental health and other needed services
Projects with mixed goals			
California	Los Angeles County EJC (Enhanced Job Club)	TANF recipients who are required to search for employment	Job search workshops promoting a step-down method designed to help participants find a job that is in line with their careers of interest
California	Los Angeles County (Reach for Success program)	Newly employed TANF recipients working at least 32 hours per week	Stabilization/retention services, followed by a combination of services to promote advancement: education and training, career assessment, targeted job development, etc.
California	Riverside County PASS (Post-Assistance Self-Sufficiency program)	Individuals who left TANF due to earned income	Family-based support services delivered by community-based organizations to promote retention and advancement

(continued)

Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

State	Location	Target Group	Primary Service Strategies
Projects with mixed goals (continued)			
Ohio	Cleveland	Low-wage workers with specific employers making under 200% of poverty who have been in their current jobs less than 6 months	Regular on-site office hours for counseling/case management; Lunch & Learn meetings for social support and presentations; and supervisory training for employer supervisors
Oregon	Eugene	Newly employed TANF applicants and recipients working 20 hours per week or more; mostly single mothers who were underemployed	Emphasis on work-based and education/training-based approaches to advancement and on frequent contact with clients; assistance tailored to clients' career interests and personal circumstances
Oregon	Medford	Newly employed TANF recipients and employed participants of the Oregon Food Stamp Employment and Training program and the Employment Related Day Care program; mostly single mothers	Emphasis on work-based and on education/training-based approaches to advancement and on frequent contact with clients; assistance tailored to clients' career interests and personal circumstances; access to public benefits purposefully divorced from the delivery of retention and advancement services
Oregon	Salem	TANF applicants	Job search assistance combined with career planning; once employed, education and training, employer linkages to promote retention and advancement
South Carolina	6 rural counties in the Pee Dee Region	Individuals who left TANF (for any reason) between 10/97 and 12/00	Individualized case management with a focus on reemployment, support services, job search, career counseling, education and training, and use of individualized incentives
Texas	Corpus Christi, Fort Worth, and Houston	TANF applicants and recipients	Individualized team-based case management; monthly stipends of $200 for those who maintain employment and complete activities related to employment plan

Appendix B

Notes for Tables and Figures Displaying Impacts Calculated with Responses to the ERA 12-Month Survey

Estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics of sample members.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between outcomes for the program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; and *** = 1 percent.

Italic type indicates comparisons that are nonexperimental. These measures are computed only for sample members who were employed. Since there may be differences in the characteristics of program group and control group members who were employed, any differences in outcomes may not necessarily be attributable to the ERA program. Statistical tests were not performed.

Dollar averages include zero values for sample members who were not employed or were not receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or food stamps.

The p-value indicates the likelihood that the difference between the program and control groups arose by chance.

NA = not applicable.

Appendix C

Notes for Tables and Figures Displaying Results Calculated with Administrative Records Data

Estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics of sample members.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between outcomes for the program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; and *** = 1 percent.

Italic type indicates comparisons that are nonexperimental. These measures are computed only for sample members who were employed. Since there may be differences in the characteristics of program group and control group members who were employed, any differences in outcomes may not necessarily be attributable to the ERA program. Statistical tests were not performed.

Dollar averages include zero values for sample members who were not employed or were not receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or food stamps.

The p-value indicates the likelihood that the difference between the program and control groups arose by chance.

NA = not applicable.

Appendix D

Examples of Employment-Related Measures Analyzed in This Report

For this report on the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) programs in Eugene and Medford, Oregon, employment-related measures are created from unemployment insurance (UI) wage records and the ERA 12-Month Survey. This section describes some of the key employment-related measures in greater detail. The measures are grouped by the research questions that they help to answer. Measures from both UI wage records and the 12-month survey are discussed.[1]

Did ERA Improve Employment Retention in UI-Covered Jobs?

As discussed in the Introduction to this report, while a lot is known about how to place welfare recipients in jobs, very little is known about how to help welfare leavers retain jobs. Facing a variety of barriers to work — including health issues, unreliable or costly child care and transportation arrangements, and difficult working conditions — welfare leavers are often unable to sustain stable employment. One of the key goals of ERA in Eugene and Medford was to stabilize employment.

- **Ever employed in a UI-covered job in Quarters 2 through 7.** At the time of random assignment, all the sample members in Eugene and Medford were recently employed and were working 20 hours or more per week in Eugene and 32 hours or more per week in Medford. "Ever employed" is therefore a measure of "still employed" — including some sample members who returned to employment after a spell of joblessness earlier in the follow-up period. The program was expected to increase the percentage of sample members who were still employed.

- **Ever employed as of the ERA 12-Month Survey interview.** This is a more comprehensive measure of "still employed," based on responses to the ERA 12-Month Survey. In a sample that is overrepresented in the informal labor market, the survey measure is likely a better measure of overall employment than estimates based on administrative records data. One shortcoming of this measure is that it is based on respondents' ability to recall past events, rather than on employment reported at certain intervals over a specific time period.

[1]As discussed in the report, UI wage data are a reliable source for estimating employment and earning impacts because UI wage records are stored in computerized systems shortly after the completion of a quarter and most employers are required to submit them. UI records do, however, miss wages not reported to the UI system in Oregon. These include "off-the-books," federal, out of state, and military jobs as well as self-employment. Also, UI records usually do not measure job characteristics. For these reasons, data from the ERA 12-Month Survey are also used.

Moreover, employment as estimated from the 12-month survey is based on a more or less representative subgroup of individuals in the report sample.[2]

- **Average quarterly employment in UI-covered jobs.** This measure can be defined as the percentage employed in the average quarter. Although the measure is related to employment retention, it might also reflect job placement and the timing of initial employment. The average quarterly employment measure was computed by adding up the number of quarters employed and dividing by the total number of quarters potentially employed. For example, for the one-year measure, a sample member who was employed in two quarters received a value of 50 percent [(2/4) x 100].

- **Employed four consecutive quarters in UI-covered jobs.** An impact on this measure would likely signal an effect on employment retention. Because UI wage records are reported quarterly, it is not possible to know whether sample members who worked in four consecutive quarters were really employed the whole time in each quarter.

- **Number of months employed since random assignment.** This measure, from the 12-month survey, is a measure of employment stability. While it is similar to the two measures above, it provides a more finely grained measure of employment stability since survey data can be measured in monthly intervals. Similarly, the survey measure "employed six consecutive months" is a measure of employment stability which is comparable to the "employed four consecutive quarters" measure but provides a better estimate of stability because it is measured based on months rather than quarters.

Did ERA Lead to Advancement in the Labor Market?

The goals of ERA go beyond employment retention. Retention at a low-wage or low-quality job may represent some improvement, but the goals of ERA include advancement to jobs with better pay and benefits. Improvements in job quality can be viewed as a type of advancement. Some of these measures are mostly noneconomic (such as whether one works the night shift) but are still very important. Others (such as health benefits) can have large economic consequences that would not be incorporated in measures of earnings.

[2]The advantages and disadvantages of survey compared with UI measures are the same for all the measures discussed in this appendix and thus are not repeated throughout.

- **Earned over $15,000.**[3] This measure could be related to both retention and advancement, although, like some of the other measures, it could also reflect the timing of initial employment.

- **Earnings distribution in a quarter (earned $2,500 or more; earned between $500 and $2,499; earned between $1 and 499).** This measure shows whether increases in UI-covered employment are driven by increases in employment at certain levels of earnings. It is likely related to advancement and job quality, although it is subject to the limitations of UI earnings data described above.

- **Employed at a good job.** A "good job" is a job in which a respondent works 35 or more hours per week and either (1) pays $7.00 or more per hour and offers health insurance or (2) pays $8.50 or more per hour.[4] By coupling wages and benefits, this measure allows for a more nuanced assessment of job quality.

- **Job schedule measures.** For workers in general, and for working mothers with young children in particular, job schedule can be a critical issue. It can be difficult to arrange for child care during the evening, for example. Overnight shifts can be especially difficult. However, such atypical schedules may command higher wage rates. For these reasons, it is important to analyze job schedules.

- **Job skills index.** These survey measures were adopted from the Woman's Employment Study.[5] Working at jobs that require skills for which there is a high demand in the labor market is an important pathway to advancement. Even if these skills are not compensated for immediately, they may lead to longer term improvement in labor market outcomes.

- **Employer-provided benefits.** The availability of benefits is obviously important. A lower-wage job with certain key benefits, such as health and dental insurance, may be more economically beneficial than a higher-wage job without benefits. However, many sample members were eligible for Medicaid, which may have provided more affordable benefits than private employ-

[3]The amount of $15,000 or more per 1.5 year is used because an individual making the federal minimum wage (which was $5.15 during most program operations) and working 40 hours per week would make approximately this amount.

[4]This definition of a good job is adapted from Johnson and Corcoran (2003).

[5]Web site: http://www.fordschool.umich.edu/research/poverty/wes/index.html.

er-based health insurance programs. An important issue to note is that the measures presented in this report reflect self-reported assessments of the *availability* of benefits. Sample members may have elected not to participate in benefit plans, particularly if the plans were too expensive.

What Was the Overall Effect of ERA on Employment Retention and Advancement?

As discussed in this report's Introduction, ERA in Eugene and ERA in Medford had many goals. The employment goals included employment retention and advancement.

- **Earnings in UI-covered jobs.** An impact on average total earnings could reflect improvements in job placement, retention, advancement, or some combination of the three. For this reason, impacts on total earnings are a comprehensive indicator of the effectiveness of ERA.

- **Hourly wages in UI-covered jobs.** Measures of average hourly wages are calculated by dividing total earnings in UI-covered jobs by total hours worked in UI-covered jobs. An impact on average hourly wage could provide an indication of whether any differences in earnings are "driven" by the number of hours worked.

- **Hourly and weekly wages.** Measures of earnings are also created from the ERA 12-Month Survey. The survey measures of earnings are more refined than the UI data, because earnings can be expressed as hourly wages or as weekly earnings. In doing so, the survey measures provides an indication of whether any differences in earnings are "driven" by the number of hours worked or by the wage rates.

Appendix E

Supplementary Exhibits for “Early Impacts of the Eugene and Medford ERA Programs”

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.1

Impacts on Quarterly UI-Covered Employment and Earnings

Eugene and Medford

	Eugene				Medford			
Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever employed (%)								
Quarter of random assignment	88.5	90.9	-2.4	0.176	89.7	92.9	-3.2 **	0.037
Q2	80.8	78.3	2.5	0.293	82.3	86.0	-3.8 *	0.068
Q3	71.2	68.4	2.8	0.294	78.5	80.3	-1.8	0.447
Q4	67.7	65.7	2.0	0.479	74.4	75.8	-1.4	0.568
Q5	64.8	63.9	0.9	0.745	71.7	75.3	-3.6	0.159
Q6	65.3	61.0	4.3	0.124	70.8	71.2	-0.4	0.879
Q7	63.5	61.9	1.6	0.577	70.5	71.4	-0.9	0.740
Earnings ($)								
Quarter of random assignment	1,699	1,770	-70	0.380	2,516	2,568	-53	0.498
Q2	2,155	2,203	-48	0.645	2,552	2,690	-138	0.174
Q3	2,127	2,057	70	0.553	2,529	2,569	-41	0.711
Q4	2,035	2,021	13	0.912	2,480	2,512	-32	0.783
Q5	2,119	2,090	29	0.820	2,385	2,574	-189	0.113
Q6	2,156	2,051	105	0.424	2,412	2,503	-91	0.458
Q7	2,208	2,050	159	0.238	2,443	2,477	-34	0.793
Hours worked								
Quarter of random assignment	203	207	-4	0.627	278	286	-8	0.370
Q2	253	248	6	0.610	276	294	-18 *	0.095
Q3	231	220	11	0.342	265	276	-12	0.312
Q4	220	213	7	0.550	255	263	-8	0.494
Q5	221	214	8	0.538	242	268	-26 **	0.029
Q6	218	206	12	0.323	241	256	-15	0.206
Q7	215	200	15	0.237	245	249	-4	0.757

(continued)

Appendix Table E.1 (continued)

Outcome	Eugene ERA Group	Eugene Control Group	Eugene Difference (Impact)	Eugene P-Value	Medford ERA Group	Medford Control Group	Medford Difference (Impact)	Medford P-Value
Hourly wages ($)								
Quarter of random assignment	7.30	7.52	-0.22	0.248	8.05	8.34	-0.28	0.175
Q2	6.85	6.79	0.06	0.792	7.58	7.86	-0.27	0.242
Q3	6.55	6.26	0.29	0.309	7.46	7.50	-0.04	0.875
Q4	6.17	6.08	0.09	0.732	7.20	7.17	0.03	0.914
Q5	6.05	6.06	-0.02	0.958	7.03	7.11	-0.08	0.766
Q6	6.31	5.90	0.41	0.179	6.99	6.76	0.23	0.416
Q7	6.21	6.22	-0.01	0.969	6.97	6.90	0.07	0.814
Working full time (%)								
Quarter of random assignment	7.4	8.1	-0.7	0.644	19.4	20.9	-1.5	0.493
Q2	18.6	17.8	0.8	0.734	21.0	25.3	-4.3 *	0.070
Q3	19.5	17.2	2.3	0.306	23.4	25.0	-1.6	0.508
Q4	18.2	18.1	0.1	0.954	20.7	24.9	-4.1 *	0.084
Q5	21.3	16.9	4.3 *	0.061	21.9	25.4	-3.5	0.154
Q6	19.1	18.4	0.8	0.731	21.5	27.1	-5.6 **	0.021
Q7	18.8	18.5	0.3	0.897	26.1	27.2	-1.1	0.674
Sample size (total = 2,301)	563	574			590	574		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from UI administrative records from the State of Oregon.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

This table includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the Oregon unemployment insurance (UI) program. It does not include employment outside Oregon or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs, some agricultural jobs, and federal government jobs).

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.2

Impacts on Distribution of Earnings

Eugene and Medford

	Eugene				Medford			
Outcome (%)	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Earned $2,500 or more								
Quarter of random assignment	25.6	26.8	-1.2	0.624	44.6	47.7	-3.1	0.201
Q2	42.0	42.3	-0.3	0.915	49.9	53.6	-3.8	0.161
Q3	41.2	38.3	2.9	0.306	48.9	47.9	1.0	0.719
Q4	39.2	40.0	-0.8	0.791	48.1	50.3	-2.2	0.432
Q5	40.9	40.2	0.7	0.792	46.0	50.3	-4.3	0.127
Q6	41.6	36.1	5.5 *	0.052	45.7	47.8	-2.0	0.457
Q7	40.5	36.9	3.6	0.203	46.2	46.6	-0.3	0.903
Earned between $500 and $2,499								
Quarter of random assignment	49.3	49.9	-0.6	0.852	38.7	38.6	0.1	0.963
Q2	30.4	29.1	1.3	0.632	26.5	26.7	-0.2	0.932
Q3	21.9	22.6	-0.7	0.771	23.9	26.8	-3.0	0.243
Q4	22.5	19.6	2.9	0.227	21.5	21.1	0.5	0.846
Q5	19.7	17.8	1.9	0.426	20.4	20.4	0.0	0.998
Q6	17.7	20.3	-2.6	0.271	20.4	18.4	2.1	0.375
Q7	17.3	19.8	-2.6	0.266	18.4	18.1	0.3	0.905
Earned between $1 and $499								
Quarter of random assignment	13.5	14.3	-0.7	0.723	6.3	6.6	-0.2	0.878
Q2	8.4	6.9	1.5	0.343	5.9	5.6	0.2	0.859
Q3	8.1	7.4	0.7	0.671	5.8	5.6	0.2	0.880
Q4	5.9	6.2	-0.3	0.864	4.8	4.5	0.3	0.803
Q5	4.2	5.9	-1.7	0.200	5.3	4.6	0.7	0.594
Q6	6.1	4.7	1.5	0.284	4.6	5.0	-0.4	0.747
Q7	5.8	5.2	0.6	0.659	6.0	6.8	-0.8	0.578
Sample size (total = 2,301)	563	574			590	574		

(continued)

Appendix Table E.2 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from UI, TANF, and food stamp administrative records from the State of Oregon.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

This table includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the Oregon unemployment insurance (UI) program. It does not include employment outside Oregon or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs, some agricultural jobs, and federal government jobs).

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.3

Quarters 2-7, Impacts on UI-Covered Employment and Earnings, by Employer Status

Eugene and Medford

	Eugene				Medford			
Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Working with any employer								
Ever employed (%)	93.9	91.3	2.6 *	0.092	91.5	95.5	-4.0 ***	0.005
Average quarterly employment (%)	68.9	66.5	2.3	0.237	74.7	76.7	-2.0	0.275
Number of quarters employed	4.1	4.0	0.1	0.237	4.5	4.6	-0.1	0.275
Total earnings ($)	12,800	12,471	329	0.586	14,800	15,325	-525	0.350
Total hours worked	1,360	1,301	59	0.309	1,524	1,606	-82	0.133
Working full time (%)	38.8	41.0	-2.2	0.428	46.5	49.6	-3.2	0.249
Hourly wage ($)	8.56	8.34	0.22	0.340	8.66	8.80	-0.13	0.497
Working with random assignment employer[a]								
Ever employed (%)	69.1	67.5	1.6	0.562	73.9	78.7	-4.8 **	0.044
Average quarterly employment (%)	36.5	35.2	1.4	0.526	43.9	48.4	-4.5 **	0.037
Number of quarters employed	2.2	2.1	0.1	0.526	2.6	2.9	-0.3 **	0.037
Total earnings ($)	6,890	6,892	-2	0.997	8,881	9,955	-1074 *	0.065
Total hours worked	747	694	53	0.329	891	1,029	-139 **	0.016
Working full time (%)	25.3	23.8	1.5	0.564	27.8	34.3	-6.5 **	0.011
Hourly wage ($)	6.06	6.10	-0.05	0.857	7.25	7.35	-0.10	0.752

(continued)

Appendix Table E.3 (continued)

Outcome	Eugene ERA Group	Eugene Control Group	Eugene Difference (Impact)	Eugene P-Value	Medford ERA Group	Medford Control Group	Medford Difference (Impact)	Medford P-Value
Working with a post-random assignment employer								
Ever employed (%)	63.4	63.6	-0.3	0.926	61.9	60.6	1.2	0.666
Average quarterly employment (%)	37.3	36.7	0.7	0.761	37.8	34.8	3.1	0.152
Number of quarters employed	2.2	2.2	0.0	0.761	2.3	2.1	0.2	0.152
Total earnings ($)	5,910	5,579	331	0.498	5,921	5,370	551	0.243
Total hours worked	613	607	6	0.899	633	576	57	0.224
Working full time (%)	20.2	22.0	-1.7	0.472	23.5	20.6	2.9	0.241
Hourly wage ($)	3.38	3.28	0.10	0.627	3.49	3.13	0.36 *	0.096
Sample size (total = 2,301)	563	574			590	574		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from UI records from the State of Oregon.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

This table includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the Oregon unemployment insurance (UI) program. It does not include employment outside Oregon or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs, some agricultural jobs, and federal government jobs).

[a]Random assignment employer was defined as the employer during the quarter of random assignment from which the sample member received the most money.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.4

Impacts on Household Income and Health Care Coverage

Eugene and Medford

Outcome	Eugene ERA Group	Eugene Control Group	Eugene Difference (Impact)	Eugene P-Value	Medford ERA Group	Medford Control Group	Medford Difference (Impact)	Medford P-Value
Household income								
Percentage with each income source (%)								
Own earnings	76.3	72.4	3.9	0.359	80.8	78.7	2.1	0.644
Earnings of other members	22.7	30.5	-7.8 *	0.063	35.6	37.9	-2.3	0.672
Child support	27.4	24.5	2.9	0.495	39.0	37.5	1.5	0.785
Public assistance	89.6	82.7	6.9 **	0.038	73.2	77.9	-4.7	0.312
TANF	13.5	19.2	-5.7	0.108	7.4	7.1	0.4	0.906
Food stamps	87.9	81.7	6.3 *	0.068	67.4	77.2	-9.7 **	0.040
SSI or disability	6.7	8.8	-2.1	0.415	7.8	4.5	3.3	0.215
Total household income in prior month ($)	1,446	1,410	36	0.691	1,796	1,680	116	0.320
Percentage of household income that is respondent's (%)	81.0	79.6	1.3	0.643	75.6	78.2	-2.6	0.433
Health care coverage								
Respondent has health care coverage[a] (%)								
Publicly funded	61.5	63.0	-1.5	0.747	39.1	39.8	-0.7	0.890
Publicly funded and not on TANF or SSI	46.2	41.0	5.2	0.281	30.4	31.1	-0.7	0.882
Privately funded	34.4	32.9	1.6	0.729	35.9	39.4	-3.5	0.497
All dependent children have health care coverage (%)	87.7	85.5	2.2	0.502	81.7	82.9	-1.2	0.791
All dependent children have health care coverage, and respondent is not covered by TANF or SSI (%)	72.4	64.4	8.0 *	0.077	74.5	74.5	0.1	0.991
Respondent and all children have health care coverage (%)	81.2	78.3	2.9	0.453	65.4	68.4	-3.0	0.574
Sample size (total = 785)	220	220			167	178		

(continued)

Appendix Table E.4 (continued)

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

NOTES: See Appendix B.

[a]Health care coverage measures combine data from the survey employment section, health care coverage section, income section, and administrative records on public assistance receipt. A person can be receiving both public and private health care coverage.

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Appendix Table E.5

Impacts on Employment Retention

Eugene and Medford

	Eugene				Medford			
Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever employed in Year 1 (%)	92.2	91.0	1.2	0.655	91.6	90.0	1.6	0.622
Average months employed in Year 1	8.6	8.4	0.2	0.668	9.3	9.3	0.0	0.956
Total months employed in Year 1 (%)								
Less than 4	8.5	11.0	-2.5	0.395	5.9	3.5	2.5	0.301
4 to 7	17.1	15.1	2.0	0.581	10.4	10.5	0.0	0.994
8 to 10	16.5	12.6	3.9	0.269	16.8	13.4	3.4	0.414
More than 10	50.1	52.2	-2.2	0.654	58.4	62.6	-4.2	0.437
Worked during Months 1 to 3 and worked for (%)								
Less than 6 consecutive months	15.3	18.4	-3.1	0.396	13.1	11.8	1.3	0.719
6 or more consecutive months	61.3	59.1	2.2	0.646	67.4	67.1	0.3	0.948
Number of jobs in Year 1 (%)								
0	7.8	9.0	-1.2	0.655	8.5	10.1	-1.6	0.622
1	50.3	45.2	5.0	0.300	53.6	54.8	-1.2	0.834
2 or 3	37.9	37.6	0.3	0.959	34.0	32.7	1.3	0.809
4 or more	4.1	8.2	-4.1 *	0.079	4.0	2.5	1.5	0.450
Ever worked for one employer for 6 months or more (%)	65.6	64.9	0.7	0.885	73.3	73.9	-0.6	0.894
Sample size (total = 785)	220	220			167	178		

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

NOTES: See Appendix B.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.6

Impacts on Wage Growth and Advancement for Current or Most Recent Job

Eugene and Medford

	Eugene				Medford			
Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Employed in first 6 months and at interview (%)	56.7	61.9	-5.2	0.276	68.8	66.4	2.4	0.644
Among those employed in first 6 months and at interview (%)								
Percentage whose weekly earnings:								
Increased	36.6	33.9	2.7	0.562	47.7	44.6	3.0	0.578
Increased by less than 20 percent	8.4	8.8	-0.4	0.885	12.4	14.8	-2.3	0.549
Increased by 20 percent or more	28.1	25.1	3.1	0.469	35.2	29.9	5.4	0.302
Decreased	12.7	19.5	-6.8 *	0.058	14.4	14.0	0.5	0.910
Stayed the same	7.4	8.5	-1.1	0.683	6.7	7.8	-1.1	0.714
Percentage whose hours worked:								
Increased	23.9	22.1	1.8	0.659	28.3	26.8	1.5	0.772
Increased by less than 20 percent	5.2	4.8	0.3	0.883	7.4	5.4	2.0	0.469
Increased by 20 percent or more	18.7	17.2	1.5	0.688	20.9	21.4	-0.6	0.903
Decreased	13.7	17.2	-3.5	0.327	16.9	17.9	-1.1	0.810
Stayed the same	19.1	22.7	-3.5	0.383	23.6	21.6	2.0	0.673
Percentage whose hourly pay:								
Increased	40.5	39.5	1.0	0.835	47.9	47.2	0.8	0.889
Increased by less than 20 percent	23.3	23.1	0.2	0.969	24.2	26.7	-2.5	0.619
Increased by 20 percent or more	17.2	16.4	0.8	0.818	23.7	20.5	3.2	0.468
Decreased	7.7	11.9	-4.2	0.151	11.6	9.4	2.2	0.526
Stayed the same	8.5	10.6	-2.0	0.488	9.3	9.9	-0.6	0.860
Sample size (total = 785)	220	220			167	178		

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

NOTES: See Appendix B.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.7

Impacts on Employment and Earnings, by Age Subgroup

Eugene and Medford

	Eugene				Medford			
Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Single parents age 20 to 24								
Ever employed (%)	94.1	90.8	3.3	0.284	91.7	96.6	-4.9	0.116
Average quarterly employment (%)	70.1	63.6	6.5 *	0.089	71.4	79.3	-8.0 **	0.048
Number of quarters employed	4.2	3.8	0.4 *	0.089	4.3	4.8	-0.5 **	0.048
Total earnings ($)	11,169	11,211	-43	0.969	12,404	14,782	-2,378 **	0.039
Average hourly wage ($)	7.92	7.94	0.0	0.955	7.91	8.40	-0.5	0.143
Sample size (total = 558)	164	157			121	116		
Single parents age 25 or older								
Ever employed (%)	94.0	91.6	2.4	0.205	91.4	95.1	-3.7 **	0.024
Average quarterly employment (%)	68.9	67.9	1.0	0.693	75.4	76.0	-0.6	0.768
Number of quarters employed	4.1	4.1	0.1	0.693	4.5	4.6	0.0	0.768
Total earnings ($)	13,765	13,258	507	0.510	15,517	15,639	-122	0.854
Average hourly wage ($)	8.80	8.65	0.2	0.574	8.90	8.97	-0.1	0.745
Sample size (total = 1,643)	371	386			448	438		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from UI administrative records from the State of Oregon.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

This table includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the Oregon unemployment insurance (UI) program. It does not include employment outside Oregon or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs, some agricultural jobs, and federal government jobs).

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.8

Impacts on Quarterly Employment and Earnings Outcomes Based on Whether Employment Was at a Random Assignment Employer

Eugene and Medford

	Eugene				Medford			
Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever employed with random assignment employer (%)								
Quarter of random assignment	88.5	90.9	-2.4	0.176	89.7	92.9	-3.2 **	0.037
Q2	66.3	65.7	0.6	0.826	72.4	78.0	-5.6 **	0.021
Q3	43.3	43.6	-0.4	0.896	52.4	57.6	-5.2 *	0.063
Q4	33.7	32.8	0.8	0.759	42.7	47.9	-5.2 *	0.062
Q5	30.3	27.0	3.3	0.213	36.3	41.1	-4.8 *	0.081
Q6	24.9	22.8	2.2	0.387	31.9	35.1	-3.2	0.230
Q7	20.9	19.2	1.6	0.487	27.6	30.8	-3.2	0.210
Earnings at random assignment employer ($)								
Quarter of random assignment	1,699	1,770	-70	0.380	2,516	2,568	-53	0.498
Q2	1,781	1,866	-84	0.440	2,134	2,332	-198 *	0.058
Q3	1,371	1,378	-7	0.950	1,757	1,897	-140	0.212
Q4	1,055	1,115	-61	0.576	1,485	1,666	-181	0.109
Q5	1,026	966	60	0.585	1,296	1,510	-215 *	0.063
Q6	895	823	72	0.492	1,176	1,334	-158	0.168
Q7	762	745	17	0.871	1,033	1,215	-182	0.112
Hours worked at random assignment employer								
Quarter of random assignment	203	207	-4	0.627	278	286	-8	0.370
Q2	211	208	2	0.837	228	254	-26 **	0.020
Q3	151	144	8	0.504	179	202	-22 *	0.059
Q4	115	110	5	0.672	145	171	-25 **	0.027
Q5	105	91	15	0.164	126	152	-25 **	0.023
Q6	90	76	14	0.147	114	133	-20 *	0.071
Q7	74	65	9	0.325	98	118	-20 *	0.062

(continued)

Appendix Table E.8 (continued)

Outcome	Eugene ERA Group	Eugene Control Group	Eugene Difference (Impact)	Eugene P-Value	Medford ERA Group	Medford Control Group	Medford Difference (Impact)	Medford P-Value
Hours worked at a post-random assignment employer								
Quarter of random assignment	0	0	0	0.000	0	0	0	0.000
Q2	43	39	3	0.581	47	39	8	0.223
Q3	80	76	4	0.680	85	74	11	0.234
Q4	105	103	3	0.798	110	92	17 *	0.088
Q5	116	123	-7	0.523	116	116	0	0.974
Q6	128	130	-2	0.870	128	123	5	0.658
Q7	141	135	5	0.644	147	131	16	0.173
Hourly wages from a post-random assignment employer ($)								
Quarter of random assignment	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.000
Q2	2.17	1.80	0.37	0.102	2.05	1.83	0.22	0.335
Q3	3.17	2.65	0.52 *	0.057	3.08	2.54	0.54 **	0.041
Q4	3.47	3.41	0.06	0.834	3.41	3.05	0.36	0.188
Q5	3.43	3.61	-0.18	0.523	3.86	3.59	0.27	0.355
Q6	4.04	3.84	0.20	0.509	4.15	3.70	0.45	0.135
Q7	4.23	4.34	-0.11	0.733	4.41	4.05	0.36	0.229
Working full time with a post-random assignment employer (%)								
Quarter of random assignment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.000
Q2	1.0	1.5	-0.6	0.401	1.3	1.5	-0.2	0.834
Q3	4.6	4.8	-0.2	0.886	5.8	5.1	0.7	0.606
Q4	7.6	6.8	0.8	0.605	7.6	6.3	1.3	0.393
Q5	10.7	9.4	1.3	0.468	9.0	9.1	-0.1	0.933
Q6	11.0	11.6	-0.6	0.741	10.2	10.8	-0.6	0.741
Q7	12.2	12.1	0.1	0.950	14.8	12.8	2.0	0.323
Sample size (total = 2,301)	563	574			590	574		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from UI administrative records from the State of Oregon.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

This table includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the Oregon unemployment insurance (UI) program. It does not include employment outside Oregon or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs, some agricultural jobs, and federal government jobs).

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.9

Impacts on Public Assistance Receipt, by Quarter

Eugene and Medford

	Eugene				Medford			
Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impacts)	P-Value	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impacts)	P-Value
Ever received TANF (%)								
Quarter of random assignment	55.1	56.9	-1.8	0.351	9.6	9.3	0.3	0.769
Q2	22.0	29.3	-7.3 ***	0.004	4.3	3.4	1.0	0.385
Q3	19.5	22.0	-2.5	0.296	5.7	5.1	0.7	0.611
Q4	19.0	20.8	-1.8	0.435	5.4	5.7	-0.3	0.818
Q5	15.2	18.3	-3.1	0.158	4.8	5.0	-0.1	0.909
Q6	13.2	15.8	-2.5	0.226	4.6	5.7	-1.1	0.405
Q7	12.4	15.2	-2.8	0.168	4.1	4.9	-0.8	0.524
Amount of TANF received ($)								
Quarter of random assignment	558	565	-8	0.731	88	78	10	0.335
Q2	198	271	-73 ***	0.006	41	33	7	0.540
Q3	209	231	-23	0.423	54	49	5	0.715
Q4	214	229	-15	0.608	60	59	1	0.964
Q5	169	201	-33	0.229	40	49	-8	0.538
Q6	140	182	-42	0.105	50	56	-6	0.696
Q7	139	177	-39	0.138	53	55	-2	0.899
Ever received food stamps (%)								
Quarter of random assignment	95.4	96.5	-1.2	0.305	89.5	93.6	-4.1 ***	0.004
Q2	92.7	91.8	0.9	0.568	85.5	87.9	-2.5	0.190
Q3	87.1	87.1	0.0	0.996	81.3	81.3	0.0	0.987
Q4	82.6	82.6	-0.1	0.977	74.5	78.8	-4.4 *	0.066
Q5	80.9	79.5	1.4	0.556	72.1	75.0	-2.9	0.250
Q6	76.6	74.7	1.9	0.454	69.5	73.6	-4.1	0.105
Q7	73.5	73.7	-0.2	0.944	66.9	69.7	-2.8	0.293

(continued)

Appendix Table E.9 (continued)

Outcome	Eugene ERA Group	Eugene Control Group	Eugene Difference (Impacts)	Eugene P-Value	Medford ERA Group	Medford Control Group	Medford Difference (Impacts)	Medford P-Value
Amount of food stamps received ($)								
Quarter of random assignment	724	729	-5	0.769	592	620	-28 *	0.074
Q2	674	667	7	0.727	545	555	-10	0.595
Q3	639	625	13	0.520	529	531	-2	0.923
Q4	590	605	-15	0.505	520	532	-12	0.579
Q5	583	583	1	0.982	507	505	2	0.943
Q6	561	566	-5	0.835	483	505	-23	0.335
Q7	544	556	-12	0.662	467	472	-5	0.841
Sample size (total = 2,301)	563	574			590	574		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from UI administrative records from the State of Oregon.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

This table includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the Oregon unemployment insurance (UI) program. It does not include employment outside Oregon or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs, some agricultural jobs, and federal government jobs).

Appendix Table E.10
Impacts on Other Employment Outcomes
Eugene and Medford

Outcome	Eugene ERA Group	Eugene Control Group	Eugene Difference (Impact)	Eugene P-Value	Medford ERA Group	Medford Control Group	Medford Difference (Impact)	Medford P-Value
Current job characteristics (%)								
Currently employed	64.6	69.5	-4.8	0.286	74.0	70.5	3.5	0.480
Works out of state	1.5	2.2	-0.7	0.614	2.3	0.7	1.6	0.243
Within past 4 weeks, number of days where more than a half day was missed due to personal/family reasons (including vacations)	0.7	1.1	-0.4	0.140	1.1	0.9	0.3	0.434
Reasons for missing work in past 4 weeks[a]								
Vacation	4.6	4.0	0.6	0.757	5.6	7.1	-1.5	0.594
Illness	13.2	14.1	-0.9	0.791	15.9	9.8	6.2	0.102
Family illness	9.1	10.4	-1.3	0.654	13.7	14.1	-0.4	0.930
Problems with child care	4.4	3.3	1.1	0.568	5.5	2.1	3.4	0.115
Problems with transportation	1.5	2.6	-1.1	0.453	2.5	1.6	1.0	0.536
Other	6.4	5.5	0.9	0.701	5.0	4.3	0.6	0.797
Has been promoted or possibility of promotion[b]	40.3	41.6	-1.3	0.790	52.7	51.1	1.5	0.779
Promoted to a higher position/job title	14.5	14.1	0.4	0.909	21.0	17.4	3.6	0.415
Has job with promotion possibilities	24.4	27.5	-3.1	0.468	31.7	33.8	-2.1	0.688
Thinks promotion is likely	17.5	20.2	-2.7	0.488	23.0	20.0	3.0	0.520
Job type								
Odd job	0.5	2.2	-1.7	0.135	0.0	0.6	-0.6	0.366
Seasonal job	0.3	1.6	-1.3	0.159	2.4	1.7	0.7	0.641
Inconsistent working schedule[c]	13.3	16.3	-3.0	0.389	11.9	16.9	-5.0	0.211

(continued)

Appendix Table E.10 (continued)

Outcome	Eugene ERA Group	Eugene Control Group	Eugene Difference (Impact)	Eugene P-Value	Medford ERA Group	Medford Control Group	Medford Difference (Impact)	Medford P-Value
Current job characteristics								
Number of job skills	3.8	4.3	-0.5	0.169	4.7	4.6	0.1	0.776
Job skills/tasks used at least monthly (%)								
Speaks with customers in person	52.5	52.5	0.1	0.988	58.5	55.8	2.8	0.612
Speaks with customers by phone	41.2	46.0	-4.8	0.320	53.6	51.9	1.7	0.755
Reads instructions or reports	48.4	52.9	-4.5	0.349	57.4	58.6	-1.2	0.829
Writes letters or memos	32.8	39.5	-6.7	0.144	35.7	41.8	-6.0	0.277
Works with a computer, such as word-processing or data entry	26.3	31.4	-5.2	0.244	41.3	36.0	5.3	0.319
Works with another electronic machine, such as a cash register, bar code scanner, or calculator	35.7	41.6	-6.0	0.207	46.1	46.6	-0.5	0.924
Does arithmetic, including making change	39.1	44.1	-5.0	0.298	52.4	46.9	5.5	0.320
Fills out forms	47.7	54.6	-6.9	0.153	61.0	56.8	4.2	0.438
Watches closely over instruments[d]	33.2	38.2	-5.0	0.285	34.0	35.0	-0.9	0.861
Supervises other people who report to respondent	25.8	28.7	-2.9	0.502	34.0	33.8	0.2	0.972
Frequent difficulties at work (%)								
Difficulty understanding job responsibilities	2.3	4.5	-2.3	0.205	1.7	1.2	0.5	0.702
Difficulty getting along with boss	2.9	3.5	-0.6	0.731	2.0	1.5	0.5	0.721
Difficulty getting along with other workers	2.6	4.2	-1.6	0.377	3.1	1.1	2.0	0.198
Type of industry (%)								
Construction	1.2	3.3	-2.1	0.148	1.2	0.6	0.6	0.557
Manufacturing[e]	3.6	6.0	-2.4	0.246	4.5	2.6	1.9	0.338
Transportation and utilities[f]	1.3	2.8	-1.5	0.295	0.7	2.2	-1.5	0.285
Wholesale trade	0.8	0.1	0.7	0.308	1.2	0.6	0.6	0.565
Retail trade[g]	16.6	14.9	1.7	0.632	14.2	12.0	2.2	0.557
Finance, insurance, and real estate	1.9	3.1	-1.1	0.456	2.1	1.4	0.8	0.610

(continued)

Appendix Table E.10 (continued)

Outcome	Eugene ERA Group	Eugene Control Group	Eugene Difference (Impact)	Eugene P-Value	Medford ERA Group	Medford Control Group	Medford Difference (Impact)	Medford P-Value
Current job characteristics (%)								
Services	35.7	35.9	-0.2	0.971	38.2	45.1	-6.9	0.210
Health care and social assistance	18.1	18.9	-0.8	0.832	23.6	22.8	0.8	0.874
Educational services	1.4	1.8	-0.4	0.776	1.0	0.2	0.8	0.344
Accommodation and food services	9.3	7.6	1.8	0.516	8.4	10.7	-2.4	0.474
Administrative, support, and waste	4.3	3.0	1.3	0.492	3.7	6.7	-3.0	0.229
Public administration	1.0	0.8	0.1	0.882	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.000
Other services	1.7	3.8	-2.2	0.176	1.6	4.7	-3.1	0.119
Other industries[h]	3.5	3.4	0.1	0.951	11.9	6.2	5.7 *	0.070
Type of occupation								
Sales	13.2	11.0	2.2	0.496	11.2	10.9	0.3	0.932
Clerical[i]	8.7	13.2	-4.4	0.135	15.1	18.4	-3.3	0.425
Services	25.8	22.0	3.8	0.366	30.1	25.7	4.5	0.379
Community and social services	-0.1	0.5	-0.6	0.158	3.3	0.3	2.9 **	0.044
Health care practitioners and technical occupations	2.1	1.5	0.6	0.671	2.8	2.4	0.4	0.813
Health care support	7.6	6.0	1.6	0.523	4.2	3.9	0.3	0.884
Protective services	0.8	0.1	0.7	0.277	0.5	0.1	0.5	0.466
Food preparation and serving	7.1	5.6	1.5	0.528	9.7	10.6	-0.9	0.794
Personal care and service	8.2	8.2	0.1	0.977	9.6	8.4	1.2	0.716
Operatives/laborers	11.9	15.5	-3.6	0.259	12.3	12.6	-0.3	0.936
Other	5.0	7.8	-2.7	0.256	5.3	2.9	2.3	0.300
Benefits								
Job offers health insurance	28.8	35.7	-6.9	0.130	39.4	34.4	4.9	0.326
Enrolled in employer's health insurance plan	13.9	12.9	1.0	0.769	23.8	22.6	1.2	0.796
Not enrolled in employer's health insurance plan	15.0	22.8	-7.8 **	0.043	15.6	11.8	3.8	0.323

(continued)

Appendix Table E.10 (continued)

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

NOTES: See Appendix B.

[a]Respondent could state more than one reason.

[b]"Promoted to a higher position" and "has job with promotion possibilities" may not sum to this amount because some people were included based on "thinks promotion is likely."

[c]Hours of work changed from week to week.

[d]Instruments of any kind, including dials and gauges.

[e]Manufacturing-Food, Beverage, Tobacco, Textiles, Apparel, Leather, Wood Product, Paper, Printing, Petroleum & Coal Products, Chemical, Plastics & Rubber Products, Nonmetallic Mineral Product, Primary Metal, Fabricated Metal Product, Machinery, Computer & Electronic Product, Electrical Equipment, Appliance & Component, Transportation Equipment, Furniture & Related Product, & Misc. Manufacturing.

[f]Transportation and Utilities-Transportation by Air, Rail, Water, Truck, Transit, Pipeline, & Related Support Services; Postal Service, Couriers, & Messengers; Warehousing & Storage and Utilities.

[g]Retail Trade of Motor Vehicles & Parts, Furniture & Home Furnishings, Electronics & Appliances, Building Materials & Garden Equipment, Food & Beverage, Health & Personal Care, Gasoline, Clothing & Clothing Accessories, Retail Trade of Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music, General & Misc. Merchandise, & Non-Store Retailers.

[h]Other Industries-Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting; Mining; Information; Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services; Management of Companies & Enterprises; Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation; and Uncodable.

[i]Clerical-Office & Administrative Support and Legal Occupations.

[j] Sample members who have not been employed since random assignment are not included.

[k]Temporary/short-term assignment ended; fired; laid off; employer went out of business.

[l]Did not like work/working conditions too stressful; benefits not good enough; salary not good enough; or respondent injured on the job.

[m]Other family or personal problems; wanted to spend more time with children; wanted to work closer to home; respondent moved, took another job, returned to school or training, or did not need to work.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.11

Year 1.5 Impacts on Summary Measures of Employment, Earnings, and Public Assistance Among Two-Parent Families

Eugene

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Year 1.5				
Ever employed (%)	90.5	91.4	-0.9	0.806
Since quarter of random assignment	98.6	96.6	1.9	0.335
With employer from time of random assignment	69.0	67.1	1.9	0.753
With post-random assignment employer	69.2	63.7	5.5	0.356
Average quarterly employment (%)	66.8	69.1	-2.3	0.607
Number of quarters employed	4.0	4.1	-0.1	0.607
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	55.1	58.4	-3.2	0.610
Total earnings ($)	13,667	15,194	-1,527	0.323
Earned over $15,000 (%)	35.2	46.3	-11.1 *	0.062
Total hours worked[a]	1,329	1,463	-134	0.342
With employer from quarter of random assignment	693	774	-81	0.526
With post-random assignment employer	637	689	-53	0.638
Average quarterly full-time employment (%)[b]	22.2	27.4	-5.2	0.211
With employer from time of random assignment	11.2	15.1	-3.9	0.251
With post-random assignment employer	9.9	10.8	-0.9	0.737
Average hourly wage ($)[a]	8.86	9.67	-0.8	0.389
Average hourly wage (%)				
$0 (not working)	9.6	8.6	1.0	0.802
Less than $5.00	1.1	0.5	0.6	0.628
$5.00 - $6.99	4.3	7.7	-3.4	0.276
$7.00 - $8.99	36.7	39.6	-2.9	0.649
$9.00 or more	48.3	43.6	4.7	0.449
Total TANF receipt ($)	764	812	-48	0.838
Total food stamp receipt ($)	3,867	3,779	88	0.777
Last quarter of Year 1.5				
Ever employed (%)	60.3	64.3	-4.1	0.514
Total earnings ($)	2,291	2,313	-22	0.949
Sample size (total = 254)	132	122		

(continued)

Appendix Table E.11 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from UI administrative records from the State of Oregon.

NOTES: See Appendix B.

This table includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the Oregon unemployment insurance (UI) program. It does not include employment outside Oregon or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs, some agricultural jobs, and federal government jobs).

[a]ERA study members with UI-wage-reported earnings and no hours worked were excluded from this analysis. Hourly wages have been top-coded at $25.

[b]Working full time is defined as working 455 hours per quarter (35 hours per week times 13 weeks).

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.12

Year 1.5 Impacts on Summary Measures of Employment, Earnings, and Public Assistance Among Two-Parents

Medford

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Year 1.5				
Ever employed (%)	87.4	88.8	-1.4	0.625
Since quarter of random assignment	90.3	91.1	-0.8	0.725
With employer from time of random assignment	69.0	72.3	-3.3	0.401
With post-random assignment employer	55.0	57.8	-2.8	0.548
Average quarterly employment (%)	70.6	70.4	0.2	0.939
Number of quarters employed	4.2	4.2	0.0	0.939
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	63.9	59.6	4.3	0.313
Total earnings ($)	17,942	17,021	921	0.416
Earned over $15,000 (%)	51.1	50.2	0.9	0.824
Total hours worked[a]	1,621	1,594	27	0.773
With employer from quarter of random assignment	891	1,029	-139	0.594
With post-random assignment employer	633	576	57	0.774
Average hourly wage ($)[a]	9.38	9.87	-0.5	0.581
Average hourly wage (%)				
Less than $5.00	0.0	0.4	-0.4	0.398
$5.00 - $6.99	2.4	4.9	-2.6	0.155
$7.00 - $8.99	36.1	32.4	3.7	0.397
$9.00 or more	47.9	51.1	-3.3	0.450
Total TANF receipt ($)	43	41	2	0.954
Total food stamp receipt ($)	3,153	2,873	280	0.183
Ever received food stamps (%)	87.6	86.6	1.1	0.728
Last quarter of Year 1.5				
Ever employed (%)	67.6	67.4	0.2	0.957
Total earnings ($)	3,145	2,919	227	0.348
Sample size (total = 464)	222	242		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from UI administrative records from the State of Oregon.

NOTES: See Appendix B.

This table includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the Oregon unemployment insurance (UI) program. It does not include employment outside Oregon or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs, some agricultural jobs, and federal government jobs).

[a]ERA study members with UI-wage-reported earnings and no hours worked were excluded from this analysis. Hourly wages have been top-coded at $25.

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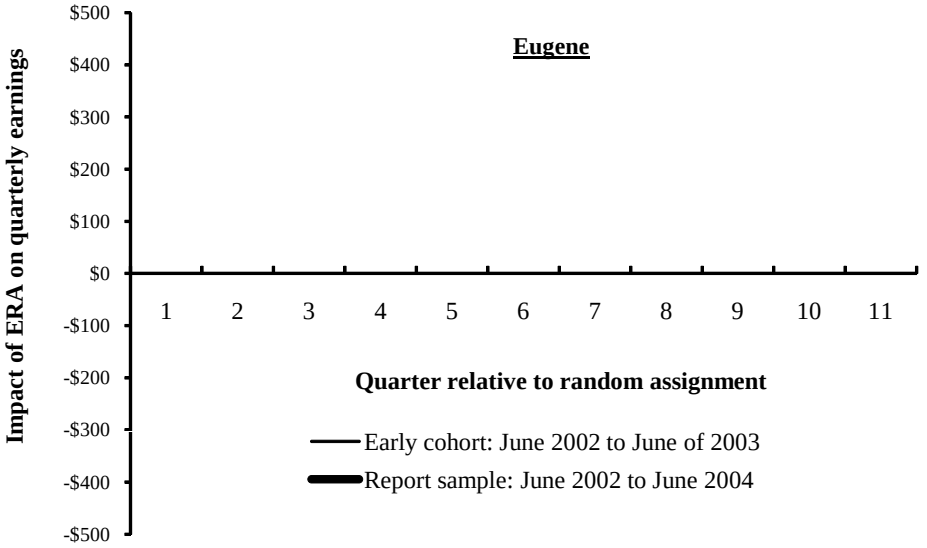
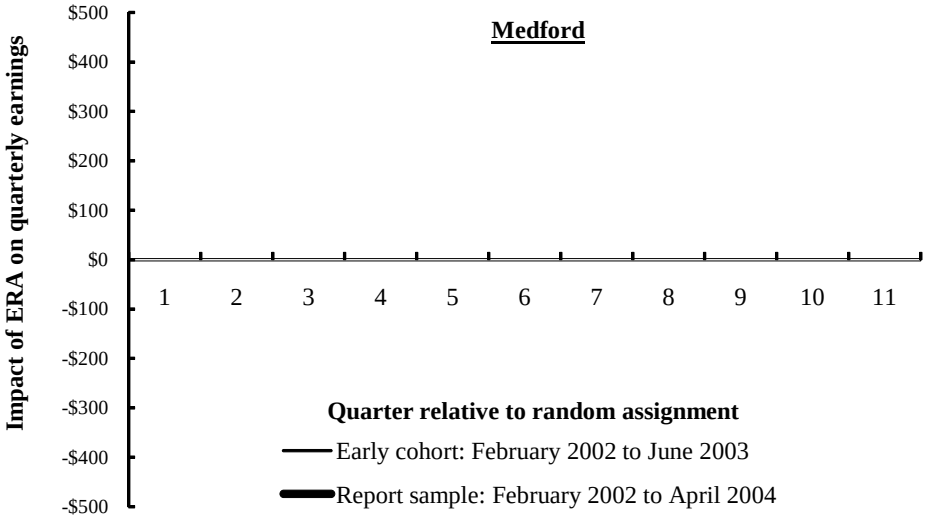
Appendix Figure E.1

Impacts on UI-Covered Earnings for the Report Sample and Early Cohort Over Time

Eugene and Medford





SOURCE: MDRC calculations from UI administrative records from the State of Oregon.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

Appendix F

ERA 12-Month Survey Response Analysis for Eugene, Oregon

The Eugene, Oregon, ERA 12-Month Survey, which was administered to a subset of the ERA research sample, provides information on respondents' participation in various activities and services, their health care coverage, their job characteristics, their household composition, and other measures presented in this report. This appendix assesses the reliability of impact results for the survey in Eugene. It also examines whether the impacts for the survey respondents can be generalized to the impacts for a group called "the research sample" — all the single parents who were randomly assigned during the sample intake period. (See Box F.1.) The appendix first describes how the survey sample was selected and then discusses the response rates for the fielded sample and for each of the two research groups covered in the sample: the ERA program group and the control group. Next, the appendix examines differences between survey respondents and nonrespondents. The analysis then compares survey respondents who were members of the ERA program group and respondents who were members of the control group. Finally, using administrative records data, the appendix compares impacts for survey respondents, the research sample, and the fielded sample.

Key Samples

Overall, the analysis shows that results for the survey respondents are generalizable to impacts for the research sample. There are no systematic differences between members of the ERA program group and members of the control group who responded to the survey. One notable finding in this analysis is that the survey respondent sample did experience larger employment retention effects than the full sample. Still, the extent of the bias is not large, and the survey should provide a reliable estimate of the effects of ERA in Eugene.

Survey Sample Selection

As noted in the report's Introduction, the research sample includes 1,137 single parents randomly assigned from June 2002 through June 2004. The sample that was fielded for the survey (Box F.1) includes 550 sample members randomly assigned from October 2002 through October 2003 who met the survey sample eligibility criteria. Anyone younger than 18 years old and anyone who did not speak English or Spanish was excluded from the eligible sample. The fielded sample constitutes about 48 percent of the research sample and covers only about 50 percent of the full sample intake period. The survey sample was split equally between ERA program group members and control group members.

Box F.1

Key Analysis Samples

Research sample. All single parents who were randomly assigned during the sample intake period, which extended from June 2002 through June 2004.

Fielded sample. Sample members in the research sample who were randomly assigned during the months in which the survey sample was selected and who met the criteria for inclusion.

Respondent sample. Sample members in the fielded sample who completed the ERA 12-Month Survey.

Nonrespondent sample. Sample members in the fielded sample who were not interviewed for various reasons — for example, because they were not located or refused to be interviewed.

Survey Response Rates

A total of 440 sample members, or 80 percent of the fielded sample, completed the survey. Among the nonrespondent sample, 73 percent refused to be interviewed or could not be located.[1] The response rates of the research groups are similar: 80 percent of program group members and 79 percent of control group members completed the survey.

Although the overall response rates are fairly high, whenever the response rate is lower than 100 percent, *nonresponse bias* may occur; that is, differences may exist between the respondent sample and the larger research sample, owing to differences between the sample members who completed and those who did not complete a survey. Furthermore, the estimates may be biased if there are differences in the background characteristics of the research groups.

Comparison Between Respondents and Nonrespondents Within the Survey Sample

In order to examine whether there were systematic differences between those who did and those who did not respond to the survey, an indicator of survey response status was created, and then multivariate analysis was used to identify whether pre-random assignment characteristics are significantly related to the indicator.

[1]Other respondents were not interviewed because they were incapacitated, institutionalized, located after the fielding period expired, or deceased.

Appendix Table F.1 presents the estimated logistic regression coefficients for the probability of being a respondent. As shown in the table, besides such background characteristics as race/ethnicity, age, and number of children, a research status indicator (shown as "ERA group" in the first row of Appendix Table F.1) was included in the model. The first column of the table provides the odds ratio for each variable in predicting the probability of completing the survey. The asterisks and p-values show the statistical significance of these relationships, and the standardized estimate provides a measure of effect size.

Overall, the model was successful in predicting response (model $x^2(28) = 34.98$; p-value less than 0.01). The most important predictors of response are gender — respondents are two times more likely to be female (p-value less than 0.10) — and number of months receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (p-value less than 0.10). Both are positively related to response, which implies that, compared with nonrespondents, a larger percentage of those who responded are female and or received public assistance for more months. In addition, respondents tended to have higher earnings over the prior three years, compared with nonrespondents.

Comparison Between the Research Groups in the Survey Respondent Sample

Random assignment designs minimize the possibility of potential bias. Although the response rates are high across both research groups, there is still the possibility that the characteristics of each research group differed due to the selective nature of the survey response process. If this is true, the reliability of impact estimates for the respondent sample might have been affected.

Appendix Table F.2 shows baseline characteristics of the ERA program and control group members. Both a chi-square test and a t-test were used to determine whether there are significant differences between members of the two groups. The differences between the groups are relatively small and insignificant.

A logistic regression analysis was performed (not shown) to further test whether there is a relationship between the background characteristics and the research status. A 0/1 dummy indicating the research status was regressed on pre-random assignment characteristics — many of which are shown in Appendix Table F.2. This model failed to predict research group status, which suggests that the program group respondents do not differ from the control group respondents.

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Appendix Table F.1

Estimated Regression Coefficients for the Probability of Being a Respondent to the ERA 12-Month Survey in Eugene

Oregon

	Survey Sample		
	Odds Ratio	P-Value	Standardized Estimate
ERA group	1.076	0.746	0.020
Female	2.082 *	0.081	0.105
Age	0.992	0.695	-0.035
Black, non-Hispanic	2.505	0.291	0.080
Other	0.742	0.532	-0.037
Hispanic	0.951	0.913	-0.007
Number of children	0.737	0.209	-0.154
Earnings in prior quarter	1.000	0.401	-0.095
Earnings in prior year	1.000	0.481	0.107
Employed in prior quarter	0.721	0.373	-0.090
Received TANF in prior year	1.155	0.831	0.038
Received food stamps in prior year	1.854	0.337	0.083
Long-term TANF recipient	0.982	0.949	-0.005
No high school diploma	0.758	0.320	-0.060
Child age 0-2	1.122	0.741	0.031
Child age 3-5	1.265	0.475	0.064
Child age 6-12	1.578	0.224	0.123
Child age 13-18	1.077	0.866	0.017
Earnings in prior 3 years squared	1.000 *	0.090	-0.328
Earnings in the prior 3 years	1.000	0.157	0.400
Number of quarters employed in prior 3 years	1.034	0.660	0.072
Random assignment month	0.987	0.673	-0.027
TANF in prior Quarter 1	1.000	0.102	-0.187
Average TANF per month received prior year	1.000	0.845	0.041
Number of months received TANF prior year	1.073 *	0.100	0.175
Average food stamps per month received prior year	1.000	0.925	0.010
Number of months received food stamps prior year	0.996	0.925	-0.008
Pseudo R-square (0.0974)			
$\chi^2(28)$	34.98	0.171	
Sample size	550		

SOURCES: Oregon baseline and administrative records.

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

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Appendix Table F.2

Selected Baseline Characteristics, by Research Group, of the ERA 12-Month Survey Sample in Eugene

Oregon

Characteristic	ERA Group	Control Group
Gender (%)		
Male	7.7	5.0
Female	92.3	95.0
U.S. citizenship (%)		
Yes	99.5	99.5
No	0.5	0.5
Primary language (%)		
English	100.0	99.5
Spanish	0.0	0.5
Race/ethnicity (%)		
White, non-Hispanic	84.1	86.8
Black, non-Hispanic	3.2	2.3
American Indian/Alaska native	1.8	0.5
Hispanic	8.2	5.5
Asian/Pacific islander	0.9	1.8
Other race/ethnicity	0.5	0.9
Mixed race	1.4	2.3
Age (%)		
Younger than 20	6.8	9.1
20 - 30	54.1	53.6
31 - 40	30.9	28.6
Older than 40	8.2	8.6
Average age (years)	29.4	29.1
Education (%)		
GED	23.7	23.2
High school diploma	47.5	45.5
Technical/associate's degree / 2-year college	7.8	10.9
4 years (or more) of college	2.3	3.6
None of the above	18.7	16.8
Housing status (%)		
Rent, public housing	10.0	11.4
Rent, subsidized housing	15.9	15.9
Rent, other (unsubsidized)	56.8	58.2
Own home or apartment	2.3	3.2
Emergency or temporary housing	2.3	0.9
Other, living with friends/relatives	12.7	10.5

(continued)

Appendix Table F.2 (continued)

Characteristic	ERA Group	Control Group
Current cash assistance status (%)		
Applicant	30.0	35.0
Recipient	68.6	63.2
Neither applicant nor recipient	1.4	1.8
JOBS registration status (%)		
Mandatory	99.1	97.3
Exempt	0.9	2.7
Assistance group (%)		
Single-parent family	100.0	100.0
Total prior AFDC/TANF receipt (%)		
None	8.2	8.6
Less than 3 months	13.6	15.0
3 months or more and less than 2 years	45.5	45.9
2 years or more and less than 5 years	23.2	20.0
5 years or more and less than 10 years	7.7	8.2
10 years or more	1.8	2.3
Months employed in past 3 years (%)		
Did not work	6.8	6.4
Less than 6	16.8	14.5
7 to 12	16.4	20.5
13 to 24	33.2	28.6
More than 24	26.8	30.0
Currently employed (%)	99.5	100.0
Hours worked per week (among those currently employed) (%)		
Mostly part time	32.4	32.0
Mostly full time	50.0	55.8
Equal amounts part time and full time	17.6	12.1
Hourly wages (among those currently employed) (%)		
$5.15 or less	0.0	0.5
$5.16 to $6.99	32.9	26.4
$7.00 to $9.99	59.8	65.5
$10 or more	7.3	7.7
Number of children (%)		
1	49.5	45.9
2	29.5	37.3
3	20.9	16.8
Age of youngest child (%)		
2 or younger	42.3	44.1
3 to 5	25.9	24.1
6 or older	31.8	31.8
Sample size (total = 440)	220	220

(continued)

Appendix Table F.2 (continued)

SOURCE: Oregon baseline information.

NOTES: A chi-square test for categorical variables and a t-test for continuous variables were run to determine whether there is a difference in the distribution of the characteristics across research groups.

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

Comparison of Survey Respondents and the Fielded Sample and Research Sample

Using administrative records data, this section discusses whether the impacts found for survey respondents can be generalized to the fielded and the research samples. Although there is no evidence of survey response bias in Eugene, it is important to check whether the impacts differ for survey respondents and the research sample. There might be other reasons besides nonresponse bias that could affect the ability to generalize the survey sample to the research sample.

As discussed, the fielded sample includes sample members who were randomly assigned during a period of time that does not cover the full random assignment period. By limiting the sample in this manner, a "cohort effect" may have been introduced, because the survey cohort might have differed from sample members randomly assigned in other cohorts.

Appendix Table F.3 shows the adjusted means and impacts on several employment and public assistance outcomes for the research sample, fielded sample, and respondent sample.[2] This comparison is useful in assessing whether the story of program impacts changes when different samples are used. This table shows that some of the employment impacts are stronger for the survey respondent sample than for the other samples. Notably, among the respondent sample, the ERA program increased the percentage employed for four consecutive quarters by 8.3 percentage points above the control group average of 61 percent. This is much larger than the effect for the research sample. On other measures, though, there are some quantitative differences in estimates, but the findings are qualitatively the same.

The larger employment effects among the respondent sample suggest that the survey sample might be biased in favor of people who had better employment impacts. Still, the extent of the bias is not large, and the survey should provide a reliable estimate of the effects of ERA in Eugene.

[2]All the impacts are regression-adjusted within each sample to control for differences in background characteristics, prior earnings, prior employment, prior receipt of public assistance, location or residence, and period of sample intake.

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Appendix Table F.3

Comparison of Impacts for the Research, Fielded, and Respondent Samples

Eugene

Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)
Quarters 2-7			
Ever employed (%)			
Research sample	94.4	91.9	2.6
Fielded sample	94.9	91.7	3.2
Respondent sample	97.2	93.2	4.0 *
Average quarterly employment (%)			
Research sample	67.0	65.4	1.6
Fielded sample	68.2	63.5	4.6 *
Respondent sample	71.4	66.7	4.7
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)			
Research sample	60.8	58.0	2.8
Fielded sample	64.4	58.2	6.2
Respondent sample	69.2	60.9	8.3 *
Number of quarters employed			
Research sample	5.3	5.1	0.2
Fielded sample	5.5	5.1	0.4 *
Respondent sample	5.7	5.3	0.4
Earnings ($)			
Research sample	16,414	15,297	1,117
Fielded sample	17,259	15,993	1,266
Respondent sample	17,967	16,643	1,323
Ever received TANF (%)			
Research sample	44.5	47.0	-2.5
Fielded sample	44.9	42.8	2.2
Respondent sample	48.4	44.3	4.2
Amount of TANF received ($)			
Research sample	1,414	1,653	-239
Fielded sample	1,309	1,528	-219
Respondent sample	1,431	1,675	-244
Ever received food stamps (%)			
Research sample	96.0	97.6	-1.5
Fielded sample	97.1	97.9	-0.8
Respondent sample	98.2	97.7	0.5
Amount of food stamps received ($)			
Research sample	4,669	4,590	79
Fielded sample	4,761	4,643	118
Respondent sample	5,077	4,986	91

(continued)

Appendix Table F.3 (continued)

Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)
Total measured income ($)			
Research sample	22,496	21,540	956
Fielded sample	23,330	22,164	1,165
Respondent sample	24,474	23,304	1,171

SOURCE: Oregon administrative records.

NOTES: The research sample includes 815 sample members; ERA group: 403; control group: 412.
The fielded sample includes 440 sample members; ERA group: 220; control group: 220.
The respondent sample includes 550 sample members; ERA group: 274; control group: 276.
Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Appendix G

ERA 12-Month Survey Response Analysis for Medford, Oregon

The Medford, Oregon, ERA 12-Month Survey, which was administered to a subset of the ERA research sample, provides information on respondents' participation in various activities and services, health care coverage, job characteristics, household composition, and other measures presented in this report. This appendix assesses the reliability of impact results for the survey in Medford. It also examines whether the impacts for the survey respondents can be generalized to the impacts for a group called "the research sample" — all the single parents who were randomly assigned during the sample intake period. (See Box G.1.) The appendix first describes how the survey sample was selected and then discusses the response rates for the survey sample and for each of the two research groups: the ERA program group and the control group. Next, the appendix examines differences between survey respondents and nonrespondents. The analysis then compares respondents who were members of the ERA program group and respondents who were members of the control group. Finally, using administrative records data, the appendix compares impacts for the research sample, the respondent sample, and the fielded sample.

Key Samples

This analysis generated some concerns about the reliability of the survey data. Several key pre-random assignment characteristics of the ERA group respondents suggest that they were more job-ready when they entered the program than respondents who were in the control group. In particular, ERA group respondents were more likely to have been recently employed. While the regression-adjustment procedures used in the impact analysis provide some protection against this problem, the results of the Medford 12-month survey should be viewed with some caution. The survey sample is also small (N = 345), so when the results of the survey differ from results derived from MDRC's analysis of administrative records for the research sample, more weight should be given to the larger and unbiased administrative records sample.

Box G.1

Key Analysis Samples

Research sample. All single parents who were randomly assigned during the sample intake period, which extended from February 2002 through April 2004.

Fielded sample. Sample members in the research sample who were randomly assigned during the months in which the survey sample was selected and who met the criteria for inclusion.

Respondent sample. Sample members in the fielded sample who completed the ERA 12-Month Survey.

Nonrespondent sample. Sample members in the fielded sample who were not interviewed for various reasons — for example, because they were not located or refused to be interviewed.

Survey Sample Selection

As noted in the report's Introduction, the research sample includes 1,164 single parents who were randomly assigned from February 2002 to April 2004. The sample that was fielded for the survey (Box G.1) includes 428 sample members randomly assigned from January through October 2003 who met the survey sample eligibility criteria. Anyone younger than 18 years old or who did not speak English or Spanish was excluded from the eligible sample. The fielded sample constitutes about 37 percent of the research sample and covers less than 40 percent of the full sample intake period. The survey sample was split equally between ERA and control group members.

Survey Response Rates

A total of 345 sample members, or 80 percent of the fielded sample, completed the survey. Most of the nonrespondent sample members refused to be interviewed or could not be located.[1] The response rates of the research groups are similar: 79 percent of ERA program group members and 82 percent of the control group members completed the survey.

Although the overall response rates are fairly high, whenever the response rate is lower than 100 percent, *nonresponse bias* may occur; that is, differences may exist between the respondent sample and the larger research sample, owing to differences between the sample members who completed and those who did not complete a survey. Furthermore, the estimates may be biased if there are differences in the background characteristics of the research groups.

Comparison Between Respondents and Nonrespondents Within the Survey Sample

In order to examine whether there were systematic differences between those who did and those who did not respond to the survey, an indicator of survey response status was created, and then multivariate analysis was used to identify which pre-random assignment characteristics were significantly related to the indicator.

Appendix Table G.1 shows the estimated logistic regression coefficients for the probability of being a respondent. The first column of the table provides the odds ratio for each variable in predicting the probability of completing the survey. The asterisks and p-values show the statistical significance of these relationships, and the standardized estimate provides a measure of effect size.

[1]Other respondents were not interviewed because they were incapacitated, institutionalized, located after the fielding period expired, or deceased.

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Appendix Table G.1

Estimated Regression Coefficients for the Probability of Being a Respondent to the ERA 12-Month Survey in Medford

Oregon

	Survey Sample		
	Odds Ratio	P-Value	Standardized Estimate
ERA group	0.695	0.184	-0.100
Female	2.539 **	0.036	0.146
Age	1.023	0.377	0.100
Black, non-Hispanic	1.484	0.736	0.028
Other	2.521	0.259	0.103
Hispanic	0.878	0.833	-0.015
Number of children	0.759	0.263	-0.143
Earnings in prior quarter	1.000	0.402	0.136
Earnings in prior year	1.000	0.734	0.071
Employed in prior quarter	1.057	0.915	0.013
Received TANF in prior year	0.174 *	0.097	-0.391
Received food stamps in prior year	0.480	0.260	-0.115
Long-term TANF recipient	0.549	0.106	-0.123
No high school diploma	0.818	0.546	-0.045
Child age 0-2	0.848	0.704	-0.043
Child age 3-5	1.146	0.728	0.036
Child age 6-12	1.357	0.464	0.084
Child age 13-18	0.532	0.199	-0.148
Earnings in prior 3 years squared	1.000	0.134	-0.390
Earnings in the prior 3 years	1.000	0.566	0.223
Number of quarters employed in prior 3 years	1.007	0.936	0.015
Random assignment month	0.943	0.241	-0.096
TANF in prior Quarter 1	1.000	0.354	0.105
Average TANF per month received prior year	1.000	0.990	-0.003
Number of months received TANF prior year	1.253 **	0.024	0.342
Average food stamps per month received prior year	1.004 **	0.018	0.266
Number of months received food stamps prior year	0.998	0.972	-0.004
Pseudo R-square (0.1708)			
$\chi^2(28)$	48.406 ***	0.010	
Sample size	428		

SOURCES: Oregon baseline and administrative records.

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

Overall, the model was successful in predicting response (model $x^2(28) = 48.40$; p-value less than 0.01). The most important predictor of response is prior welfare use. As Appendix Table G.1 shows, people who had received food stamps or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) were more likely to respond to the survey. This may be because the survey firm was more likely to have updated contact information for recent welfare recipients, making it easier for the firm to locate them.

Comparison Between the Research Groups in the Survey Respondent Sample

Random assignment designs minimize the possibility of potential bias. Although the response rates are high across both research groups, there is still the possibility that the characteristics of the two research groups differed due to the selective nature of the survey response process. If this is true, the reliability of impact estimates for the respondent sample might have been affected.

Appendix Table G.2 shows baseline characteristics of the ERA and control group members. Both a chi-square test and a a-test were used to determine whether there are significant differences between the ERA and control group members. On several measures, the differences between the groups are relatively small and insignificant. However, there are differences on several measures that are key to the study. Most notably, ERA group respondents were 13 percentage points more likely than control group respondents to have worked in the quarter before they entered the study. Since past employment predicts future employment, this may mean that some of the differences in the job characteristics of respondents in the Medford ERA and control groups (Table 14) reflect response bias rather than the success of the Medford ERA program.

There is also a large difference in the total earnings of ERA program group and control group respondents. ERA group respondents earned over $900 more than control group respondents (though this difference is not statistically significant). A logistic regression analysis was performed (not shown) to further test whether or not there is a relationship between the background characteristics and the research status. A 0/1 dummy indicating the research status was regressed on pre-random assignment characteristics — many of which are shown in Appendix Table G.2. This model failed to predict research group status overall, but some measures (including prior employment) are statistically significant.

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Appendix Table G.2

Selected Baseline Characteristics, by Research Group, of the ERA 12-Month Survey Sample in Medford

Oregon

Characteristic	ERA Group	Control Group	
Gender (%)			
Male	7.2	7.3	
Female	92.8	92.7	
U.S. citizenship (%)	100.0	100.0	
Primary language (%)			
English	99.4	100.0	
Spanish	0.6	0.0	
Race/ethnicity (%)			
White, non-Hispanic	89.8	89.9	
Black, non-Hispanic	1.2	2.2	
American Indian/Alaska native	1.2	1.7	
Hispanic	3.0	4.5	
Asian/Pacific islander	0.6	0.0	
Other race/ethnicity	2.4	1.7	
Mixed race	1.8	0.0	
Age (%)			
Younger than 20	7.8	6.2	*
20 - 30	41.9	48.9	
31 - 40	29.3	34.3	
Older than 40	21.0	10.7	
Average age (years)	31.8	30.5	
Education (%)			
GED	21.6	22.5	
High school diploma	34.7	41.6	
Technical/associate's degree/2-year college	15.6	16.9	
4 years (or more) of college	6.6	1.7	
None of the above	21.6	17.4	
Housing status (%)			
Rent, public housing	0.0	0.0	
Rent, subsidized housing	25.1	26.4	
Rent, other (unsubsidized)	57.5	57.3	
Own home or apartment	6.6	5.1	
Emergency or temporary housing	4.8	5.1	
Other, living with friends/relatives	6.0	6.2	

(continued)

Appendix Table G.2 (continued)

Characteristic	ERA Group	Control Group	
Current cash assistance status (%)			
Applicant	1.2	1.1	
Recipient	5.4	2.2	
Neither applicant nor recipient	93.4	96.6	
JOBS registration status (%)			
Exempt	100.0	100.0	
Assistance group (%)			
Single-parent family	100.0	100.0	
Total prior AFDC/TANF receipt (%)			
None	34.9	25.3	
Less than 3 months	13.3	15.2	
3 months or more and less than 2 years	36.1	43.8	
2 years or more and less than 5 years	10.2	10.7	
5 years or more and less than 10 years	4.2	3.4	
10 years or more	1.2	1.7	
Months employed in past 3 years (%)			
Did not work	0.6	0.0	
Less than 6	3.6	5.6	
7 to 12	10.8	10.7	
13 to 24	14.4	21.9	
More than 24	70.7	61.8	
Currently employed (%)	100.0	100.0	
Hours worked per week (among those currently employed) (%)			
Mostly part time	27.7	31.5	
Mostly full time	61.4	60.1	
Equal amounts part time and full time	10.8	8.4	
Hourly wages (among those currently employed) (%)			
$5.15 or less	18.0	16.9	
$5.16 to $6.99	61.7	67.4	
$7.00 to $9.99	18.0	14.6	
$10 or more	2.4	1.1	
Employed in prior Quarter 1 (%)	83.8	70.8	***
Earnings in prior Quarter 1 ($)	2,326	2,081	
Earnings in prior year ($)	9,110	8,179	
Number of children (%)			
1	44.9	35.4	
2	31.1	40.4	
3 or more	24.0	24.2	

(continued)

Appendix Table G.2 (continued)

Characteristic	ERA Group	Control Group
Age of youngest child (%)		
2 or younger	31.1	37.6
3 to 5	26.9	24.2
6 or older	41.9	38.2
Sample size (total = 345)	167	178

SOURCE: Oregon baseline information.

NOTES: A chi-square test for categorical variables and a t-test for continuous variables were run to determine whether there is a difference in the distribution of the characteristics across research groups.

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

Comparison of Survey Respondents and the Fielded Sample and Research Sample

Using administrative records data, this section discusses whether the survey respondents' impacts can be generalized to the fielded and research samples. Because there is evidence of survey response bias in Medford, it is important to check whether the impacts of the program differ for respondents and members of the research sample. There might be other reasons besides nonresponse bias that could affect the ability to generalize the survey sample to the research sample. As discussed, the fielded sample consists of sample members randomly assigned during a period of time that does not cover the full random assignment period. By limiting the sample in this manner, a "cohort effect" may have been introduced, because the survey cohort might have differed from sample members randomly assigned in other cohorts.

Appendix Table G.3 shows the adjusted means and impacts on several employment and public assistance outcomes for the research sample, fielded sample, and respondent sample.[2] This comparison is useful in assessing whether the story of program impacts changes when different samples are used. The table shows that the impacts for the fielded and respondent samples are generally consistent with the impacts for the research sample. Though there are some quantitative differences in estimates, the findings are qualitatively the same. However, the effects of ERA on the receipt of food stamps are large for the respondent and fielded samples, compared with the effects for the research sample. It should also be noted that there is a fairly large difference between the earnings impacts for the research sample and the respondent sample. ERA reduced earnings by $526 for the research sample and increased earnings by $309 for the respondent sample. On the whole, however, the impacts shown through an analysis of administrative records data are not much different across these samples. Still, in combination with the evidence of response bias, the differences of impacts that do exist suggest that the survey impacts for Medford should be interpreted with a great deal of caution.

[2]Within each sample, all the impacts are regression-adjusted to control for differences in background characteristics, prior earnings, prior employment, prior public assistance receipt, location or residence, and period of sample intake.

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Appendix Table G.3

Comparison of Impacts for the Research, Fielded, and Respondent Samples

Meford, Oregon

Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)
Quarters 2-7			
Ever employed (%)			
Research sample	91.5	95.5	-4.0 ***
Fielded sample	89.2	95.0	-5.8 **
Respondent sample	88.6	95.5	-7.0 **
Average quarterly employment (%)			
Research sample	74.7	76.7	-2.0
Fielded sample	73.0	76.4	-3.4
Respondent sample	77.1	78.9	-1.8
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)			
Research sample	64.8	66.6	-1.8
Fielded sample	62.1	64.8	-2.7
Respondent sample	70.0	67.5	2.5
Number of quarters employed			
Research sample	4.5	4.6	-0.1
Fielded sample	4.4	4.6	-0.2
Respondent sample	4.6	4.7	-0.1
Earnings ($)			
Research sample	14,800	15,326	-526
Fielded sample	14,725	15,197	-471
Respondent sample	15,977	15,667	309
Ever received TANF (%)			
Research sample	11.7	10.8	0.8
Fielded sample	13.1	8.3	4.8
Respondent sample	12.6	7.9	4.7
Amount of TANF received ($)			
Research sample	298	300	-3
Fielded sample	341	265	75
Respondent sample	302	266	36
Ever received food stamps (%)			
Research sample	89.7	92.6	-2.9 *
Fielded sample	86.8	92.7	-6.0 **
Respondent sample	85.8	94.3	-8.5 ***
Amount of food stamps received ($)			
Research sample	3,050	3,100	-50
Fielded sample	2,964	3,106	-142
Respondent sample	2,958	3,323	-366 *

(continued)

Appendix Table G.3 (continued)

Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)
Total measured income ($)			
Research sample	18,148	18,726	-578
Fielded sample	18,030	18,568	-538
Respondent sample	19,236	19,257	-20

SOURCE: Oregon administrative records.

NOTES: The research sample includes 1,164 sample members; ERA group: 590; control group: 574.
The fielded sample includes 430 sample members; ERA group: 213; control group: 217.
The respondent sample includes 345 sample members; ERA group: 167; control group: 178.
Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

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