

Transitional Jobs Programs Break Through Barriers to Work

A paycheck is the best alternative to a welfare check. Transitional jobs programs provide that paycheck for welfare recipients who need the most assistance leaving welfare for work. Transitional jobs programs place participants in short-term, publicly subsidized jobs that combine real work, skill development, and support services to help participants overcome barriers to employment.

In programs across the country, workers in transitional jobs programs earn between \$5.15 and \$8 per hour and work between 20 to 35 hours per week for three months to a year. Between 39 and 82 percent of people who enroll complete the program, and the majority of participants who finish the program—81 to 94 percent—go on to find unsubsidized employment averaging \$7 to \$10 per hour to start.

Transitional jobs programs across the country serve a range of people, including welfare recipients, at-risk youth, refugees, and disabled workers. In programs serving welfare recipients, participants typically have been unable to find work through job search activities.

Most participants have little, if any, work experience and minimal

education and have often spent years on public assistance. The majority have a range of significant, multiple, and often severe employment barriers, such as depression or a learning disability, unstable housing, or no transportation. All of these barriers have prevented them from securing stable, unsubsidized employment. Despite serving participants with these barriers, transitional jobs programs have successfully helped people prepare for and find jobs.

A review of transitional jobs programs throughout the country reveals target populations with severe and multiple barriers to employment:

Washington State, Community Jobs

- ◀ Three-quarters of participants have either not worked at all in the past five years, or have a highly sporadic work history.
- ◀ More than half do not have a high school diploma.
- ◀ Over 10 percent cannot read.
- ◀ One-quarter have at least one criminal conviction in their pasts.

Philadelphia, Transitional Work Corporation

- ◀ On average, participants read at a sixth-grade level and do math at a fifth-grade level.

Barriers Faced by Washington Community Jobs Program Participants (percentage of total participants)



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- ◀ Over 10 percent are not fluent in English.
- ◀ Over 25 percent have histories of substance abuse.
- ◀ Over 25 percent have at least one criminal conviction in their past.

San Francisco, Community Jobs Program

- ◀ Nearly two-thirds of the participants lack a high school diploma.
- ◀ Over 10 percent are not fluent in English.
- ◀ 7 percent had been homeless in the year before participation.
- ◀ Half the participants have been on welfare for at least four-and-a-half years when they start the program.

St. Paul, Advancement Plus

- ◀ Nearly half the program population is not fluent in English.
- ◀ Almost a quarter of all participants have had no formal

education (either in the United States or abroad).

- ◀ Three-quarters have less than a high school education.
- ◀ 40 percent have not had a job outside the home.

Georgia, GoodWorks!

- ◀ Nearly two-thirds of the participants have less than a high school education.
- ◀ Two-thirds also lack transportation.
- ◀ On average, participants have been detached from the workforce for seven to nine years.
- ◀ The majority of participants have been on welfare for at least five years when they start the program.

New York City, Center for Employment Opportunities

- ◀ All participants have a criminal background.
- ◀ Less than 30 percent of participants have a GED.

- ◀ On average, participants read and do math at a sixth-grade level.

Transitional jobs programs achieve substantial results with these hard-to-serve populations, paying off the upfront investment. In particular, they provide a direct connection to the workforce for people who have often been out of work for a long time or have never worked at all.

The results don't lie: transitional jobs programs have proven effective in moving people with barriers to work into employment.

For more information on outcomes of transitional jobs programs, see the fact sheet, "Transitional Jobs Programs Work." ■

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