

SSRC Selections

Rapid Attachment to Employment

Selections highlight research, evaluation reports, and other publications that inform the field about key issues in, and effective practices for, fostering economic self-sufficiency.

Autor, D.H., Houseman, S.N., & Herr, S.P. (2017). The effect of work first job placements on the distribution of earnings: An instrumental variable quantile regression. *Journal of Labor Economics* 35(1), 149-190.

<http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/687522?journalCode=jole>

This article analyzed data from Detroit's welfare-to-work program to examine the impact of rapid employment placement on earnings. The researchers looked at both direct hire and temporary help job placements. They found that direct hire placements yielded earnings increases for over half of participants, while temporary job placements yielded earnings losses. The results led the researchers to doubt the efficacy of a primary focus on rapid job placement, especially placement in temporary jobs.

Hahn, H., Adams, G., Spaulding, S., & Heller, C. (2016). Supporting the child care and workforce development needs of TANF families. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/supporting-child-care-and-workforce-development-needs-tanf-families>

This report explained the child care subsidy and workforce development resources available to TANF participants, but also the challenges associated with meeting the needs of disadvantaged families. First the report provided an overview of TANF families and policies, then explained the variation in state child care subsidies available to TANF families. Next the authors analyzed the challenge of meeting child care needs through subsidies, including short subsidy spells and a lack of access to high quality child care providers who are willing to serve TANF families. The authors recommended 12 months of subsidy eligibility, making all child care providers subject to inspections, and providing more information to help families make informed child care decisions. This report also summarized workforce development opportunities available to TANF participants, and the opportunities to better integrate TANF with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs.

Amine, S., & Ouattara, P. (2015). The effect of incentive return-to-work policies on single-parent families: A comparative approach. *The European Journal of Applied Economics*, *12*(2), 9-15.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/effect-incentive-return-work-policies-single-parent-families-comparative-approach>

This article compared the effect of return-to-work policies on single parents in three different countries: the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) in the United States, the Working Tax Credit in the United Kingdom, and Active Solidarity Income in France. In the case of the EITC, the researchers found that the tax credit provided financial assistance to 6.3 million people in 2010, but it is difficult to isolate its effect on single parents' employment. Because single parents often do not understand the complex structure of the EITC, they do not know how to maximize the tax credit through their work hours. The researchers also found that the effects of these policies on the labor market depended on the ability of the local economy to reduce unemployment and provide sustainable, well-paying jobs.

Mathur, A., & McCloskey, A. (2014). *Fostering upward economic mobility in the United States*. Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/fostering-upward-economic-mobility-united-states>

In this report, the authors review the literature on economic mobility in the United States and propose policies to increase upward mobility. Through reviewing the literature on economic mobility, the authors found that a parent's income level is a significant determinant of a child's income level, due to factors like segregation, labor market challenges, welfare programs, education, and family structure. The authors then recommend policy proposals to target each of these factors. These proposals include school choice to counteract neighborhood disadvantages, customized job-training programs, welfare programs that incentivize work, a cash bonus for low-income teenagers who earn their high school diploma, and encouraging child support.

Ha, Y., & Ybarra, M. (2013). Are strong work-first welfare policies aligned with generous child care provisions? What states are doing and the implications for social work. *The Journal of Contemporary Social Services* *94*(1), 5-13.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/are-strong-work-first-welfare-policies-aligned-generous-child-care-provisions-what-states>

This article studied the variation in state child care subsidy programs, and how those programs match up with work requirements. Under welfare reform, states have significant authority to design and implement TANF and child subsidies. States can choose the intensity of work requirements and the amount of child care subsidies, so the researchers studied how those programs interact across states. The researchers found that states with stringent work requirements do not typically provide generous child care subsidies. They discuss the implications for family and policy.

Hamilton, G. (2012). Improving employment and earnings for TANF recipients. Washington, DC: Urban Institute

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/improving-employment-and-earnings-tanf-recipients>

This brief highlighted strategies for increasing employment and earnings among welfare recipients, using evidence from rigorous random assignment studies. The author looked at the effects of several different TANF program components, such as job search, education, subsidized work, and specialized training. While the studies analyzed in this brief increased employment and earnings, none of the increases were transformational because they did not prevent interruptions in employment or increase wages over time. Recommendations for further consideration included adopting a career pathways framework, combining financial incentives with training, fostering strong connections to employers, and providing longer-term subsidized employment. The author also suggested providing services to TANF recipients through workforce development agencies, community colleges, and community-based organizations.

Greenberg, D.H., & Robins, P.K. (2011). Have Welfare-to-Work programs improved over time in putting welfare recipients to work? *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 64(4), 910-920.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/have-welfare-work-programs-improved-over-time-putting-welfare-recipients-work>

In this article, the researchers analyzed the results of 21 random assignment evaluations and 76 experimental studies of welfare-to-work programs to see whether employment outcomes improved over time. The experiments were conducted in the United States between 1983 and 1998, and over that 16 year period the control groups started receiving similar services as the program groups. This similarity in services reduced the impact of welfare-to-work programs on employment. The researchers recommend that evaluators play a more significant role in program design to ensure that welfare-to-work programs vary enough from services available to the control group.

Bloom, D. (2010). Transitional jobs: Background, program models, and evaluation evidence. New York: MDRC.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/transitional-jobs-background-program-models-and-evaluation-evidence>

This report describes transitional jobs models, reviews their effectiveness, and provides suggestions for program design and research. Transitional jobs programs provide temporary, wage-paying jobs, support services, and placement for hard-to-employ populations to help prepare them for unsubsidized employment. After reviewing the evolution of transitional jobs models since the 1980s, the author discusses design, implementation, and impacts of current transitional jobs models. The author also makes several recommendations to improve transitional jobs models, such as improving long-term job retention, providing incentives for participants to transition into regular full-time jobs, providing more opportunities for occupational skills training, and testing the potential of models that directly place individuals into regular unsubsidized jobs.