The Employment Retention
and Advancement Project

Results from the Los Angeles Reach for Success Program

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Overview

This report presents implementation and two-year effectiveness results for the Reach for Success (RFS) program, operated by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). RFS offered individualized and flexible case management services to recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance benefits — primarily, single mothers who were working at least 32 hours per week but earned too little to leave assistance. DPSS administrators designed RFS with the goal of helping individuals retain their employment and secure better jobs, and it sought to meet this goal by increasing the availability and improving the quality of case management services, relative to services offered as part of the agency's existing postemployment services (PES) program. Participation in services in either program was voluntary. RFS operated from March 2002 to June 2005 in three regions in the county.

RFS is one of 16 innovative models across the country being evaluated as part of the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project under contract to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, with additional funding from the U.S. Department of Labor. The evaluation of RFS uses a random assignment research design, whereby eligible individuals were assigned, through a lottery-like process, to one of two groups. Those assigned to the RFS group were actively recruited to participate in services and were offered personalized case management. Those assigned to the control group were eligible to request, on their own initiative, services from the county's existing postemployment program. The report's findings thus indicate whether Los Angeles's new RFS program was more effective than its existing approach to providing postemployment services.

Key Findings

- **Concerted outreach, customer service, flexibility, and individualized attention were what primarily distinguished RFS services from regular PES services; fewer clients than expected, however, received RFS's work-based services.** RFS case managers vigorously marketed RFS services to prospective clients — including work-based services such as assistance with career assessment, addressing life crises that might interfere with work, and negotiating on-the-job issues, as well as assistance in accessing work supports. Although case managers initially were able to engage clients, they had difficulty keeping them engaged. Moreover, relatively few clients received RFS work-based employment retention and advancement services, which had been intended as central to the RFS program. Instead, clients were more likely to receive help with work supports, such as child care, and to participate in job search activities after the loss of a job, as many quickly lost their jobs and had to find new ones. In contrast with the self-directed take-up of services among those who were eligible for PES, the RFS program did not result in a much higher proportion of individuals receiving services.

- **Over two years, RFS did not lead to greater employment or higher earnings than PES did.** RFS led to a 2.4 percentage point increase relative to PES in the likelihood of working four consecutive quarters during follow-up Year 1 but not during Year 2. Otherwise, over the two-year follow-up period, RFS and PES group members were employed for similar numbers of quarters (five, on average) and earned about the same amount during each year.

MDRC will continue to track the employment paths of both the RFS and the PES group and will present longer-term results in the future.

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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.

Executive Summary

This report presents implementation and two-year impact results for the Los Angeles Reach for Success (RFS) program, which provided individualized and flexible case management services to working welfare recipients. The study of RFS is part of the national Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project. 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 ERA project is testing 16 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. MDRC — a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization — is conducting the ERA project under contract to ACF and is producing a similar interim report for each site in the project.

The RFS program, which began operations in March 2002, offered services to recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance benefits who were working at least 32 hours per week. RFS was designed to help participants — almost all single mothers — retain their employment and secure better jobs. The program, in which individuals could voluntarily participate, was operated by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) as part of its larger employment program for welfare recipients, called "Greater Avenues for Independence" (GAIN). RFS operated in three of seven GAIN administrative regions in the county.

The impact results included in this report compare RFS's effects on employment stability, earnings, advancement, and welfare receipt with the effects of existing postemployment services (PES) provided by DPSS. The findings thus shed light on the relative effectiveness of two different approaches to providing postemployment services. The report's two-year results are not the final word on the program's effects; MDRC will ultimately track employment and earnings outcomes for the study's participants for over three years.

The ERA Project

Although much is known about how to help welfare recipients find jobs, little is known about how to help them and other low-wage workers keep jobs or advance in the labor market. Previously studied postemployment programs were not found to improve participants' outcomes. The ERA project was designed to build on past efforts and identify and test innovative programs designed to promote employment stability and wage progression among welfare recipients or other low-income groups. From 2000 to 2003, 16 ERA tests were launched in eight states, including one examining Los Angeles's RFS program.

The evaluation design is similar in most of the project sites. Individuals who meet the ERA eligibility criteria, which vary by site, are assigned at random to a program group, usually called the ERA group, or to a control group. Members of the ERA group are recruited for (and, in some sites, required to participate in) the ERA program, while those in the control group are not eligible for ERA services but are eligible for other services and supports available in the community. MDRC is tracking both research groups over time. The random assignment process ensures that there are no systematic differences in sample members' characteristics, measured and unmeasured, between the two research groups. Thus, any differences between them that emerge over time — for example, in employment rates or average earnings — can be attributed to the ERA program; such differences are known as the "impacts" of the program.

Origin and Goals of the Los Angeles RFS Program

California's relatively high welfare grant levels and generous welfare grant earnings disregard (the amount of earnings that does not count when calculating a monthly welfare grant) allows many Los Angeles County welfare recipients to work full time and still remain eligible for a cash grant. As part of what was called "the PES program," the county agency provided some services to welfare recipients working full time who voluntarily asked for assistance: case management services, a minimal level of career assessment, and support for education and training.

The leadership within the Los Angeles County DPSS was interested in knowing whether a more customized and more comprehensive set of services would produce better results than the existing PES program. Thus, they designed the RFS program in ways that they believed would increase participation in retention and advancement services beyond the levels achieved by the existing PES program. These design differences included providing more aggressive marketing and outreach, paired with intensive case management that would be more flexible and client-driven. Services included coaching on job retention issues, career counseling and assessment, and providing assistance in pursuing both work-based and education-focused strategies for advancement.

In each of the three regions that operated RFS, program services were delivered by a team of five to six case managers, a job developer, and a unit supervisor. The case managers, who were responsible for marketing RFS to clients and delivering the bulk of the services, carried caseloads ranging from 40 to 85 clients, with caseloads varying across case managers, across regions, and over time. In contrast, PES case managers had caseloads of about 120. The smaller RFS caseloads were intended to allow RFS case managers to deliver more intensive and more individualized services. Individuals were eligible for RFS (or for PES) services for as long as they were receiving TANF but not for longer than one year. (About one-third of all those who were eligible left TANF within a year.)

The Los Angeles RFS Evaluation Design

As in the other ERA sites, a random assignment research design was used to assess the effectiveness of Los Angeles's RFS program relative to its existing PES program. Starting at the end of July 2002 and continuing until June 2004, the management information system for the GAIN program identified those who met the study eligibility criteria — single-parent welfare recipients residing in GAIN Regions 1, 5, or 6 who were working at least 32 hours per week — and randomly assigned half of them to the RFS group and half of them to the PES group. Those who were assigned to the RFS group were sent a letter informing them of RFS services, and attempts would be made to recruit them into the RFS program; those who were assigned to the PES group were sent a letter informing them of the availability of the existing PES services and of their eligibility to volunteer to receive them.

This report analyzes all the individuals who were randomly assigned as part of the study: 5,412 single parents — 2,710 of whom were assigned to the RFS group and 2,702 of whom were assigned to the PES group. MDRC is tracking both groups using data that show each individual's quarterly earnings in jobs covered by the California unemployment insurance (UI) system and their monthly welfare and food stamp benefits. Two years of follow-up data, starting with each sample member's date of random assignment, are available for this report. In addition, data are available from a survey administered to a subset of RFS and PES group members about one year after they entered the study.

Key Findings on Program Implementation and Participation

The report's findings on how RFS was implemented and the extent to which RFS and PES group members participated in retention, reemployment, and advancement services are based on interviews with RFS and PES staff, observations of interactions between case managers and clients, reviews of case files, a time study of case managers, and client survey data. Key findings are presented below.

- **Customer service, flexibility, and individualized attention were distinguishing features of the services provided by RFS. While RFS staff delivered work-based retention and advancement services, helping individuals become reemployed took up a larger share of staff time than originally anticipated, due to program participants' high levels of job loss.**

Customer service, flexibility, and individualized attention were what primarily distinguished RFS services from regular PES services. With smaller caseloads, RFS case managers went outside traditional protocol and scheduled meetings with clients outside regular business

hours, held meetings in places that were convenient to clients, and got to know clients' personal situations and characteristics in depth.

Retention services were focused primarily on helping clients effectively access work supports (primarily child care and transportation), address life crises that might interfere with work (such as housing problems), and negotiate work-related issues that could affect job performance (often revolving around the "soft skills," such as interpersonal and communication skills, needed to be a good employee). RFS advancement services were individualized according to clients' needs and levels of motivation. Staff typically did not dissuade clients who already had career goals, and, in such a situation, case managers often served more as listeners and encouragers than as career counselors. Case managers worked with clients using both work-based strategies (for example, providing coaching on how to ask for a raise or promotion in the current job) and education-focused strategies (for example, making referrals to training programs). In general, interviews, observations, and case file reviews indicated that RFS case managers found it difficult to guide clients in strategizing about how to advance, and they struggled to implement the advancement component of the program.

Quick and frequent job losses among clients caused staff to spend less time on planned retention and advancement work and more time on reemployment activities. RFS job developers, for example, spent much of their time helping unemployed RFS clients quickly find new jobs and very little of their time helping employed clients find better jobs. Although the demand for reemployment assistance took time away from staff's planned activities, reemployment help sometimes served the program's retention and advancement goals: to the extent possible, case managers and job developers generally worked with clients following job loss to help them find a job that they would be more likely to retain because it was suited to their interests or had a better schedule or to help them find a job that had higher pay or better benefits than their previous job.

- **Operating a retention and advancement program within a large welfare agency that was focused on moving individuals quickly into jobs posed implementation challenges.**

Interviews with RFS staff members indicated that there were difficulties in operating RFS as a separate "program within a program" within DPSS. Staff reported their belief that some RFS group members may not have wanted continued contact with a program they associated with DPSS's mandatory and enforcement-oriented preemployment program — a program that they recently would have exited when they found jobs. In addition, some case managers reported that they would have appreciated more institutional support for the goals of their particular program.

- **RFS case managers were able initially to engage clients in the program, but securing ongoing engagement with a majority of those in their caseload was much more difficult. As a result, case managers were more likely to work with clients who responded to offers of assistance.**

RFS case managers tried to make immediate contact following a client's random assignment to RFS, and they used different methods to recruit clients into the program for an initial meeting. They were flexible about meeting times and places and also were persistent. In their marketing messages to clients, case managers tended to emphasize that participation in RFS services was voluntary, that services were tailored to each client, and that advancement could help clients better provide for their children. This marketing resulted in approximately three-quarters of those randomly assigned to RFS attending an initial program meeting, and almost all of these clients ended the meeting with a written plan outlining the steps that they would take to pursue career advancement.

Following the initial program meeting, however, participation often tapered off. RFS staff attempted to contact clients roughly once per month, usually by telephone, and more frequently for clients who were unemployed or facing a work or personal crisis. Case managers prioritized those who were unemployed or those who needed extra encouragement and support in order to pursue advancement.

- **Low proportions of welfare recipients assigned to the RFS program reported that they received work-based employment retention and advancement services. Moreover, the RFS program led to only small increases in the use of these services, compared with the PES program.**

According to client reports in survey data, only 22 percent of RFS group members received help with work-based employment retention and advancement, that is, assistance that was not help with work supports or help finding a job. Most commonly, this help was reported to be in the form of career assessment. RFS group members were more likely to receive help (from any program or agency) with work supports than with other types of retention and advancement help: overall, 62 percent of RFS group members reported receiving help with maintaining their eligibility for Medicaid (called "Medi-Cal" in California) or food stamps, and 59 percent reported receiving assistance with child care or transportation in the year following random assignment. A little more than one-quarter reported receiving help finding a new job.

RFS clients were only slightly more likely to report receiving these different kinds of help than their counterparts in the PES (control) group. The smallest difference in receipt of assistance between the two groups was in the area of retention and advancement services: reported rates of receiving help with career advancement, with finding a better job while working, or with dealing with problems on the job were only 4 percentage points higher in the

RFS group than in the PES group. The percentage of individuals who reported that they received help with Medicaid, food stamps, or child care or transportation or help finding a new job was 6 to 7 percentage points higher in the RFS group than in the PES group.

Thus, although available services were marketed more to those in the RFS group than to those in the PES group, and although the services offered were more flexible and more tailored, the proportion of clients reporting that they received services was not much higher in RFS than in PES. Keep in mind that participation in either RFS or PES services was voluntary.

Key Findings on Program Impacts

Table ES.1 and Figure ES.1 summarize the impact of Los Angeles's RFS program on employment and earnings, relative to the regular services provided through the PES program, during a two-year follow-up period. These results are based only on UI earnings data and thus do not reflect employment not covered by UI, such as self-employment, federal and military jobs, informal work, and out-of-state employment. Differences between the RFS and PES groups that are marked with asterisks are statistically significant, which means that it is unlikely for differences of such magnitude to occur by chance. The key findings from the impact analysis are presented below.

- **During follow-up Year 1, the RFS program led to a small increase in employment retention relative to the PES program, but impacts were not sustained in Year 2.**

Few impacts on employment and earnings for the full RFS research sample are apparent. During Years 1 and 2, RFS and PES group members had very similar patterns of employment and earnings. Each group worked for about the same number of quarters and earned about the same amount during each year of follow-up. During Year 1, the RFS model led to a small increase (of 2.4 percentage points) above the PES group level on one measure of employment retention: working during four consecutive quarters. It appears that much of this increase resulted from RFS group members staying longer at their initial jobs.

Members of both groups were equally likely to experience advancement, as measured by earning $10,000 or more during Year 2.[1] Finally, a similar percentage of RFS and PES group members worked during the final quarter of Year 2, and both groups received about the same

[1]Earnings greater than or equal to $10,000 per year was used as an indicator of advancement 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.

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Table ES.1

Years 1-2, Impacts on Employment and Earnings

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Years 1-2				
Ever employed (%)	89.2	88.5	0.6	0.429
Average quarterly employment (%)	64.6	64.8	-0.2	0.816
Number of quarters employed	5.2	5.2	0.0	0.810
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	61.5	61.5	0.0	0.990
Total earnings ($)	18,470	18,479	-9	0.983
Earned over $20,000 (%)	39.9	40.6	-0.8	0.541
Year 1				
Ever employed (%)	84.5	84.1	0.4	0.668
Employed in last quarter of Year 1 (%)	64.6	63.5	1.1	0.374
Average quarterly employment (%)	67.8	67.2	0.5	0.573
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	50.2	47.8	2.4 *	0.058
Total earnings ($)	9,017	8,911	106	0.606
Earned over $10,000 (%)	41.6	40.6	1.1	0.386
Year 2				
Ever employed (%)	75.3	76.3	-1.0	0.369
Employed in last quarter of Year 2 (%)	60.4	62.4	-2.1	0.107
Average quarterly employment (%)	61.4	62.3	-1.0	0.372
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	46.7	47.5	-0.8	0.534
Total earnings ($)	9,453	9,568	-115	0.650
Earned over $10,000 (%)	40.9	42.5	-1.6	0.210
Sample size (total = 5,412)	2,710	2,702		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) records from the State of California.

NOTES: See the last page of the Executive Summary.

amount in quarterly earnings. These findings suggest that it is unlikely that the RFS approach will lead to employment and earnings gains, relative to the PES approach, in later years.

- **RFS led to small increases, relative to PES, in the receipt of public assistance during Years 1 and 2.**

When they were randomly assigned as part of the study, all sample members were receiving welfare benefits, and nearly all PES and RFS group members were receiving food

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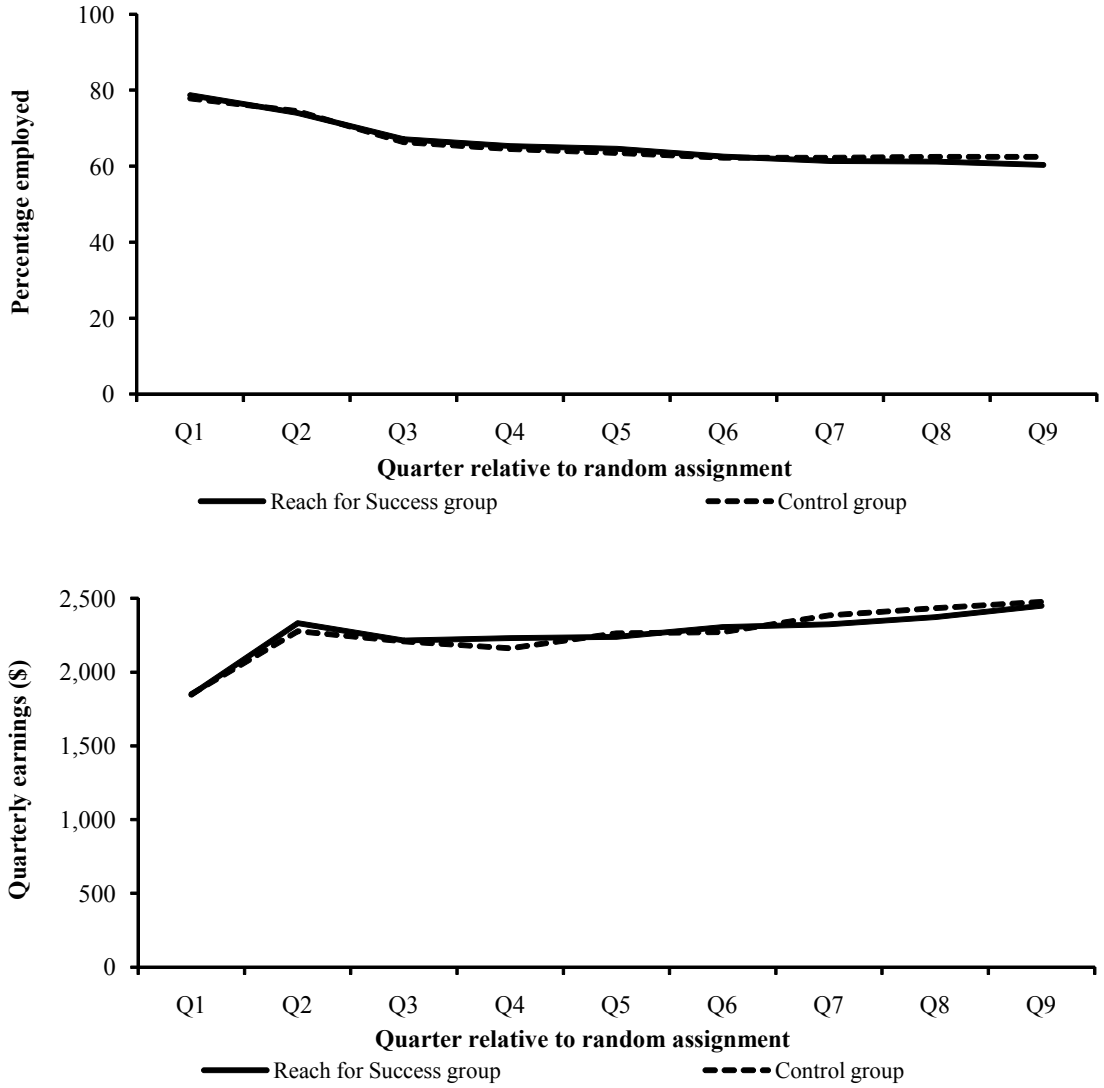
Figure ES.1

Impacts of the RFS Strategy on Employment and Earnings Over Time

Los Angeles Reach for Success



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) records from the State of California.

NOTES: See the last page of the Executive Summary.

stamps (93 percent and 94 percent, respectively). Table ES.2 shows that RFS led to a small but persistent increase (averaging about 2 to 3 percentage points per quarter) relative to the PES group in the incidence of welfare and food stamp receipt during the follow-up period. By the final quarter of the year following random assignment (Quarter 5), about 64 percent of the PES group received welfare benefits, and a similar proportion received food stamps; the receipt rate was slightly higher for the RFS group (Appendix Tables E.2 and E.3). Welfare receipt rates declined more slowly during the second year of follow-up — to 49 percent of the PES group and 52 percent of the RFS group at the end of that year. Most sample members in both research groups ceased to receive food stamps when they left TANF. About 54 percent of PES group members and 57 percent of RFS group members received food stamps in Quarter 9, the final quarter of Year 2.

The public assistance impacts occurred mostly during Year 2 of follow-up. Starting in Quarter 7, the average welfare payment received by RFS group members was about $40 more per quarter than their PES counterparts received, which suggests that the increase in welfare payments relative to the PES group will continue during Year 3. In contrast, RFS did not lead to higher average food stamp payments, relative to PES, at any time during the follow-up.

- **Year 1 gains in employment retention and earnings were found for the subgroup of those who had recent employment prior to random assignment. These impacts diminished after the beginning of Year 2, however.**

In theory, individuals with a greater track record of employment are at less risk of job loss than those newly in jobs, and they may be more ready to benefit from services promoting career advancement. In fact, sample members with recent employment did fare better in the labor market during the follow-up period: PES (control) group members who had employment in the quarter *prior to* random assignment earned about $5,000 more during Years 1 and 2 after random assignment than PES group members who were without recent employment. Looking only at the subgroup of those with recent employment, RFS group members earned, on average, $1,056 (or 5 percent) more over two years, compared with PES (control) group members. For this subgroup, RFS also led to a small (3 percentage point) increase relative to PES on one measure of employment retention: employment for at least four consecutive quarters. Impacts on employment and earnings for the subgroup with recent employment were not sustained, however; they peaked around the beginning of Year 2 and diminished thereafter. No comparable effects were found for the subgroup without recent employment. (Differences in impacts between the two subgroups are statistically significant; results are not shown in tables.)

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Table ES.2

Years 1-2, Impacts on Public Assistance, Employment and TANF Receipt, and Income

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Years 1-2				
Number of months receiving TANF	14.7	14.2	0.5 **	0.040
Amount of TANF received ($)	7,471	7,249	222	0.110
Number of months receiving food stamps	15.5	15.1	0.4	0.102
Amount of food stamps received ($)	4,322	4,229	93	0.206
Total measured income[a] ($)	30,264	29,957	306	0.409
Quarter 9				
Ever received TANF (%)	51.9	48.9	2.9 **	0.026
Amount of TANF received ($)	743	703	41 *	0.071
Ever received food stamps (%)	56.9	54.2	2.7 **	0.040
Amount of food stamps received ($)	510	495	15	0.283
Employed and not receiving TANF (%)	33.4	36.5	-3.1 **	0.014
Employed and receiving TANF (%)	27.0	26.0	1.0	0.385
Not employed and receiving TANF (%)	24.9	23.0	1.9 *	0.092
Not employed and not receiving TANF (%)	14.8	14.6	0.2	0.872
Sample size (total = 5,412)	2,710	2,702		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from administrative records.

NOTES: See the last page of the Executive Summary.
[a]This measure represents the sum of UI earnings, TANF, and food stamps.

Conclusions

The RFS program differed from the existing PES program in its smaller caseloads, proactive and aggressive marketing of postemployment services, and greater flexibility in tailoring services to meet the needs of employed welfare recipients. Participation differences between the two programs were greatest during the first months after random assignment, when RFS case managers initially engaged a large portion of their caseload, but these differences then diminished over time. Case managers reported difficulty in sustaining engagement among many RFS members — a situation that has been encountered in many of the models studied in the

ERA project. RFS case managers thus tended to work primarily with those who more readily accepted the offer of help and services.

In the absence of RFS, as measured by the PES group, about the same number of individuals sought out postemployment services and supports through PES, on their own, or from agencies within and outside DPSS. The resulting overall difference in service receipt between the two research groups was small.

When the RFS model was being developed, DPSS administrators and staff member believed that relatively few employed welfare recipients sought postemployment services and supports through the reactive, limited PES program or through other resources in the county. Thus, given the marketing, outreach, and flexibility of the RFS program, the small difference in service receipt between the RFS and PES groups is surprising.

DPSS had only recently created the RFS program when the evaluation began. As might be expected when operating a new program using existing staff, case managers needed to shift their emphases and learn new skills, inasmuch as the tasks and client-staff interactions that are focused on encouraging low-income workers to advance in the labor market are different from the tasks and interactions focused on helping people to quickly find jobs. More protocols, training, or staff performance benchmarks in these new aspects of case management might have strengthened the program.

Suggested Lessons

Field research done as part of the RFS test as well as findings from the evaluation of other ERA models suggest additional hypotheses that might explain why the RFS model did not achieve more sustained or broad-based gains in employment and earnings. It is possible that single parents found it difficult to set aside time to talk regularly with case managers while working and attending to family responsibilities. It is also possible that individuals who were already working may not have seen the offered services as valuable or may not have understood how the services could have benefited them. Some individuals simply may not have been ready for such services until they had had more time in the labor market or in a particular job. Some may not have wanted ongoing engagement — beyond what was required — with a public assistance program. Data that might conclusively support or refute these hypotheses are not available.

In general, the findings from the evaluation of the RFS model and other ERA models suggest that more consideration is needed of the types of strategies that can support and encourage the engagement of low-income workers in services. In addition, more consideration is

needed of the range of services, and their timing, that are seen as potentially helpful from the point of view of low-income workers.

* * *

In the remainder of the ERA evaluation, the project will examine the longer-term employment paths of the low-wage workers in the RFS study and in the ERA study as a whole, and it will explore whether the programs produced other types of changes — such as wage increases, work-hour increases, better working conditions, and improved work schedules and work/life balances. In addition, the study will compare the costs of selected ERA models with their benefits. Much more will be learned through the ERA project about the effects of services and supports that might help low-income adults remain and advance in the labor market.

Notes for the Exhibits in the Executive Summary

This exhibit includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the California unemployment insurance (UI) program. It does not include employment outside California 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.

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

"Year 1" refers to Quarters 2 to 5. Quarter 1 is the quarter in which random assignment took place.

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

Acknowledgments

The Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) evaluation would not be 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 Los Angeles County ERA program, called "Reach for Success (RFS)," the following individuals deserve special thanks.

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Finally, we extend our deep appreciation to the thousands of Los Angeles RFS study sample members whose program and employment experiences will contribute to the policy world's knowledge of the challenges faced by working recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) as they strive to improve their lives.

The Authors

Introduction

This report presents interim results for the Los Angeles Reach for Success (RFS) program, which was studied as part of the national Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project. 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 ERA project is testing innovative programs across the country that aim to promote steady work and career advancement for current and former welfare recipients and other low-wage workers. MDRC — a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization — is conducting the ERA project under contract to ACF and is producing a similar interim report for each site in the project.

The Los Angeles Reach for Success program, which began operations in March 2002, targeted welfare recipients who were working at least 32 hours per week. The RFS program was designed to help single mothers retain their employment and secure better jobs through a more flexible and more customized service delivery approach than the existing postemployment services (PES) program. The program was operated by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) as part of its larger employment program for welfare recipients, called "Greater Avenues for Independence" (GAIN). Notwithstanding the availability of postemployment services through the PES component, most GAIN staff and resources were focused on preemployment services. Similarly, the postemployment services that were provided through RFS were only a small part of the much larger GAIN program. RFS operated in three of the seven GAIN administrative regions.

This section provides background information on the national ERA project, the Los Angeles RFS program, and the research design of the evaluation.

Overview of the National ERA Project

For over a decade, policymakers and program operators have struggled to learn what kinds of services, supports, and incentives are best able to help low-income working parents retain steady employment and move up to better jobs. This issue has assumed even greater urgency in the wake of the 1990s welfare reforms, which made long-term welfare receipt much less feasible for families. Despite many efforts, scant evidence exists about effective strategies to promote employment retention and advancement. Previously evaluated programs that were aimed at improving retention or advancement — notably, the ones in the Post-Employment Services Demonstration (PESD), a four-site project that tested programs that provided follow-up case management to welfare recipients who found jobs — generally failed to improve employment outcomes.

The ERA project was designed to improve on former efforts in this area by building on past lessons and identifying and testing innovative models designed to promote employment stability and wage progression among welfare recipients and other low-income groups. The project began in 1998, when the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued planning grants to 13 states to develop new programs. The following year, HHS selected MDRC to conduct an evaluation of innovative programs, and thus began the ERA project.[1] From 2000 to 2003, MDRC and its subcontractor, The Lewin Group, worked closely with the states that had received planning grants, and with several other states, to mount tests of ERA programs. MDRC, Lewin, and Cygnet Associates also provided extensive technical assistance to some of the states and program operators, since most were starting the project from scratch, with no proven models on which to build.

Ultimately, a total of 16 ERA tests (two of which were in Los Angeles) were implemented in eight states. Almost all the programs targeted current or former recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) — the cash welfare program that mainly serves single mothers and their children — but the program models are very diverse. One group of programs targeted low-wage workers and focused primarily on advancement. Another group targeted individuals who are considered "hard to employ" and primarily aimed to place them in stable jobs. Finally, a third group of programs had mixed retention and advancement goals and targeted a diverse set of populations, including former TANF recipients, TANF applicants, and low-wage workers in particular firms. Some of the program models initiated services before individuals went to work, while others began services after employment. Appendix Table A.1 describes each of the ERA models and identifies its goals and target populations.

The evaluation design is similar for most of the ERA tests. Individuals who met ERA eligibility criteria (which varied from model to model) were assigned, at random, either to the program group (in this case, to the RFS program) or to a control group (in this case, to a less intensive postemployment services program, referred to here as "PES"). Members of the program group in each ERA test were eligible for the services offered through the ERA model, whereas members of the control group were not eligible for ERA services but were eligible for other services and supports available in the community. (The extent and nature of the control group's services and supports varied across the ERA sites.) Because of random assignment, any differences in outcomes between the program and control groups in each test during the follow-up period can be confidently attributed to the ERA program, rather than to differences in people's characteristics that might affect the outcomes of interest.

[1]The U.S. Department of Labor has also provided funding to support the ERA project.

The Los Angeles Reach for Success Program

Origins and Goals of the RFS Program

The Los Angeles Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) designed the Reach for Success program to help working welfare recipients keep their jobs and ultimately advance into higher-wage employment leading to self-sufficiency. Under GAIN — California's welfare-to-work program — clients are required to work full time (32 hours per week) in order to receive benefits, unless they are otherwise exempt. However, because of the relatively high grant levels and generous earnings disregards in California,[2] many clients who obtain full-time work are still eligible for a cash grant. In the late 1990s, DPSS initiated a number of small-scale postemployment services to help these clients sustain employment and increase their earnings in order ultimately to move off welfare. Participation in these services was voluntary, and clients had to maintain a full-time work schedule in order to access them. Services included case management, a minimal level of career assessment, and support for education and training. Participation, however, was low.

Through the RFS program, county officials intended to increase participation in postemployment services beyond that achieved in existing efforts by providing more aggressive marketing and outreach than was done in the existing postemployment program, paired with intensive case management that was more flexible and more client-driven than in the existing postemployment program. In addition, services were slated to include coaching on job retention issues, in-depth career counseling and assessment, and assistance in pursuing both work-based and education-focused strategies for advancement. The evaluation of RFS in Los Angeles was designed to test the effectiveness of this new model for providing postemployment services, in comparison with existing services, which were less marketed, less intensive, less individualized, and less flexible. Table 1 compares the RFS model and regular postemployment services (PES).

Characteristics of the RFS Program Setting

The RFS model was funded and operated by DPSS in three of the seven GAIN administrative regions: Regions 1, 5, and 6. Region 1 is located in the western part of Los Angeles County and in the neighborhoods surrounding Los Angeles International Airport (LAX); Region 5 includes most of South Central Los Angeles, including Compton; and Region 6 includes the neighborhood of East Los Angeles and its surrounding areas.

[2]The earnings disregard is the amount or proportion of earnings that is not counted when calculating the size of the welfare grant. The earnings disregard creates a greater incentive to work by allowing welfare recipients to keep a larger portion of their welfare check when they find a job.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Table 1

The Reach for Success (RFS) Model Compared with Regular Postemployment Services (PES)

	Reach for Success (Program Group)	Regular Postemployment Services (Control Group)
Program Goal	To provide assistance with rapid reemployment, work supports, job retention, education and training, and work-based strategies for advancement	To provide work supports and, when requested by clients, to support them to participate in education and training
Message	Services were marketed and were flexible and tailored to clients' needs and career goals	Services were not marketed and were less flexible and less individualized
Staffing Design	RFS units included 5 to 6 case managers and an RFS-dedicated job developer for rapid reemployment services.	PES units included 5 to 6 case managers; job developers were available through the GAIN program to provide reemployment services.
Employer Involvement	Job developers had contact with employers mostly for the purposes of helping develop job leads for clients who had lost their jobs.	Job developers had little contact with employers.
Caseload Size	40 to 85 cases	100 to 120 cases
Customer Contact	Average of once per month, after early months of program entry	Average of once per quarter
Reemployment Services	Clients worked with a job developer for 30 days to find a new job with potential for better wages, benefits, or career prospects; clients who had promising job prospects after 30 days would be given more time to look for a job before being sent to a GAIN job club.	Clients worked with a job developer for 30 days, looking for any type of job; if they were unsuccessful in finding a job, they were sent to a GAIN job club.
Job Retention Services	Case managers coached clients on job retention issues (such as managing job responsibilities and negotiating interpersonal relationships) and provided assistance in obtaining work supports, such as child care and transportation.	Very few job retention services were provided other than work supports, such as child care and transportation.
Career Advancement Services	Services were flexible, depending on the needs and interests of clients, and could include both work-based and education and training strategies.	Services consisted primarily of support for education and training, when requested by clients.

Los Angeles County is the most populated county in the nation and one of the largest by area. The City of Los Angeles accounts for almost 40 percent of the county's population.[3] The county's population increased steadily throughout the sample intake period for the study, growing from 9,817,400 in 2002 to 10,107,451 in 2004.[4]

The county has a diversity of industries. The top industries, based on 2005 employment data, are international trade, tourism, motion-picture production, technology, and business and professional services.[5] Major industry types vary by GAIN region. Predominate industries in GAIN Region 1 are diverse, ranging from professional and business services, leisure and hospitality, and education and health services on the western side of Los Angeles County (which includes the cities of Beverly Hills, Culver City, Malibu, Santa Monica, West Hollywood, and the western portion of Los Angeles)[6] to government sector employment in downtown Los Angeles.[7] In addition, GAIN Region 1 includes South Los Angeles County (portions of Los Angeles and Inglewood) — a primarily residential area with some apparel and textile manufacturing jobs as well as health care jobs.[8] Manufacturing is a major industry in GAIN Region 5, but retail is a major employment sector in the cities of Carson, Lomita, and Torrance, and health care is a major employment industry in Long Beach.[9] In GAIN Region 6,[10] manufacturing is the predominate industry in the North Gateway Region, which includes the cities of Commerce and Vernon.[11]

Countywide, the unemployment rate decreased slightly during the sample intake period for this study, declining from 7.4 percent in 2002 to 6.9 percent in 2004.[12] Unemployment rates differed by region, however. In 2002, at the beginning of the study period, weighted average unemployment rates[13] were 5.3 percent in Region 1, 7.9 percent in Region 2, and 5.8 percent in Region 6. By the end of study sample intake, in 2004, regional unemployment rates had decreased slightly, to 5.1 percent in Region 1, 7.6 percent in Region 5, and 5.5 percent in Region 6.[14]

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[3]Los Angeles County (2006).

[4]California Employment Development Department (2006).

[5]Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (2006).

[6]Kyser (2005).

[7]Kyser (2004a).

[8]Kyser (2004b).

[9]U.S. Census Bureau (2006).

[10]Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) (2006).

[11]Kyser, Ackbarali, and Sidhu (2003).

[12]California Employment Development Department (2006).

[13]Regional average unemployment rates are weighted by the labor force population in each city in the region. See Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) (2006).

[14]California Employment Development Department (2006). Regional averages were estimated across annual unemployment rates from 2002 to 2004.

TANF caseloads in Los Angeles County also declined considerably during the study period, dropping from 65,991 in June 2004 to 53,950 in June 2006.[15] California TANF grant levels averaged about $723 for a family of three from mid-2004 to mid-2006.[16] Because of California's relatively high TANF grant levels and generous earnings disregards, TANF recipients can earn a significant amount of money before becoming ineligible for this assistance. For example, in 2004 a family of three — which is the typical family size of RFS study sample members — could earn up to $1,671 per month before losing their TANF eligibility. In other words, clients could work 40 hours per week at $9.65 per hour before reaching this threshold. Moreover, at this level of monthly earnings, the net earned income of $1,560 (after taxes) was more than the 2004 federal poverty guideline of $1,306.[17] During the study period, approximately a third of all TANF single-parent case heads in Los Angeles County were employed.[18]

The RFS Target Population

The RFS program targeted single-parent welfare recipients in the three GAIN regions who were GAIN participants and who had been working in a full-time job of 32 hours or more for 30 days. (Individuals were generally identified as eligible once their employment was added to the welfare management information system.) Table 2 presents selected characteristics of single-parent sample members — in both the program and the control group — at baseline.

Almost all the sample members are women. On study entry, the average sample member was 31 years old and had two children. Most spoke English, although a significant minority (13 percent) spoke Spanish as their primary language. Around half did not have a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, and around one-third had received welfare for three years or more in their lifetime. Ten percent of all sample members were holding two jobs at study entry. Sample members were fairly evenly divided among the three GAIN regions, although Region 5 had a slightly higher share than the other two regions.

About the RFS Evaluation

The evaluation of Reach for Success uses a random assignment design to measure the impact of the program. Random assignment is the most rigorous methodology available to test the effectiveness of service interventions. As described above, by randomly assigning eligible individuals either to the RFS program group, which received the new services, or to the control

[15]California Department of Social Services (2006g).

[16]California Department of Social Services (2006a, 2006b, 2006c).

[17]California Department of Social Services (2006d) contains the CalWORKs income disregard regulations; California Department of Social Services Web site (2006f).

[18]California Department of Social Services (2006e).

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Table 2

Selected Characteristics of Single-Parent Sample Members at Baseline

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Characteristic	Total
Characteristics recorded at random assignment	
Gender (%)	
Female	94.4
Male	5.6
Age (%)	
20 or younger	6.1
21 to 30	48.6
31 to 40	30.8
41 or older	14.4
Average age (years)	30.9
Race/ethnicity (%)	
Hispanic	40.4
Black, non-Hispanic	51.0
White, non-Hispanic	5.2
Other	3.5
Primary language (%)	
Spanish	12.6
English	87.4
Marital status (%)	
Never married	74.2
Married, living together	3.5
Married, separated	16.2
Widowed	0.6
Divorced	5.4
Number of children[a] in household (%)	
None	0.1
1	35.8
2	29.1
3 or more	35.1
Average number of children	2.3
Age of youngest child in household (%)	
2 or younger	40.1
3 to 5	25.2
6 or older	34.7

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Characteristic	Total
Location (%)	
Region 1	31.1
Region 5	41.1
Region 6	27.8
Currently employed (%)	98.1
Number of jobs at random assignment (%)	
None	1.9
1 job	87.5
2 jobs	10.1
3 jobs	0.5
Hours worked per week (%)	
Fewer than 32 hours	1.4
32 or more hours	98.6
Average hours per week	38.4
Hourly wages (%)	
Less than $6.75	0.2
$6.75 - $6.99	31.7
$7.00 - $9.99	55.0
$10.00 or more	13.2
Average hourly wage ($)	8.02
Characteristics recorded at most recent appraisal[b]	
Limited English ability (%)	11.2
Education (%)	
General Educational Development (GED) certificate	4.9
High school diploma	40.7
California High School Proficiency Exam (CHSPE)	0.2
Technical or associate's degree / 2-year college	2.8
4-year college (or more)	1.1
None of the above	50.2
AFDC/TANF receipt (%)	
None (in the past 5 years)	9.7
Less than 2 years (in the past 5 years)	39.2
2 years or more and less than 3 years (in the past 5 years)	17.6
3 years or more (in the past 5 years)	22.6
3 years or more (not in the past 5 years)	10.8
Sample size	5,412

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Los Angeles GEARS data.

NOTES: Both program group members and control group members are included in this table.

[a]A child is defined as a person under the age of 19 and identified as son/daughter, stepson/-daughter, adoptive son/daughter of the case heads. In cases where the relationship between the person under the age of 19 and the case head could not be determined, the person was assumed to be a child.

[b]The appraisal could take place up to one year before random assignment.

group, which received PES (existing) services, differences in outcomes that emerge between the two research groups during the follow-up period can be confidently attributed to the effects of the RFS program.

The Research Design

Research Questions

The ERA evaluation focuses on the implementation of the sites' programs and their effects, or impacts. Key questions addressed in this report include the following:

- **Implementation.** How did DPSS staff manage and execute the Reach for Success program? How did RFS staff spend their time? What services and messages did the program provide and emphasize? How was this different from the regular postemployment services provided to the control group as part of the PES program?
- **Participation.** Did RFS succeed in engaging a substantial proportion of individuals in services? What types of services did people receive? To what extent did RFS increase service levels above the levels that would normally be received, as represented by the control group's behavior?
- **Impacts.** Within the two-year follow-up period available for this report, did the RFS program increase employment and earnings, lead to employment stability and wage growth, or improve job characteristics (such as fringe benefits and advancement opportunities), compared with the PES program? Did RFS have any effects on the use of public assistance or on participants' total income?

The Random Assignment Process

Starting at the end of July 2002 and continuing until June 2004, a total of 5,412 people were randomly assigned as part of the RFS test. Individuals who met the RFS study eligibility

criteria were randomly assigned to either a group eligible for services through the Reach for Success program or a group eligible for services through the regular postemployment (PES) program, with 50 percent being assigned to each group. The data management system for the GAIN program — called "GEARS" (GAIN Employment Activity and Reporting System) — automatically initiated the random assignment process for GAIN participants in the three GAIN regions who met the eligibility criteria described above. Once individuals were randomly assigned, a letter was automatically generated and sent to people in both the program and the control group, informing them about the study and the services available to them, depending on the group to which they had been assigned. Figure 1 illustrates the random assignment process and program flow for the RFS evaluation.

The Counterfactual: What Is RFS Being Compared With?

The outcomes for individuals who were randomly assigned to the control group represent the "counterfactual" in the study; that is, their outcomes represent outcomes *in the absence of the RFS program,* because the control group members were eligible to receive only the regular postemployment services (through the PES program) that had existed before RFS. These PES services included such work supports as child care and transportation. In addition, if control group members were interested in pursuing education and training, they were provided assistance with fees as well as other supports. As discussed in the report, however, while many control group members received work supports through the PES program, very few were provided assistance related to education and training, although many of them participated in these activities on their own. In general, the control group members did not receive the same level of personalized attention from their case managers as did those who were eligible for the RFS program, as caseload sizes for case managers were much higher in the PES program than in the RFS program.

Data Sources

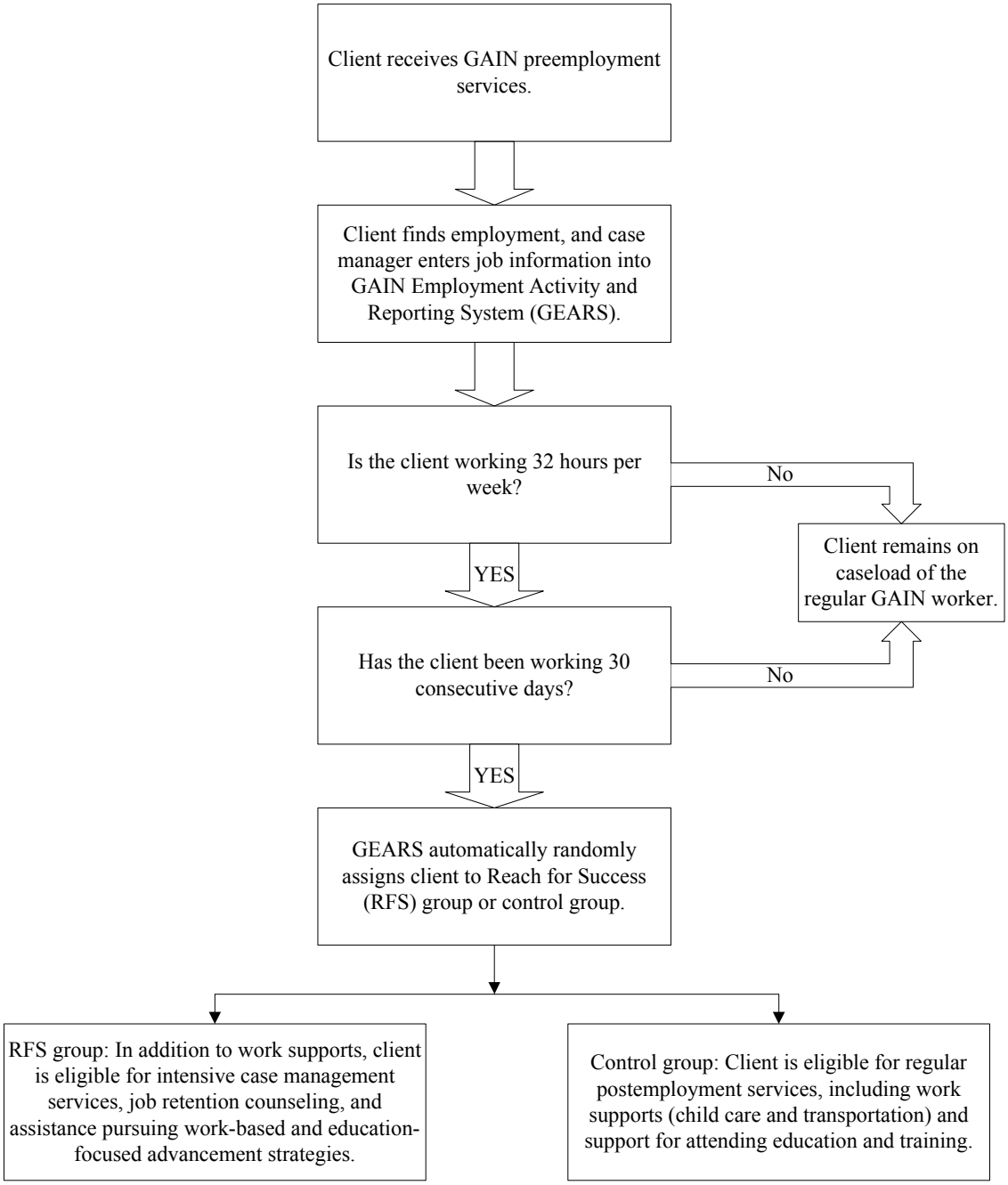
The data sources for the analyses presented in the report are described below.

Baseline Data

Data on selected demographic characteristics of sample members are available from the GEARS system. These data were used to describe the study population (as in Table 2) and to identify subgroups of sample members for which the RFS program might have been more effective or less effective.

Figure 1

Program Flow in the Los Angeles Reach for Success Study



Administrative Records

Effects on employment and earnings were computed using automated unemployment insurance (UI) wage records data, and effects on public assistance were computed using automated TANF and food stamp administrative records. Two years of follow-up data were available for all sample members when the analyses for this report were conducted.[19]

Program Implementation and Participation Data

Data on program operations were obtained from periodic interviews with RFS and PES staff and from reviews of sample members' case files. In addition, a "time study" collected information on the daily activities of RFS staff and PES staff.

The ERA 12-Month Survey

Information about sample members' participation in program services and about their employment, income, and other outcomes was gathered via the ERA 12-Month Survey, which was administered to a subset of program and control group members approximately 12 months after they were randomly assigned to a research group. The survey sample was selected from among sample members who were randomly assigned from July to December 2003, who were able to speak English or Spanish, and who were 18 years or older at their time of random assignment. MDRC randomly selected 1,150 survey-eligible sample members to be interviewed. Out of this group, 848 sample members responded to the survey, representing a response rate of 74 percent. (Appendix F presents the ERA survey response analysis for the Los Angeles Reach for Success test.)

Roadmap of the Report

This report focuses on the implementation and two-year impact findings of the Reach for Success program. The next section further describes the RFS program and its implementation. The report then provides information on the program's one-year impacts on participation and service receipt. The concluding section presents two-year program impacts on employment, earnings, job characteristics, and other outcomes.

[19]UI data for the final quarter of Year 2 were imputed for sample members randomly assigned from April 1 to June 30, 2004. Quarter 9 UI data were set equal to Quarter 8 UI data for 746 sample members, that is, for 13.8 percent of the report sample.

The Implementation of the Reach for Success Program

The Reach for Success (RFS) program was operated by the Los Angeles Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) and provided employment retention and career advancement services to welfare recipients who had obtained full-time employment. The goal was to help people stay employed and advance into better-paying jobs that would ultimately allow them to leave cash assistance and become self-sufficient.

The RFS case managers were able initially to engage individuals in the program, but securing ongoing engagement with a majority of those in their caseload was much more difficult. In general, case managers were more likely to work with individuals who were motivated to participate, and staff reported that they found it difficult to engage individuals who were less interested in pursuing advancement. Customer service and flexibility were the cornerstones of the RFS approach, and case managers supported and encouraged clients to pursue their own career goals. However, staff often lacked the skills needed to provide in-depth employment counseling to help clients assess the feasibility of those goals. In addition, staff — particularly the job developers — ended up spending more time than they anticipated providing reemployment services, because of high levels of job loss.

This section of the report describes the implementation of the RFS program. Data for this analysis come from interviews with case managers, unit supervisors, and managers; case file reviews; and a study that tracked the ways in which case managers and job developers spent their time.

The discussion also describes the structure and organization of RFS; the process for promoting initial and ongoing engagement; and the delivery of retention, reemployment, and advancement services. In addition, it describes how staff spent their time.

The section concludes by comparing the services of the RFS program with those provided to people who were assigned to the regular postemployment services (PES) program — the study's control group.

The Framework: Structure, Staffing, and Management

RFS case managers provided services only to those individuals assigned to the program group, while PES case managers served individuals assigned to the counterfactual (control) group. The control group's outcomes represent outcomes in the absence of the RFS program, because the control group members received only the regular postemployment services (through the PES program) that had existed before RFS.

Organizational Structure

Since the late 1990s, DPSS-provided postemployment services have been offered in Los Angeles County as part of the county's larger welfare-to-work program, called "Greater Avenues for Independence" (GAIN). Because of the sheer size of the GAIN program in Los Angeles, delivery of services was organized into seven regions. The RFS program operated as a pilot in three of the seven regions: GAIN Regions 1, 5, and 6.

Although DPSS did not work directly with any external partners to operate the RFS program, staff sometimes referred clients to outside agencies for services, including mental health and substance abuse treatment, domestic violence services, and housing assistance. Clients interested in training were often referred to training providers, usually providers that also worked with clients in the regular GAIN program. Once clients were referred to these programs, however, there was very little contact between the RFS staff and the provider to ensure that clients followed up on the referral or to track their progress once they enrolled in the training. Work supports such as transportation, child care, and Medicaid were provided by DPSS to all working GAIN clients whether or not they were participating in RFS.[20] Occasionally, RFS staff initiated contact with the child care resource and referral agency that administers the child care payments for DPSS — for example, if a client was having difficulty navigating the process for receiving these benefits.

Staffing Structure and Management

In each of the three regions in which the RFS program operated, a team of five to six case managers, a job developer, and a unit supervisor delivered RFS services to eligible clients. The case managers delivered the bulk of program services and carried caseloads ranging from 40 to 85 clients, with caseloads varying across case managers, regions, and over time. Job developers did not work with the same individuals over time. Rather, they worked primarily with clients who lost their jobs and less often with employed clients who were looking for a better job; this was less by design than necessity, since more clients lost their jobs than anticipated.

Although responsibilities were generally similar across case managers, there was some degree of specialization. For example, one case manager in each regional unit was assigned to work with all Spanish-speaking clients. In some of the units, certain case managers specialized by issue. For example, one of the case managers in Region 5 served all clients who had an identified domestic violence issue, because of her prior experience in this field and her knowledge of available resources in the community.

[20]Medicaid is called "Medi-Cal" in California.

The RFS unit in each region had several different levels of management. The program manager was located in the central GAIN office. Each region also had a deputy regional manager, who managed a number of different GAIN units, including the RFS unit. Finally, unit supervisors in each region were responsible for day-to-day management and supervision.

The RFS program manager had programmatic oversight over the three RFS units and was involved in making sure that the services delivered were in line with the program model and that the units initially engaged clients, maintained their ongoing participation, and involved clients in retention and advancement activities. Although case managers did not have specific performance measures, the program manager would track the proportion of all RFS-assigned clients who participated in an initial meeting, met with staff on a regular basis, participated in retention services, and enrolled in training. In addition, the program manager tracked rates of employment and the number of clients who found new jobs. The program manager met with staff from all three units once per month to review procedures, discuss strategies for engagement, help staff develop career counseling skills, and share ideas about how to work with difficult cases. The deputy regional managers mostly dealt with staffing and with political and other "bigger picture" issues as they arose, and they were less focused on the RFS program specifically.

Unit supervisors directly monitored day-to-day activities, focusing primarily on compliance with the larger GAIN program rules relating to work participation and reporting earnings. While the RFS unit supervisors spent much of their time on tasks that were similar to those of other GAIN unit supervisors, they also worked with case managers and job developers to address issues that were specific to the advancement and retention focus of the program. For example, unit supervisors had regular staff meetings in which the case managers shared their strategies for engaging clients and discussed participants' progress.

Institutional Culture

Many of the RFS case managers expressed frustration that they were not being supported within the regional GAIN offices. The RFS units were focused primarily on retention and advancement, while all the other units in the regional offices were focused on job placement. RFS staff reported that they felt resentment from other GAIN staff, who thought that the work of the RFS unit took up staff resources that otherwise could have supported the regions' larger efforts to move people into work. In many ways, the RFS program was attempting to build a smaller program within a much larger bureaucratic structure that did not have the same mission or goals. In this challenging environment, morale was boosted among RFS case managers by the fact that RFS managers actively involved them in designing and implementing the program.

Over time, however, morale decreased — in part, because of the challenges of implementing a new program and because of turnover at the unit supervisor level but also because staff reported that they often felt isolated within the GAIN office, as though they were "working in a vacuum."

Funding

Most of the RFS case managers reported that their staffing and physical resources — including their office space and computer equipment — were adequate to do their job. Over the duration of the study period, funding was stable for supportive services, including child care, transportation, Medicaid, and food stamps. While the stability of this funding was important, many case managers and supervisors wished that there had been extra money for inexpensive items that the clients needed. For example, they would have liked to be able to buy clients coffee or to have had the option of giving small incentives to encourage program engagement.[21]

Intake, Assessment, and Client Engagement

RFS case managers were very successful at initially engaging a large proportion of those assigned to the RFS group, but maintaining ongoing participation was a much bigger challenge. When case managers first met with clients, they would describe the RFS services, attempt to "sell" the benefits of participation, discuss clients' current employment situations, and develop a plan that outlined clients' career goals. These efforts, however, did not always translate to ongoing participation by clients. Whether or not clients were actively participating, case managers generally tried to check in with clients once per month after the initial meeting.

Initial Intake and Engagement

At the point that individuals were randomly assigned to a research group as part of the RFS study, the names and case files of clients randomly assigned to the RFS program group were sent to the appropriate RFS unit supervisor, who assigned each program group member to a case manager. The case managers then would attempt to contact the newly assigned individuals in order to describe the services that RFS offered and to encourage them to come in for an initial appointment. (Encouragement was needed, in that participation in RFS was voluntary.)

Case managers initially engaged a high proportion of RFS program group members. Based on a review of over 150 RFS case files conducted in the spring of 2003, 87 percent of the clients who were randomly assigned to the RFS program group were successfully contacted

[21]To pay for the food and drinks at the client "mixers" that were organized every quarter, RFS staff held fundraisers; for example, they sold candy bars and snacks to other people in their office.

(that is, the case manager was able to discuss RFS with the client); 74 percent attended an initial meeting; and 68 percent signed a written plan specifying steps toward career advancement. Nonetheless, it often took some time for case managers to convince clients to meet with them. On average, among those who eventually met with a case manager, 57 days passed between random assignment and the initial meeting.

Case managers acknowledged that getting people to agree to meet with them was often a challenge, and each case manager approached this task in a slightly different way. Some created their own marketing materials, and some met clients for coffee or lunch outside the GAIN office. Others used access to transportation benefits and other supportive services as leverage to get people to meet with them. In general, RFS staff reported that the most important strategies for fostering initial client engagement were based on making immediate contact, offering flexibility about meeting times and places, and being persistent. Case managers also reported that they believed that the "message" delivered to clients was also very important. Some case managers emphasized that services were voluntary and were tailored to fit clients' needs rather than being determined by strict program regulations. Others emphasized the positive outcomes of participation as a "hook" — particularly, that clients could earn more money and be better able to provide for their children.

The initial meeting with clients was used to explain the RFS program and the services offered. Case managers made sure that clients had access to all available supportive services, including child care and transportation. In addition, they asked clients about their current job to assess whether there were any "red flags" that would indicate a problem at work, such as not making it into work on time or having ongoing conflicts with coworkers or supervisors.

During this initial meeting, case managers also talked with clients about their education and skills, career goals, and possible advancement opportunities. Ultimately, this discussion culminated in a written plan detailing a number of different steps toward career advancement that the client and case manager would jointly pursue. As the program progressed and case managers learned more, these steps became less general and much more specific. For example, instead of a more general step like "find a job in the health care field," case managers would encourage a client to "locate two to three schools that offer training for a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) certificate." The idea behind this strategy was to help clients take concrete steps toward a larger goal without feeling overwhelmed, and to help case managers track client progress more easily.

According to case managers, clients often came to the first meeting with some skepticism about the value of the RFS services, particularly if they had had bad experiences with the GAIN program. Thus, RFS staff reported that this initial contact with clients was critical to fostering ongoing participation. Staff believed that once clients heard about the career assistance

and tangible benefits of the program, they were more motivated. One case manager said: "Once you talk with them and explain [RFS] thoroughly, they're hooked. Once they understand that they're getting help — at that point, they become more independent in their visions, and you sort of follow them."

Ongoing Participation

Despite the marketing of RFS services in the initial meeting, participation often tapered off afterward, and clients often did not participate in the retention and advancement services that were central to the program. In the case file review described above, only 42 percent of clients were found to have ever participated in a retention activity, and only 43 percent were found to have ever participated in an advancement activity.[22] Some clients worked actively toward the goals outlined in their plan, while others experienced more difficulty moving forward. Regardless of how much progress the clients were making, case managers tried to check in with them on a regular basis. Case managers estimated that, following the initial meeting, they had an average of about one contact per month, usually over the telephone, with clients with whom they were actively working. Contact was more frequent with clients who were unemployed or who were facing a work or personal crisis. The case file review found that 45 percent of the clients had had contact with their case manager in the previous month and that almost half of these clients had had more than one contact. In general, RFS staff reported that maintaining more frequent contact did not necessarily make people more likely to pursue advancement. Thus, the attempts to check in once per month were reported by staff to be adequate.

According to interviews with case managers, the primary mode of communication with clients after the initial meeting was over the telephone, rather than through additional face-to-face contact. This finding is consistent with the time study (discussed below in this section), which found that 70 percent of all client contacts were over the telephone.[23] For the most part,

[22]The retention activities measured in the case file review include credit/budget counseling, employer contact regarding retention issues, retention counseling, workshops, and reemployment services. The advancement activities measured include workplace/job coaching, job search, job readiness, career advancement counseling, education and training, and employer contact regarding advancement issues. Results from the case file review show higher participation in retention and advancement activities than is shown by results from the client survey (discussed in the next section, "Impacts on Participation and Services"). This is probably because the case file review was conducted with case managers rather than clients and because, compared with clients, case managers may have had a different definition of what constitutes a service and may have been more likely to remember delivering that service than clients were likely to remember receiving it.

[23]In some cases, case managers *did* meet in person with clients after the initial meeting. Some of these meetings occurred when clients were in crisis, and case managers would meet the clients at their homes or other locations. Such meetings in places other than the GAIN office were sometimes carried out by a case manager who had not conducted the initial interview, as not all case managers felt comfortable making off-site visits.

case managers reported that they did not push for further in-person contact because the initial meeting established sufficient rapport with clients that carried into later conversations. One case manager said: "The initial contact, when we meet face-to-face, that's very important. The follow-up contact is like you are talking face-to-face." Another case manager said: "After [the initial meeting], they're glad to do it over the phone. It doesn't take anything away from [the interaction]." Sufficient rapport, however, did not necessarily produce ongoing engagement, as discussed further below.

Even with this minimal level of contact, some case managers had difficulty reaching out to clients as caseload sizes went up. One case manager said: "When you have a big caseload, you don't have the time to get into it. Even if you have the will." When caseloads were high (closer to 80 rather than 40), case managers tended to prioritize those who were unemployed as well as those who were working more actively toward advancement and were reaching out to their case manager for assistance. In general, case managers felt that it was difficult — and perhaps not effective — to try to engage those who were employed and were not already actively working with the program. As such, these clients often fell to the bottom of case managers' priority list. While working with motivated clients made sense, given case managers' workloads, it is also likely that these clients would have pursued career advancement on their own, that is, without the assistance of RFS services.

There was no protocol for reengaging people who stopped participating in RFS; however, case managers often used transportation benefits as a way to try to reestablish contact, because case managers had to collect pay stubs from clients at least once every three months in order to authorize transportation benefits. Job loss was also a point at which case managers could try to reestablish contact. Clients who were placed in rapid reemployment worked primarily with the job developer, but their situation gave the case manager a chance to try to build a relationship and hopefully to work with them on career advancement activities.

Retention and Advancement Services

RFS retention services were focused primarily on counseling regarding on-the-job issues and reemployment issues. Reemployment became a much stronger focus of the program than initially intended because job loss was much more common than anticipated. In addition, the advancement component of the program took longer to implement and was challenging to implement because of a lack of staff experience and training in career counseling. This section provides background on these overall findings.

Customer Service and Individualized Attention

Case managers felt strongly that customer service, flexibility, and individualized attention distinguished RFS from the PES services provided as part of the regular GAIN program. Staff reported that, in many ways, those who participated in RFS probably experienced a less bureaucratic and less "rule-bound" program than those who participated in the regular postemployment services.

RFS staff also expressed the importance of motivating and supporting clients in their efforts to improve their employment situation. Case managers believed that many of their clients did not have friends or family members who played this supportive role in their lives. They would encourage clients to pursue their goals, listen to and validate their frustrations, point out their strengths, celebrate their accomplishments, and remind them that what they were doing was valuable and worthwhile. Staff believed that clients were comfortable sharing their problems and challenges because they knew that staff would listen and support them. One case manager said: "Clients react to the way we treat them. They're surprised that I actually listen to them and want to help them." Another case manager used her own experiences as a single mother to connect and relate to clients' issues firsthand. Staff believed that, in RFS, there was a strong focus on building positive relationships with clients, compared with the regular GAIN program. One case manager said: "In GAIN, you just push papers. We get very involved personally with our clients. We would never have this kind of relationship in the regular GAIN program."

The greater degree of flexibility that RFS provided was another example of how the program was more individualized and less bureaucratic. Some case managers would meet with clients outside regular work hours and in locations other than the DPSS offices, including clients' homes. As one case manager stated, flexibility "has made it a little bit easier to maintain communication." Staff thought that it was important for clients to have this kind of personal treatment from an agency that could often be frustrating and difficult to navigate.

Retention Services

Retention services were focused primarily on helping clients effectively access work supports, address life crises that could prevent them from working, and negotiate work-related issues that affected their job performance. Child care and transportation were two issues with which case managers were most likely to help clients. For working TANF recipients (and regardless of their status in the RFS or the PES/control group), all child care and transportation costs related to work (either mileage reimbursement or bus passes) were covered by DPSS as long as clients were still receiving a welfare grant. If clients earned enough to lose their TANF grant, these benefits continued for two years and, in some cases, longer.

RFS case managers were directly responsible for determining eligibility for transportation assistance and often intervened if a client was having a hard time accessing child care benefits. For example, if a client had a problem with child care services, the case manager contacted both the client's eligibility worker and the child care resource and referral agency. The case manager worked with these two contacts, as well as the client, to remedy the problem.

Medicaid was another benefit that RFS case managers sometimes had to help clients negotiate. For example, one client needed medication for a mental health issue in order to maintain her employment, but she was unable to fill her prescription through Medicaid because the DPSS staff person who conducted the assessment for mental health issues failed to refer her to a mental health provider. The client was repeatedly unable to get help from this division of DPSS, so her RFS case manager intervened. After discovering that the appropriate staff person was on vacation, the case manager contacted a specialized supportive service worker in the regional GAIN office who gave the client the referral needed to access her medication.

Many times, personal crises made it difficult for clients to maintain their jobs, and there were a number of examples in which case managers were able to intervene when clients otherwise might have lost their jobs. In one example, a case manager had a client who was homeless and unemployed and had been the victim of domestic violence. The first thing the case manager did was help the client stabilize her housing situation by connecting her with a housing relocation program that provided the first month's rent, deposit, a stove, and a refrigerator. The case manager then worked with the job developer to help the client get a job with an in-home care provider, which she was able to retain. Another case manager helped a homeless client get into a family shelter and worked with her to find a job that would allow her to support her family. The case manager usually met with the client at a location that was more convenient for her than the GAIN office. Ultimately, the case manager helped the client secure a full-time medical job at a hospital for $14 per hour and also helped find a permanent apartment that was suitable for the client and her children.

According to the case managers, job dissatisfaction and a lack of soft skills — such as workplace interpersonal and communication skills — were the most common reasons that clients either lost jobs or failed to advance. Often, case managers reported that they coached clients to take the long view about their current employment situation, reminding them that their experience would be valuable, and they would work with the clients to find a better career path. Case managers would often help clients understand the basics about being a good employee — taking breaks at appropriate times, making a good impression during the probationary period, and following office norms. One case manager said that she "talks with [clients] about how to get the time schedule together, their priorities together."

Case managers varied in their comfort level in addressing these issues. Some case managers were more comfortable delving into clients' personal situations, while others were more reluctant to probe deeply. Even when they knew about serious challenges that clients were facing, they sometimes were uncomfortable about getting too involved. For example, one client was at risk of losing her housing due to a familial conflict, but the case manager did not provide a referral to help her cope with these issues because he felt uncomfortable prying into her personal life.

Reemployment

As in many other ERA tests, reemployment services became a more prominent RFS program component than initially anticipated because of the high rate of job loss among RFS participants. In fact, some program group members lost their jobs before case managers were able to contact them after random assignment. Because of this, RFS job developers ended up spending much of their time helping unemployed participants find jobs and very little time providing advancement services to employed participants. According to staff interviews, the job developers often felt overwhelmed by their responsibilities and generally wished that they had more time to help RFS group members find better jobs. One job developer estimated that he spent 85 percent of his time on reemployment services. In two of the three regions, the job developer was working only part time with the RFS unit and found it even more difficult to keep up with the demand of participants who lost their jobs. In these two regions, case managers took on some of the workload for the reemployment component of the program.

When participants lost their jobs, they technically had 30 days before they were supposed to be transferred back to the regular GAIN preemployment program. However, case managers and job developers were often flexible with this time frame if participants were making progress in looking for employment. According to GAIN rules, job placement should — for the most part — operate under a "work first" philosophy, in which participants take the first job available to them. Based on interviews with staff, case managers and job developers generally adhered to this policy, but they often tried to focus job search efforts on jobs that interested participants and matched their skills. They believed that if participants liked their jobs, they would be more likely to stay employed. Staff often used the 30-day reemployment period to explore the reasons that clients lost their last job and ways to avoid the same situation in the future.

The job developers used a number of strategies to find job openings and pass along leads to clients. They consulted such traditional sources as newspapers and online classified ads to find and follow up new job leads, but they also visited employers and developed relationships with them to better understand job responsibilities. For example, one of the job developers visited a new employer in the area, a duck-processing company that was hiring Spanish-

speaking employees. The job developer got a sense of the job responsibilities of the work, which included transporting, de-feathering, and processing the ducks. This information helped her to better portray the day-to-day responsibilities of the job when clients expressed interest. Another job developer made an effort to build positive relationships with employers so that RFS clients whom he referred would have an edge over other applicants. The knowledge about employers also helped job developers understand which employers seemed to treat their employees well and which paid better than others.

Many staff expressed frustration with the reemployment component of the program, in part because it consumed some of the time available to work with employed clients. Some staff stated that the reemployment component forced them to work with those participants who were not interested in advancing. One case manager said: "The ones who lose their jobs are the ones who are less skilled or have the bad jobs. They often get fired or laid off, . . . but they're the hardest ones to employ anyway. The other people generally remain on the job."

Advancement Services

The RFS advancement services were individualized according to clients' needs and levels of motivation. Case managers often started by talking with clients about their career goals and current skill sets. To help with these conversations, program managers developed a "goals sheet," which prompted case managers to ask appropriate questions and develop a set of steps to help clients strategize about how to move forward with goals. Case managers would often refer to this tool in later meetings to follow up with clients on the steps that they had taken to move forward. Case managers also worked with clients to explore education and training opportunities as well as work-based advancement strategies, such as pursuing a raise or finding a better-paying job. For example, one client was working in a temporary, part-time job in a hospital cafeteria and wanted to advance into a permanent, full-time cashier position. The case manager encouraged her to ask her supervisor about opportunities to train for this position. She followed the advice and was soon working as a temporary cashier. The case manager continued to work with her on how to approach the supervisor about securing a permanent position. After this conversation, the client was able to gain permanent full-time status, which included benefits, vacation, and sick days.

For many clients, case managers often served more as listeners and encouragers than as career counselors. Given staff interpretation of customer service and flexibility, case managers typically did not dissuade clients who already had career goals. As one case manager stated, he "never said no to anyone's dreams." Case managers felt that it was important to allow clients to make their own decisions: "It's helpful to find out what clients really want to do and let them know that there is flexibility for them to decide what is best." For example, one RFS client had been working part time in a beauty salon with the same pay for three years. Her goal was to

become a beautician. The case manager encouraged her to look for an apprenticeship program, and she found something through her current employer. The case manager called her employer to arrange for the client to begin the program and also paid for all necessary supplies. It seemed that the encouragement and support she received from RFS provided the impetus to get her to pursue something that she had wanted to do for quite a while.

Despite some examples of successes, RFS staff often struggled to implement the advancement component of the program. Case managers, for the most part, did not have previous experience or training in career counseling and found it difficult to guide clients in strategizing about how to advance. In general, case managers were familiar with the education and training programs available through GAIN and often encouraged clients to participate in these activities as a way to get ahead. It was often more difficult, however, for case managers to promote work-based advancement strategies, such as coaching people on asking for a raise, navigating internal career ladders, and applying transferable skills to a job with better compensation and/or advancement opportunities. These kinds of strategies require a thorough knowledge of the labor market, an understanding of the skill sets necessary for a wide variety of job opportunities, and some sophistication about interoffice dynamics to help clients "plant seeds" for future advancement. Most case managers did not enter the program with this type of knowledge and had to learn as they went along. Some case managers became more adept than others at promoting work-based advancement strategies, while others were more comfortable encouraging clients to pursue a more traditional route to advancement through training.

MDRC worked with Cygnet Associates and another consultant to provide training and technical assistance to help case managers develop tools that they could use to help clients advance.[24] This training focused on engaging and motivating clients and working with them to create "income improvement plans" that outlined very specific steps that clients could take toward advancement. Specific steps, for example, could include calling the local community college to learn more about its training programs, taking on additional responsibilities at work that may lead to a promotion, and talking with a supervisor about advancement opportunities. Although some of the case managers incorporated these tools into their work with clients, they still found it very difficult to motivate clients to follow through on agreed-upon plans.

Staff reported that some individuals seemed to need more time to settle in and feel more comfortable with their current job before working actively toward advancement. In these cases, the monthly check-in provided an opportunity for the case manager to explore clients' readiness to pursue advancement. For example, one client who was working part time at a hotel resisted for nearly a year the case manager's attempts to get her to pursue advancement. During their

[24]RFS case managers were also given specialized training by the county's Employment Development Department (EDD) on how to access and use its career development Web site.

monthly calls, the case manager would check in about her job, provide some job leads, and describe the advancement services available through RFS. The client never took advantage of these services until she became disillusioned with her job and unhappy with her compensation. She called her case manager, and they talked about ways in which she could move up at the hotel. The client applied for and received a promotion to a position as full-time sales and meeting coordinator that paid $12 per hour.

Overall, however, throughout the study period, case managers struggled to engage in career advancement activities those people who were not already working with them. It is not entirely unexpected that some individuals who were assigned to RFS would view themselves as already overcommitted with full-time jobs and parenting responsibilities and as not being able to take on additional commitments during the period that the RFS services were available. Others may have pursued their advancement goals outside the GAIN program, possibly through help from family and friends. Given these factors, RFS staff often found it difficult to convince clients of the value of the program's services — or, at least, that the services were of sufficient value to offset their "costs" in terms of clients' time and effort. At first, case managers spent a lot of time trying to engage people who were not responsive to their overtures. As time went on, however, staff reported that they believed that these efforts were often not effective. As one case manager said, "You can throw everything in the book at them, and if they don't want to do it, they won't." Case managers perceived that they were most successful with clients who were motivated to advance but who needed extra encouragement and support to pursue their goals: "the magic is that they need to want it as much as I do." In working with these kinds of clients, however, case managers were often unsure of how much credit they could take for clients' successes. As one case manager expressed his uncertainty: "Maybe being there helped them or not. . . . I don't know." While it may have been difficult for staff to gauge the extent to which RFS influenced clients' success, there were clearly reports of clients who appreciated the encouragement and support that they had received from their case managers.

How RFS Staff Spent Their Time

MDRC administered a "time study" in all the ERA sites to better understand the practices of program staff. The study captured detailed information on the nature of the ERA staff-client interactions and on the topics covered during these interactions. The time study also collected information on how RFS case managers typically spent their time each day. In the RFS test, the time study was conducted from January 26 to February 1, 2004. All RFS case managers participated in the study, along with a sample of PES case managers who worked with control group members. (Results for PES case managers are discussed at the end of this section.) Job developers did not participate in the time study because they did not carry a distinct caseload.

As shown in Figure 2, RFS case managers spent one-third (33 percent) of their time in contact with clients, which is over two hours per day, on average. As shown in Table 3, RFS case managers had an average of six client contacts per day — almost all with working clients; contacts with working clients were slightly shorter than contacts with nonworking clients.

RFS case managers most commonly contacted clients via the telephone. As shown in Appendix Table B.1, 70 percent of all client contacts were via telephone. Contacts were almost as likely to be initiated by clients as by case managers.

A variety of topics were covered during client contacts. (See Appendix Table B.2.) Most commonly, contacts focused on supportive service eligibility and issues (covered in 43 percent of all contacts) — particularly, transportation and other work supports, such as uniforms, clothing, and tools. Participation and sanctioning issues were covered in 22 percent of client contacts, with a focus primarily on monitoring clients' employment status. In one of every five contacts, case managers addressed personal or family issues, discussed career goals and advancement, and/or explored specific employment and training options. Finally, about 17 percent of the contacts focused on initial client engagement in the program.

Similar to other ERA sites, the time-study findings indicate that discussions relating to advancement activities — such as exploring specific employment and training options, discussing career goals and advancement, and initially trying to engage clients — were fairly long. Contacts that included these three types of activities lasted, on average, roughly an hour.

Comparison of RFS Services and Regular Postemployment Services (PES)

As described in the report's Introduction, control group members in the RFS test were eligible for existing GAIN postemployment services in Los Angeles County. As explained in detail below, field research and the ERA time study — all reports from staff members' points of view — suggest that the main difference between RFS services and the regular postemployment services offered through GAIN was the increased individual customer service that RFS staff provided, which was facilitated by the smaller caseloads of the RFS staff. Compared with PES case managers, RFS case managers were more likely to provide more intensive outreach, to go outside traditional protocol in order to meet with clients (such as scheduling meetings outside business hours and meeting at places convenient for clients), to troubleshoot issues encountered in securing work supports, to discuss specific employment and training options, and to work on reemployment issues.

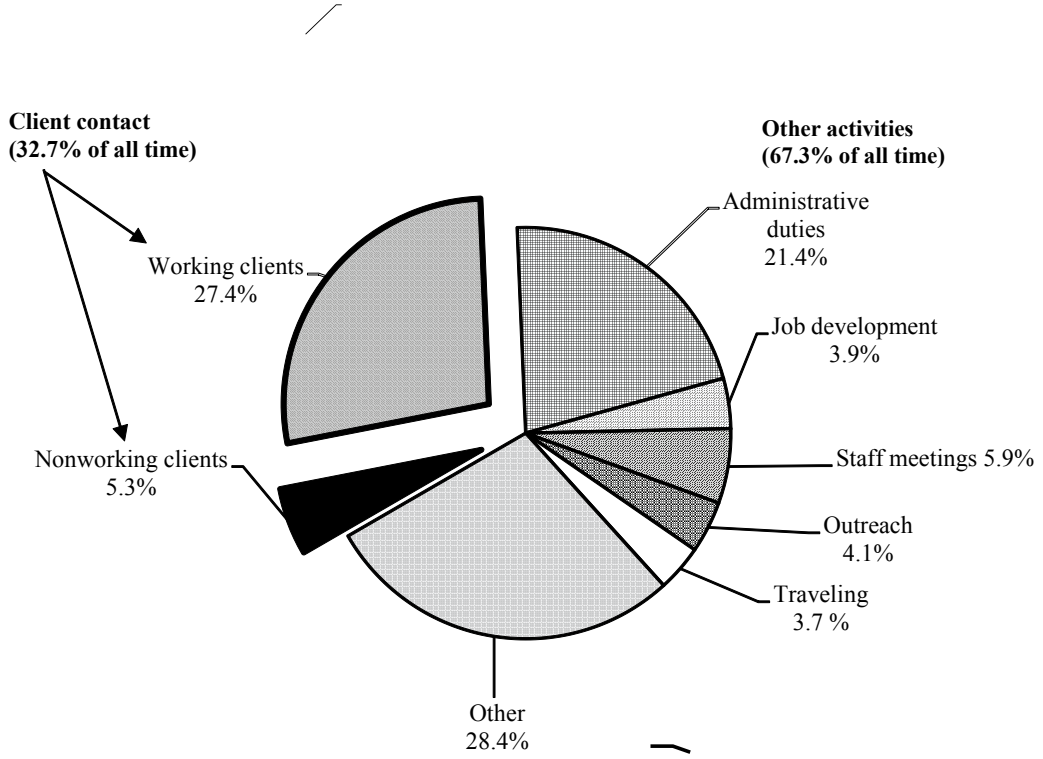
Initially, when PES case managers were assigned a new client, they would send the client a letter and an information packet explaining PES services. They would then follow up

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Figure 2

Summary of How Los Angeles RFS Case Managers Typically Spent Their Time

Los Angeles Reach for Success



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the ERA time study.

NOTES: The "Other" category contains the following activities: monitoring or checking the employment status and/or work hours of clients/customers (without contact with client/customer) (7.9%); monitoring client/customer activities/participation in program services or activities (without contact with client/customer) (6.3%); developing/seeking out education or training opportunities (3.6%); developing/seeking out other community resources (1.9%); interacting with TANF/food stamp/Medicaid eligibility workers regarding specific clients/customers (1.9%); interacting with others not listed above (for example, landlords) representing specific clients/customers (1.4%); noncompliance tasks (without contact with client/customer) (1.1%); interacting with employers regarding specific clients/customers in their employment (0.9%); interacting with other workforce organizations (for example, One-Stops) (0.7%); making TANF/food stamp/Medicaid eligibility decisions (0.2%); and interacting with employers regarding general program activities (0.1%).

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Table 3

Extent of Contact Between RFS Case Managers and Clients

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	
Percentage of work time spent in contact with:	
Any client	32.7
Working clients	27.4
Nonworking clients	5.3
Average number of client contacts per day per case manager:	
Any client	6.3
Working clients	5.4
Nonworking clients	0.8
Average number of minutes per contact with:	
Any client	18.7
Working clients	18.1
Nonworking clients	21.8
Number of case managers time-studied	17

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the ERA time study.

NOTE: NA = not applicable.

with a letter scheduling an appointment for the client to come in to meet with them. According to interviews with PES case managers, many clients would not respond to this letter, and PES case managers generally did not put much effort into engaging new clients who did not respond. Most of the PES case managers who were interviewed reported that they gave up after one or two attempts, although a few said that they continued to reach out to unresponsive new clients, either through the mail or over the telephone. The interviewed RFS staff emphasized the differences between themselves and PES staff in this regard. As one RFS case manager put it: "The outreach and contacts are what sets us apart. You're guilt-ridden if you don't honestly make that effort."

PES case managers had much larger caseloads than RFS case managers, which had an effect on the extent of contact that case managers had with clients. Including both active and inactive clients, over the study period, PES case managers had caseloads of about 100 to 120 clients each, while RFS case managers had caseloads of about 40 to 85 clients each. PES case managers aimed to have ongoing contact with their clients quarterly, while RFS case managers aimed to have ongoing monthly contact. According to interviews with PES case managers, the quarterly contacts usually revolved around employment verification and issuing transportation checks. Some PES case managers reported that this was the only time when they were in

contact with the majority of their clients. Clients participating in education or training programs also had to show quarterly progress reports to their case managers and had to indicate that they were performing satisfactorily in the program.

Data from the time study discussed above also highlight some key differences between RFS and PES. Time-study data show that RFS and PES case managers spent similar proportions of their time in contact with clients and had similar average numbers of contacts and amounts of time spent in each contact. (Comparative time-study results are not shown in tables.) However, during the time-study period, the PES case managers who participated in the time study had an average caseload size of 110, compared with an average caseload size of 49 among RFS case managers. Thus, clients in the PES program would have been much less likely than their RFS counterparts to have had at least one contact or multiple contacts with a postemployment case manager.[25] Although the difference is not statistically significant, time-study data show that PES case managers also were less likely than the RFS case managers to meet with clients in person and were more likely to have written contact with clients.

Clients in both research groups were eligible for the same supportive services: child care, transportation, and ancillary costs for such items as books, school fees, and employment-related clothing. Furthermore, clients in both groups had to have contact with a case manager to remain eligible for these supportive services. Unlike RFS case managers, however, PES case managers issued some of these supports, like transportation assistance, on a quarterly as opposed to monthly basis. In addition, PES case managers were less likely than RFS case managers to help clients troubleshoot issues that they might have in accessing these benefits.

The time-study data also suggest other RFS and PES differences. While the topics covered in meetings with clients were similar for PES and RFS case managers (for example, PES case managers were as likely as RFS case managers to discuss career goals and advancement with clients), PES case managers were less likely than their RFS counterparts to discuss specific employment and training options. This may reflect the fact that, for any one client, PES case managers generally had less time to discuss job-related issues or to explore various career options. Interviews with PES staff suggest that PES case managers generally did not coach their clients on issues that tended to arise at work. Advice in this area seems to have been limited to short conversations between the case managers and clients about setting realistic expectations and encouraging the clients to stay employed. Interviews also indicate that PES clients who were interested in participating in education and training were sent to a career assessment. After

[25]Unlike the contact statistics based on the client survey that are presented in the next section of this report (Table 4), contacts reported here would have been only with case managers who dealt with *postemployment* issues. The statistics presented in Table 4 represent the percentage of sample members who had contact with any type of case manager or staff from an employment program, not just with postemployment case managers.

receiving the results of the assessment (usually about a week later), PES case managers would meet with clients to discuss the results and an appropriate program.

According to the time study, PES case managers also were less likely than RFS case managers to work with clients on reemployment issues. This is consistent with staff interviews: when clients lost their employment, PES case managers referred them to a job developer for 30 days, and PES staff would follow up again when the client found another job, whereas RFS case managers tended to work together with job developers to help unemployed clients find a new job. In addition, the focus for PES clients during this time was on getting any job rather than, as was sometimes the case for RFS clients, trying to find a job suited to their interests or a job that would pay well.

Finally, time-study data show that PES case managers were less likely than their RFS counterparts to deviate from protocol to facilitate meetings with clients. (During the course of the two-week time study, two of the RFS case managers had even met with clients during the weekend.) In addition, PES staff were not, by and large, supposed to meet with clients outside the GAIN offices.

Impacts on Participation and Services

This section of the report compares the use of services and the participation rates in job search, education, and training activities among the Reach for Success (RFS) sample members (the program group) and the regular postemployment services (PES) sample members (the control group). The results reflect calculations based on responses to the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) 12-Month Survey for a portion of the report sample. Survey respondents reported their use of services that could have been provided by a number of programs or agencies: the RFS or the PES program, other agencies within the Los Angeles County welfare department, and other publicly and privately funded agencies throughout the metropolitan area.

The findings presented below inform the analysis of the RFS program's effects on employment, earnings, and receipt of public assistance, which are discussed in the concluding section of the report. The underlying rationale for the RFS model was that providing enrollees with strongly marketed, individualized, and flexible postemployment services might boost their chances of working steadily and advancing in the labor market. It was expected that a relatively large proportion of RFS group members would receive program services and that their level of service receipt would greatly exceed the level of regular postemployment services received by the control group. In the absence of such a difference, it would be unlikely, though not impossible, that RFS group members would experience greater employment retention and earn more, on average, than their counterparts in the control group.

Before discussing the findings, it is important to introduce a note of caution about the ERA 12-Month Survey. The survey covered many but not all aspects of service use that may have affected RFS and control group members' employment, earnings, and receipt of public assistance. For instance, survey respondents were not asked to estimate the amount of time that they spent in meetings and conversations with case managers from the Los Angeles Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) and other agencies and organizations. In addition, the survey did not address whether RFS or control group respondents received higher-quality services or participated in employment and training activities that were better suited to their career plans. Finally, the survey sample was drawn from among those who were randomly assigned to the two research groups during only six months of the two years of random assignment (from the end of July 2002 until June 2004). Choosing the survey sample from a relatively narrow time period makes it harder to generalize the survey findings to the full sample. The follow-up period covered by the survey may have missed changes in program implementation or changes in the labor market that affected the use of program services and subsequent employment among those

sample members who were randomly assigned outside the period from which the survey sample was drawn.[26]

- **A slight majority of RFS group members reported receiving postemployment services, but few were still in contact with program staff a year after entering RFS. The RFS program did not lead to a higher likelihood of contact with staff or to more frequent contact than the control group experienced in the PES program.**

As shown in Tables 4 and 5, the survey respondents reported their frequency of contact with staff members from any type of employment program and the types of help that they received. However, a fairly large proportion of respondents in both research groups appear to have answered questions on these topics inconsistently — noting, for example, that they received assistance from a program but not reporting any contact with that program's staff. Nonetheless, the survey findings are in line with the results of field research interviews with RFS case managers, which suggest that RFS group members tended to have contact early in their program tenure but that most ended contact before the end of their one year of service eligibility. The 12-month survey data indicate that nearly 54 percent of RFS respondents reported that they had been in contact with staff from RFS or some other type of employment program since random assignment; only 20 percent, however, reported contact in the month prior to survey interview.[27] (Box 1 describes how the survey was used to measure participation, and Box 2 explains how to read the impact tables in the ERA evaluation.)

Case managers in the PES program were not expected to meet as often with control group members, and they were rarely expected to initiate contact. Thus, it is somewhat surprising that about 50 percent of survey respondents from the control group reported having had contact with PES or other employment program staff — nearly the same rate of contact as for the RFS group (Table 4). Because control group members were required to submit documentation to their PES case managers on a regular (at least quarterly) basis in order to retain assis-

[26]For reasons that are not clear, the RFS program led to unusually positive effects on employment and earnings among all sample members (survey respondents as well as nonrespondents) who were randomly assigned during the six months of sample intake from which the survey sample was drawn. As noted in Appendix F, this finding is based on calculations using unemployment insurance (UI) wage data from the State of California for the different samples in the study. This variation most directly affects the generalizability to the full sample of employment and earnings outcomes that were calculated from survey responses. It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to ascertain whether outcomes related to the use of program services were similarly affected. See Appendix F for details about the survey sample and an analysis of response bias.

[27]The actual contact rate was almost certainly higher, based on respondents' reporting of the help they received and their participation in program activities, inasmuch as these services and activities involve contact with program staff. (See Tables 5 and 6.)

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Table 4

Year 1 Impacts on Contacts with Program Staff

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Any contacts with case manager/employment program since random assignment (%)	53.9	50.6	3.4	0.332
Average number of contacts with staff/case manager	7.3	6.2	1.1	0.246
In person	2.7	2.0	0.6 *	0.079
By telephone	4.7	4.2	0.5	0.499
Talked with staff/case manager in past 4 weeks (%)	20.2	18.9	1.3	0.631
Ever met with staff/case manager (%)	48.8	43.4	5.4	0.118
At home	3.6	1.8	1.8	0.115
At workplace	3.6	3.9	-0.3	0.845
At staff/case manager's office	46.5	41.0	5.5	0.113
At school/training program	11.0	15.4	-4.4 *	0.063
At other places	2.6	4.0	-1.4	0.270
Staff/case manager talked with respondent's employer (%)				
Never	88.0	88.0	0.0	0.996
Once or twice	7.6	7.3	0.3	0.854
More than twice	1.7	3.6	-1.9 *	0.087
Don't know	2.8	1.2	1.6	0.113
Sample size (total = 848)	428	420		

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

NOTES: See Appendix D.

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Table 5

Impacts on Areas in Which Respondent Received Help

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome (%)	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Received help with support services	59.1	52.7	6.4 *	0.062
Finding or paying for child care	44.6	41.2	3.5	0.298
Finding or paying for transportation	44.8	37.7	7.0 **	0.040
Received help with basic needs	44.2	38.8	5.5	0.115
Housing problems	10.4	8.4	2.0	0.325
Access to medical treatment	39.2	34.2	5.0	0.139
Financial emergency	6.0	6.0	0.0	0.983
Received help with public benefits	62.0	55.1	6.9 **	0.044
Getting Medicaid	56.4	52.5	3.8	0.266
Getting food stamps	48.9	43.7	5.2	0.135
Received help with job preparation	35.5	29.3	6.2 *	0.054
Enrolling in job readiness or training	19.0	15.9	3.1	0.228
Looking for a job	27.1	20.5	6.6 **	0.027
Finding clothes, tools, or supplies for work	19.6	18.2	1.4	0.612
Received help with retention/advancement	21.7	17.4	4.3	0.123
Finding a better job while working	7.9	5.8	2.1	0.225
Other activities while working[a]	7.9	5.6	2.3	0.180
Career assessment	14.5	9.7	4.8 **	0.033
Dealing with problems on the job	5.5	3.7	1.8	0.214
Addressing a personal problem that makes it hard to keep a job	4.0	3.8	0.2	0.872
Sample size (total = 848)	428	420		

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

NOTES: See Appendix D.

[a]This measure includes other activities, such as life skills and child development classes.

Box 1

Measuring Participation in ERA

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 Reach for Success group received ERA services, and the control group received standard postemployment services (PES). In many studies, it is relatively straightforward to determine dosages, because the "treatments" are 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, 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 (RFS) group and the control (PES) 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 RFS accessed, as 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 (see Table 6). These services are relatively easy to measure.
- 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 (see Table 4). 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 (see Table 5). Although these questions were fairly straightforward, they did not provide any information about the *amount* of service that was received in each area.

Box 2

How to Read the Impact Tables in the ERA Evaluation

Most tables in this report use a similar format, illustrated below. The data show a series of participation outcomes for the Reach for Success group and the control group. For example, the table shows that about 63 (62.7) percent of the RFS group and about 57 (56.9) percent of the control group participated in any employment-related activity.

Because individuals were assigned randomly either to the RFS 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 (Impact)" 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 56.9 percent from 62.7 percent, yielding 5.8 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 the level of statistical significance of the impact (the lower the level, the less likely that the impact is due to chance). One asterisk corresponds to the 10 percent level; two asterisks, the 5 percent level; and three asterisks, the 1 percent level. The p-values show the exact levels of significance. For example, as shown below, the RFS group had a statistically significant impact of 5.8 percentage points at the 10 percent level on participation in any employment-related activity.

Impacts on Participation in Job Search

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)		P-Value
Participated in any employment-related activity (%)	62.7	56.9	5.8	*	0.089
Participated in a job search activity	60.3	55.3	5.0		0.149
Group job search/job club	41.3	41.7	-0.4		0.905
Individual job search	45.1	41.9	3.2		0.361

tance with transportation costs, this may explain some of the contact that control group respondents reported in the survey.

- **The type of help received most frequently from RFS, as reported by over half of all program group members, was assistance with obtaining publicly funded work supports, such as child care and transportation and public benefits. Compared with the PES program, RFS produced a small increase in the proportion of individuals who received help finding or paying for transportation and help getting Medicaid or food stamps.**

As discussed in the preceding section ("The Implementation of the Reach for Success Program"), RFS staff reported — in field research interviews and in the ERA time study — that they spent considerable time helping enrollees resolve issues related to publicly funded work supports, such as financial assistance toward child care and transportation costs. These supports promoted employment retention and advancement indirectly. Once again, the survey responses corroborate the field research and time-study findings. When asked to name the types of help that they received from a program, RFS respondents most often answered that they received assistance with obtaining financial work supports and public benefits (Table 5). The largest proportion of RFS respondents (62 percent) reported receiving help with maintaining their eligibility for Medicaid or food stamps, and a similar proportion indicated that they had received help obtaining child care or transportation assistance.

Control group members could access these financial work supports as well, but larger percentages of RFS group members reported receiving assistance with such work supports — particularly, transportation assistance (a 7 percentage point increase above the control group) and Medicaid or food stamps (also a 7 percentage point increase). The fact that more than one-half of both research groups reported that they received assistance with financial benefits and medical coverage underscores that there is demand for these supports among low-income families.

- **Only about one-fifth of all RFS group members reported receiving work-based employment retention and advancement services, such as help dealing with problems on the job, career assessment, or finding a better job while working. Overall, RFS did not produce an increase in the receipt of such services, relative to the control group, although RFS did increase the receipt of help with career assessment.**

In total, 22 percent of RFS group survey respondents reported that they had received help with employment retention and advancement that was not help with work supports or help finding a job. Career assessment — typically the first step in promoting career advancement — was the most common type of advancement assistance reported to be received, but it was

reported by only about 15 percent of RFS group members. These survey findings are in line with field research interviews in which RFS case managers reported experiencing difficulty in achieving enough sustained involvement with program enrollees to provide them with retention and advancement services that went beyond helping them with work supports or helping them find a job if they were no longer employed.

Compared with the control group, the RFS group was more likely to report receiving help with career assessment, by 5 percentage points. RFS group members were also more likely than control group members to report that they received help looking for a job — a finding that is explored in more detail below.

- **Compared with the PES program, the RFS program led to only small increases in job search activity or participation in education.**

The RFS program model initially did not have a strong emphasis on job search or on participation in education or training activities. Still, it was expected that a higher percentage of RFS group members would participate in job search or skill-building activities to advance their careers, compared with control group members. In theory, greater participation by RFS group members could occur if they maintained greater contact than the control group did with their case managers, which, in turn, could increase the chances that RFS case managers would learn about clients' job losses and would quickly refer them to job search services. Similarly, if RFS group members had greater contact with their case managers, it was expected that they could receive more effective help than control group members in enrolling in an education or training program, obtaining financial aid and other supportive services, and overcoming barriers to attendance. However, as discussed above, levels of contact with program staff did not vary much between the RFS group and the control group, which suggests that differences in participation should be small.

In fact, a high proportion of members in both the RFS and the control group — about 70 percent — participated in some type of employment preparation or postemployment activity during the first year of follow-up (Table 6). The participation rate for RFS group members is about average for postemployment programs in the ERA study, whereas the participation rate for control group members is relatively high compared with the rates for control or comparison groups in these other sites.[28]

Members of both groups — about 63 percent of the RFS group and 57 percent of the control group — most often participated in job search and other employment-related activities.

[28]The proportion of ERA group members who participated in any activity during Year 1 ranged from 64 percent in Chicago, Illinois, to 81 percent in Eugene, Oregon. Among control or comparison group members, participation levels ranged from 48 percent in Chicago to 74 percent in Eugene.

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Table 6

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

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever participated in any activity[a] (%)	72.1	68.0	4.1	0.200
Participated in any employment-related activity[b] (%)	62.7	56.9	5.8 *	0.089
Participated in a job search activity	60.3	55.3	5.0	0.149
Group job search/job club	41.3	41.7	-0.4	0.905
Individual job search	45.1	41.9	3.2	0.361
Participated in an education/training activity (%)	36.3	33.7	2.6	0.436
Adult Basic Education (ABE) or GED classes	11.1	7.1	4.0 **	0.042
English as a Second Language (ESL) classes	3.6	5.2	-1.6	0.239
College courses	16.4	19.2	-2.8	0.294
Vocational training	12.6	9.5	3.1	0.156
Participated in unpaid work/subsidized employment (%)	7.1	6.8	0.4	0.837
Ever participated in an employment or education activity while working (%)	28.7	24.4	4.3	0.168
Average number of weeks participating in:				
Job search activities	5.4	4.6	0.8	0.212
Education/training activities	7.1	7.0	0.0	0.970
Unpaid work/subsidized employment	0.9	1.4	-0.5	0.246
Among those who participated in each type of activity:				
Average number of weeks participating in				
Job search activities	*9.0*	*8.4*	*0.7*	*NA*
Education/training activities	*19.4*	*20.8*	*-1.4*	*NA*
Unpaid work/subsidized employment	*13.0*	*21.0*	*-8.0*	*NA*
Sample size (total = 848)	428	420		

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

NOTES: See Appendix D.

[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.

The frequent reported use of job search services by both groups is not surprising, given the high rates of job loss that occurred in the follow-up period.[29] (For details about this, see the report's concluding section: "The Effects of Reach for Success on Employment, Earnings, Public Assistance, and Income.") The 6 percentage point difference between the two groups in participation in employment-related activities, though statistically significant, indicates that RFS had only a modest effect on participation in employment-related activities.

About one-third of both the RFS and the control group attended education or training activities, despite the fact that neither program attempted to enroll large numbers of individuals in education and training activities. Many public and private educational institutions within Los Angeles County offer instruction and financial assistance to low-income adults. The availability of these institutions may have helped boost participation levels for both groups. More important, the relatively high participation levels in education and training for both groups demonstrate that a sizable minority of employed single parents will seek out education and training opportunities on their own initiative and without the active support of agency administrators and case managers.

- **Impacts on the use of services were found among two subgroups: individuals who were unemployed in the quarter prior to random assignment and individuals residing in administrative Region 5 of the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program.**

So far, the analysis has shown that RFS led to only small increases in the use of program services — when *all* respondents are considered. However, a finding related to an overall difference can mask effects among key subgroups. This issue is considered here. For this analysis, the primary subgroups examined include (1) sample members who did or did not work in jobs covered by the UI system during the quarter prior to random assignment and (2) sample members who were randomly assigned in each of the three GAIN administrative regions.

Subgroup 1: Sample members who did or did not work in UI-covered jobs during the quarter prior to random assignment. Although all sample members reported full-time employment at their time of random assignment, previous studies of welfare populations have shown that individuals with recent employment tend to have more stable employment after random assignment and to earn more over time, compared with sample members without recent employment. It would be expected, therefore, that a smaller proportion of RFS group members in the "recently employed" subgroup would need reemployment services and, correspondingly,

[29] As shown in Table 6, a minority of participants in employment preparation activities (28.7 percent / 72.0 percent who participated in any such activity) reported that they participated while working. It may therefore be inferred that most job search participants were not working while they were engaged in looking for a job.

that a larger proportion would need the program's advancement services. In this regard, the recently employed subgroup may be considered the primary target group in the RFS program model.

The effects of RFS on the use of program services varied among the two employment subgroups. Only 19 percent of RFS group survey respondents in the recently employed subgroup reported receiving work-based retention or advancement services during Year 1, and the program did not lead to statistically significant differences on measures of contact, help, or participation, when compared with the recently employed clients in the control group.

In contrast, increases were found among the subgroup of survey respondents who did not work in the quarter prior to random assignment. For this subgroup, RFS led to increases of between 8 and 13 percentage points — compared with similar members of the control group — in several measures of the use of program services, including reported contact with staff, receipt of help with basic needs, receipt of help with public benefits, and participation in job search or another employment-related activity (Table 7).

A relatively large proportion (about 35 percent) of RFS group survey respondents in both employment subgroups reported participating in education or training activities. However, control group respondents reported similarly high levels of participation, resulting in no impact on education or training participation for either subgroup.

Subgroup 2: Sample members randomly assigned in each of the three administrative regions. Examining the research sample by region captures variations in local labor markets, welfare populations, and program implementation that could affect levels of service use and differences in service receipt between the RFS and control groups.

Results analyzed by region indicate that RFS group survey respondents in Region 5 experienced a relatively large increase (of nearly 16 percentage points) in the receipt of help in obtaining supportive services (child care and transportation assistance), compared with that region's control group respondents (Table 8). RFS in Region 5 also led to a modest increase (of about 10 percentage points) in participation in job search and in education and training activities, relative to the region's control group.[30] In contrast, the RFS program in Regions 1 and 6 had no effect on the use of services, compared with survey respondents in the corresponding control groups.

[30]The 9 percentage point difference in participation in education and training activities was just above the 10 percent level of statistical significance (p-value = 0.106).

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Table 7

**Year 1 Impacts on Contacts with Program Staff;
Areas in Which Respondent Received Help;
Participation in Job Search, Education, Training, and Other Activities
(Recently Employed and Recently Unemployed Subgroups)**

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Employed in quarter prior to random assignment				
Any contacts with case manager/employment program since random assignment (%)	50.6	53.2	-2.6	0.624
Average number of contacts with staff/case manager	7.1	5.9	1.3	0.320
In person	2.6	2.1	0.5	0.316
By telephone	4.5	3.8	0.7	0.431
Received help with support services (%)	59.0	51.1	7.9	0.139
Received help with basic needs (%)	42.1	45.5	-3.4	0.526
Received help with public benefits (%)	59.7	58.8	0.9	0.870
Received help with job preparation (%)	32.7	26.7	6.1	0.204
Received help with retention/advancement (%)	19.3	14.2	5.1	0.197
Ever participated in any activity[a] (%)	66.5	68.0	-1.5	0.760
Participated in any employment-related activity[b] (%)	54.6	57.2	-2.6	0.621
Participated in an education/training activity (%)	37.3	32.3	5.0	0.313
Sample size (total = 378)	201	177		
Unemployed in quarter prior to random assignment				
Any contacts with case manager/employment program since random assignment (%)	56.6	48.7	7.9 *	0.090
Average number of contacts with staff/case manager	7.4	6.5	0.9	0.529
In person	2.7	2.0	0.7	0.128
By telephone	4.7	4.5	0.2	0.852
Received help with support services (%)	59.2	53.8	5.4	0.238
Received help with basic needs (%)	45.7	34.3	11.4 **	0.015
Received help with public benefits (%)	64.1	52.5	11.6 **	0.013
Received help with job preparation (%)	38.1	31.1	7.1	0.116
Received help with retention/advancement (%)	23.9	19.6	4.3	0.266

(continued)

Table 7 (continued)

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever participated in any activity[a] (%)	77.1	67.9	9.2 **	0.031
Participated in any employment-related activity[b] (%)	69.8	56.7	13.1 ***	0.004
Participated in an education/training activity (%)	34.9	35.3	-0.4	0.929
Sample size (total = 470)	227	243		

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

NOTES: See Appendix D.

[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.

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Table 8

Year 1 Impacts on Contacts with Program Staff; Areas in Which Respondent Received Help; Participation in Job Search, Education, Training, and Other Activities (Region Subgroups)

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Region 1				
Any contacts with case manager/employment program since random assignment (%)	47.0	44.9	2.1	0.739
Average number of contacts with staff/case manager	5.6	7.3	-1.8	0.334
In person	2.4	2.3	0.1	0.929
By telephone	3.2	5.0	-1.8	0.234
Received help with support services (%)	50.3	52.4	-2.2	0.722
Received help with basic needs (%)	43.4	37.0	6.4	0.291
Received help with public benefits (%)	51.1	48.2	2.9	0.641
Received help with job preparation (%)	29.9	26.8	3.1	0.582
Received help with retention/advancement (%)	20.3	16.1	4.2	0.386
Ever participated in any activity[a] (%)	64.5	66.6	-2.2	0.713
Participated in any employment-related activity[b] (%)	55.4	56.1	-0.7	0.907
Participated in an education/training activity (%)	34.5	33.7	0.8	0.889
Sample size (total = 296)	149	147		
Region 5				
Any contacts with case manager/employment program since random assignment (%)	52.3	47.2	5.1	0.379
Average number of contacts with staff/case manager	7.6	5.8	1.8	0.257
In person	2.9	1.8	1.1 **	0.046
By telephone	4.7	4.0	0.7	0.556
Received help with support services (%)	62.1	46.4	15.6 ***	0.006
Received help with basic needs (%)	46.2	39.5	6.7	0.245
Received help with public benefits (%)	66.5	59.9	6.6	0.243
Received help with job preparation (%)	36.9	29.6	7.3	0.179
Received help with retention/advancement (%)	23.7	17.0	6.7	0.150

(continued)

Table 8 (continued)

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever participated in any activity[a] (%)	77.1	67.9	9.3 *	0.072
Participated in any employment-related activity[b] (%)	67.5	57.1	10.3 *	0.065
Participated in an education/training activity (%)	40.5	31.5	9.0	0.106
Sample size (total = 334)	166	168		
Region 6				
Any contacts with case manager/employment program since random assignment (%)	67.3	61.8	5.5	0.442
Average number of contacts with staff/case manager	8.9	5.7	3.2	0.117
In person	2.7	2.1	0.6	0.386
By telephone	6.2	3.6	2.5	0.103
Received help with support services (%)	66.2	63.0	3.2	0.639
Received help with basic needs (%)	44.5	37.8	6.7	0.351
Received help with public benefits (%)	69.2	58.0	11.2	0.111
Received help with job preparation (%)	40.8	32.3	8.5	0.220
Received help with retention/advancement (%)	20.1	20.3	-0.2	0.967
Ever participated in any activity[a] (%)	74.2	70.7	3.5	0.600
Participated in any employment-related activity[b] (%)	62.5	60.3	2.2	0.756
Participated in an education/training activity (%)	35.8	33.9	2.0	0.773
Sample size (total = 218)	113	105		

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

NOTES: See Appendix D.

[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.

The Effects of Reach for Success on Employment, Earnings, Public Assistance, and Income

This section of the report analyzes the effects of the Reach for Success (RFS) program on sample members' employment, earnings, receipt of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and food stamps, and combined income from earnings and public assistance. The analysis uses unemployment insurance (UI) wage data from the State of California[31] and automated TANF and food stamp payment data from Los Angeles County to estimate effects for two years, or eight quarters, following each sample member's date of random assignment.[32] In addition, the section analyzes data on job characteristics and related outcomes as reported by respondents to the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) 12-Month Survey.[33]

The effects of RFS services for the program group are estimated relative to the outcomes of standard PES services for the control group, and the analysis uses ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, which controls for small differences between the RFS and control groups in terms of sample members' characteristics recorded at random assignment. Average employment and public assistance outcomes for the control group represent what happens when employed TANF recipients receive only limited postemployment services and rely mostly on their own initiative to seek services, advance in their jobs, find better employment, or return to work following loss of a job. Differences in average outcomes between the RFS group and the control group represent the effects, or impacts, of the RFS program model, compared with the existing postemployment services at the time.

For this analysis, "Year 1" refers to Quarters 2 through 5 after random assignment, and "Year 2" refers to Quarters 6 through 9. Quarter 1 — the quarter of random assignment — is excluded from the follow-up period because sample members may have received earnings and public assistance payments during the quarter but before their actual date of random assignment.

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[31]UI wage records cover nearly all types of employment and allow researchers to make unbiased estimates of program effects on employment and earnings, but they have some limitations. UI systems exclude earnings from federal and military jobs, self-employment, informal work, and out-of-state employment.

[32]From the end of July 2002 until June 2004, sample members were assigned either to the RFS (program) group or to the control group, which was eligible to receive only the county's regular postemployment (PES) services.

[33]Data on employment and earnings are also available from the 12-month survey, to which a portion (848 single parents) of the full sample responded. As noted in the preceding section, however, the survey sample was, by chance, drawn from a cohort within the full research sample that experienced unusually strong employment and earnings effects, compared with the rest of the research sample. (See Appendix F for details.) This discrepancy of results decreases the generalizability of employment and earnings as calculated from survey responses. Accordingly, the report includes tables of survey outcomes regarding employment and earnings (Appendix Tables E.4 through E.6) but does not analyze program effects on these measures.

The two-year impact results described in this section do not represent the final word on the RFS program, as MDRC will ultimately track the study participants' employment and earnings outcomes for more than three years.

Expected Effects

The comparison of RFS and PES services in Los Angeles was designed to test whether intensive and proactive case management could lead to better employment and earnings outcomes for working single-parent TANF recipients, compared with the more limited and more reactive case management of the regular postemployment program. It was hypothesized that impacts on employment and earnings might occur if RFS group members consulted with their case managers more often and received more effective assistance than their counterparts in the control group. As noted in the report's second section, however, during the actual implementation of RFS, overall differences in service receipt between the two groups were less than expected, which suggests that impacts on employment and earnings outcomes may be small. In theory, impacts could occur even in the absence of large differences in the frequency of staff-client contact or service receipt for the two groups, if RFS case managers provided better-quality case management services than the case managers in the regular PES program did. Unfortunately, it is not possible to ascertain from available data the relative quality of RFS and PES services.

Employment Patterns

As noted above, all sample members were already working when they were randomly assigned as part of the study (including some who were employed at jobs not recorded by California's UI system). Under these circumstances, employment levels for members of both research groups can remain steady or go downward over time. The employment patterns for control group members that are discernable from UI records reflect what would have happened without the RFS program model. Nearly all PES group members (88.5 percent) worked in at least one quarter during the first two years of follow-up (Table 9 and Figure 3). However, the data indicate that many control group members experienced difficulty retaining employment. The percentage of employed control group members decreased over the follow-up period; only about 62 percent of them were working during the final quarter of Year 2, including some who returned to employment after a spell of joblessness. On average, control group members remained employed for 5.2 out of the 8.0 follow-up quarters, which is equivalent to a quarterly employment rate of 65 percent. About 62 percent of control group members remained employed for at least four consecutive quarters during Years 1 and 2 — a key indicator of em-

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Table 9

Years 1-2, Impacts on Employment and Earnings

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Years 1-2				
Ever employed (%)	89.2	88.5	0.6	0.429
Average quarterly employment (%)	64.6	64.8	-0.2	0.816
Number of quarters employed	5.2	5.2	0.0	0.810
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	61.5	61.5	0.0	0.990
Total earnings ($)	18,470	18,479	-9	0.983
Earned over $20,000 (%)	39.9	40.6	-0.8	0.541
Year 1				
Ever employed (%)	84.5	84.1	0.4	0.668
Employed in last quarter of Year 1 (%)	64.6	63.5	1.1	0.374
Average quarterly employment (%)	67.8	67.2	0.5	0.573
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	50.2	47.8	2.4 *	0.058
Total earnings ($)	9,017	8,911	106	0.606
Earned over $10,000 (%)	41.6	40.6	1.1	0.386
Year 2				
Ever employed (%)	75.3	76.3	-1.0	0.369
Employed in last quarter of Year 2 (%)	60.4	62.4	-2.1	0.107
Average quarterly employment (%)	61.4	62.3	-1.0	0.372
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	46.7	47.5	-0.8	0.534
Total earnings ($)	9,453	9,568	-115	0.650
Earned over $10,000 (%)	40.9	42.5	-1.6	0.210
Sample size (total = 5,412)	2,710	2,702		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) records from the State of California.

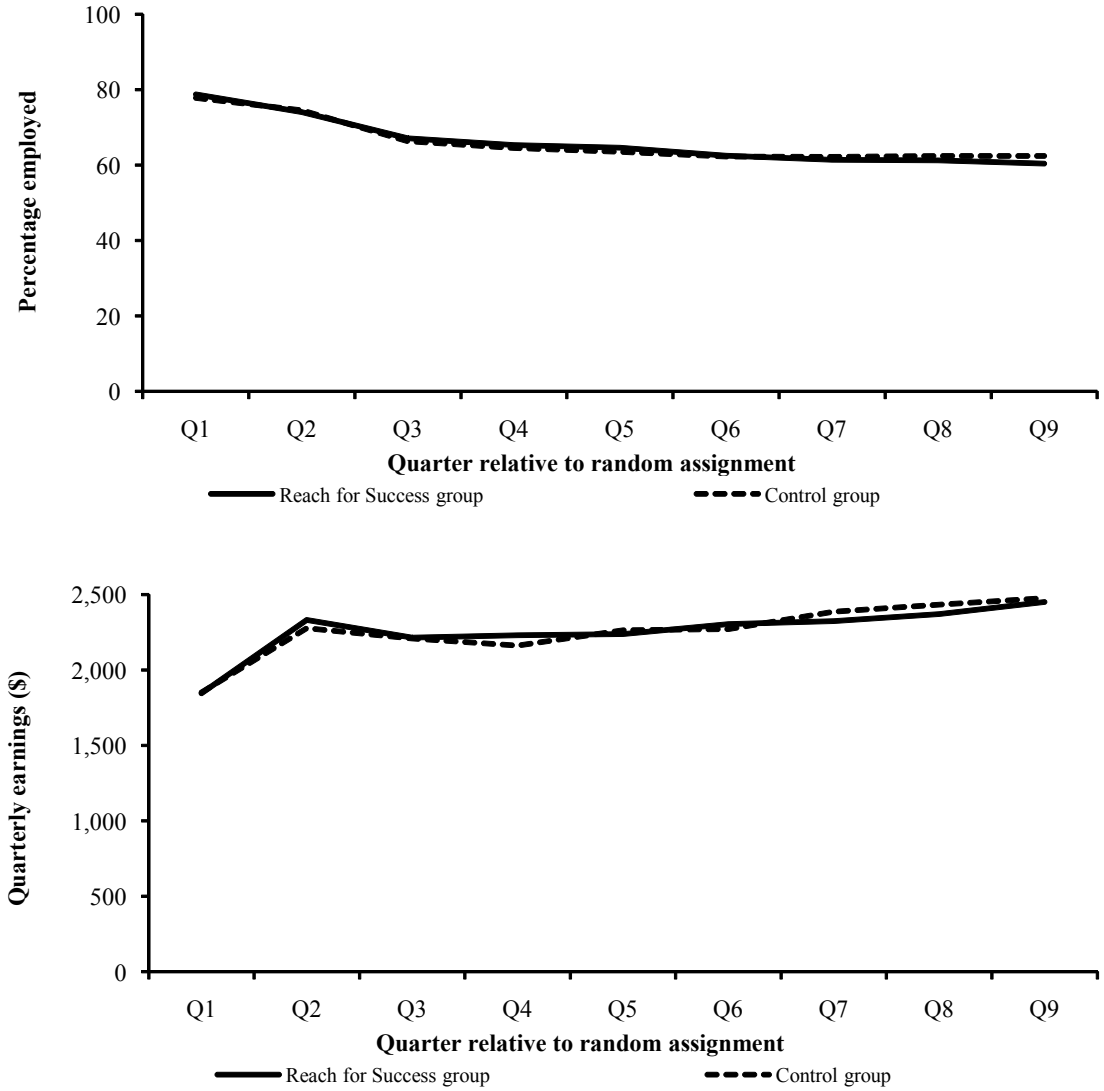
NOTES: See Appendix C.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Figure 3

Impacts of the RFS Strategy on Employment and Earnings Over Time

Los Angeles Reach for Success



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) records from the State of California.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

ployment retention.[34] These results are fairly typical for the control or comparison groups in the ERA tests of postemployment initiatives.[35]

Similar to findings from other research examining employment outcomes for welfare recipients, members of the control group received low earnings during Years 1 and 2: an average of $18,479 for the two years combined, or a little more than $9,200 per year. (This average includes zeros for quarters with no earnings reported to California's UI system.) About 41 percent of the control group received $20,000 or more in earnings over two years — another important indicator of employment advancement.[36]

Although some control group members experienced difficulty sustaining employment, others advanced in the labor market. On average, control group members earned about $650 more in Year 2 than they did in Year 1, even though the number of them who worked decreased over time.[37] Moreover, the proportion of control group members who earned $10,000 or more annually rose slightly, from 40.6 percent in Year 1 to 42.5 percent in Year 2.

The remainder of this section compares the outcomes for the RFS group with the outcomes for the control group over the two-year follow-up period.

Impacts on Employment and Earnings

- **During Year 1, RFS led to a small increase in employment retention relative to the control group, but this impact was not sustained in Year 2. There were no impacts on other measures of employment or earnings.**

During Years 1 and 2, the RFS model resulted in a small but positive impact on only one employment-related measure. Generally, RFS group members had a pattern of employment and earnings that was very similar to that of control group members (Table 9 and Figure 3). Each group worked at jobs for about the same number of quarters and earned about the same amount during each year of follow-up. During Year 1, RFS led to a small increase (2.4 percen-

[34]During Year 1, most control group members left the UI-covered job at which they were working during their quarter of random assignment. A majority of these job-leavers found another UI-covered job (not shown in tables).

[35]For example, average quarterly employment rates ranged from 53 percent among control or comparison group members in the Chicago, Illinois, ERA test to 77 percent in the Medford, Oregon, ERA test (Bloom, Hendra, and Page, 2006; Molina et al., 2009).

[36]Earnings greater than or equal to $10,000 per year is used as an indicator of advancement 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.

[37]In Year 2, 76.3 percent of control group members worked for at least one quarter. They earned an average of $9,568 / 0.763 = $12,539. The corresponding average for control group members who worked in Year 1 was $8,911 / 0.841 = $10,592 (Table 9).

tage points) above the control group level in working during four consecutive quarters. It appears that much of this increase resulted from RFS group members staying longer at their initial jobs during the follow-up period (Appendix Table E.10). However, even this impact disappeared in Year 2.

Members of each group were equally likely to experience employment advancement, as measured by earning $10,000 or more during Year 2. Finally, a similar percentage of both groups worked during the final quarter of Year 2, and both groups received about the same amount in quarterly earnings. These findings suggest that it is unlikely that the RFS approach will lead to employment and earnings gains, relative to the control group, in the follow-up period beyond the two years covered in this report.

Impacts on Public Assistance Receipt and Payments

- **RFS led to small increases in the receipt of public assistance relative to the control group during Years 1 and 2.**

TANF and food stamp payment data were examined for two years after each sample member's date of random assignment (Table 10). As discussed in the report's Introduction, California pays relatively high TANF benefits and uses relatively generous rules for disregarding earnings when calculating monthly grants. In this setting, postemployment programs can lead to temporary increases in the receipt of TANF and food stamps, especially if case managers encourage enrollees to combine work and welfare to maximize their income and maintain medical coverage for themselves and their children.

All sample members were receiving TANF benefits when they were randomly assigned as part of the study. During Year 1, control group members exited from assistance at a relatively rapid pace. By Quarter 5 of the follow-up period — the final quarter of Year 1 — only about 64 percent of the control group were receiving TANF benefits, and a similar proportion were receiving food stamps. Receipt rates continued to decline but more slowly during the following year — to about half of the control group by the end of Year 2 (Appendix Tables E.2 and E.3).

Nearly all sample members were also receiving food stamps at random assignment. About 54 percent of control group members received food stamps in Quarter 9, the final quarter of Year 2. Most control group members ceased to receive food stamps when they left TANF.[38]

[38]In other ERA tests, at least some groups of former TANF recipients were more likely to continue their receipt of food stamps. For instance, in the Chicago ERA test, where the targeted group was also working TANF recipients, only about half of all control group members received TANF during the final quarter of (continued)

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Table 10

Years 1-2, Impacts on Public Assistance, Employment and TANF Receipt, and Income

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Years 1-2				
Number of months receiving TANF	14.7	14.2	0.5 **	0.040
Amount of TANF received ($)	7,471	7,249	222	0.110
Number of months receiving food stamps	15.5	15.1	0.4	0.102
Amount of food stamps received ($)	4,322	4,229	93	0.206
Total measured income[a] ($)	30,264	29,957	306	0.409
Quarter 9				
Ever received TANF (%)	51.9	48.9	2.9 **	0.026
Amount of TANF received ($)	743	703	41 *	0.071
Ever received food stamps (%)	56.9	54.2	2.7 **	0.040
Amount of food stamps received ($)	510	495	15	0.283
Employed and not receiving TANF (%)	33.4	36.5	-3.1 **	0.014
Employed and receiving TANF (%)	27.0	26.0	1.0	0.385
Not employed and receiving TANF (%)	24.9	23.0	1.9 *	0.092
Not employed and not receiving TANF (%)	14.8	14.6	0.2	0.872
Sample size (total = 5,412)	2,710	2,702		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from administrative records.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

[a]This measure represents the sum of UI earnings, TANF, and food stamps.

follow-up Year 1, but over 90 percent of all control group members were receiving food stamps during that same quarter (Bloom, Hendra, and Page, 2006).

On average, control group members received TANF and food stamps for about 15 out of the 24 months during the follow-up period. They received a total of nearly $11,500 in assistance from both of these sources combined (Table 10).

The RFS program led to a small but persistent increase (averaging about 2 to 3 percentage points per quarter) relative to the control group in the incidence of TANF and food stamp receipt. These impacts occurred mostly during Year 2 of follow-up, after RFS group members were no longer eligible for the program (Appendix Tables E.2 and E.3). The increased incidence of receipt of TANF and food stamps did not lead to a statistically significant difference in the amount of TANF or food stamp benefits received over the first two years of follow-up. However, starting in Quarter 7 of the study, RFS group members were receiving about $40 more per quarter in TANF payments than their control group counterparts, which suggests that the increase in TANF payments relative to the control group will continue during Year 3 (Appendix Table E.2). In contrast, the program did not lead to higher average food stamp payments at any time during the follow-up period (Appendix Table E.3).

Over two years, RFS had no effect on sample members' combined income from earnings at UI-covered jobs, TANF, and food stamps. From these sources combined, members of each research group received, on average, about $30,000 in income over the two years. Earnings accounted for a little more than 60 percent of combined income for both groups. During Quarter 5 of the study, the final quarter of Year 1, RFS led to a small *decrease* of 3 percentage points relative to the control group in the proportion of single parents who were working and not receiving TANF — a measure of self-sufficiency. This difference persisted through Quarter 9, the final quarter of Year 2. (Table 10 presents results for Quarter 9; other results are not shown.)

Impacts on Other Outcomes

Respondents to the ERA 12-Month Survey reported on a number of additional outcomes, including employment by other household members, receipt of publicly funded medical coverage for themselves and their children, use of child care, and receipt of child care benefits. The RFS program had no effect on these outcomes among survey respondents (Appendix Tables E.8 and E.9).

Impacts for Selected Subgroups

The impact findings presented so far may mask significant variation in program effects among the different welfare populations that make up the research sample. To explore this issue, this section presents separate impact estimates for subgroups based on sample members' employment prior to random assignment and their residence within one of the three administra-

tive regions of the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program — the same subgroups examined in the report's third section, "Impacts on Participation and Services." The preceding participation analysis shows that RFS group members without recent employment and those located in Region 5 were more likely to use services than their control group counterparts. This section examines whether the impacts on service use for these subgroups were accompanied by increases in employment and earnings relative to the control group and whether there were impacts for any other subgroups.

- **RFS did not increase employment and earnings above control group levels for the two subgroups with impacts on service use. RFS did lead to some short-term employment retention and earnings impacts for two other subgroups.**

Although the participation analysis in the previous section indicates that individuals without recent employment, relative to study entry, had a higher rate of service use in the year following study entry if they were in RFS group rather than the control group, the RFS program did not produce economic gains for this subgroup. In fact, RFS group members in this subgroup, compared with their control group counterparts, experienced a decrease in average quarterly employment (of 2.8 percentage points) and in total earnings (of $637) during follow-up Year 2 (Table 11).[39] Similarly, RFS did not lead to employment and earnings gains for those located in Region 5 — the only region where the program raised levels of service receipt above the control group rate.

As discussed in "Impacts on Participation and Services," sample members with employment in the quarter prior to random assignment could be considered the primary target group in the RFS program model. Members of this subgroup would have had a somewhat longer attachment to the labor market when they entered RFS and, therefore, in theory at least, may have had less immediate need of reemployment services and potentially could have been better positioned to take advantage of services designed to facilitate career advancement. In fact, members of this subgroup did fare better in the labor market than those without such recent employment: control group members with employment in the quarter prior to random assignment earned about $5,000 more over the two-year follow-up period than those without recent employment (Table 11).

Although the preceding participation analysis indicates that, according to 12-month survey data, RFS group members in the recently employed subgroup were not more likely than

[39]For selected employment and earnings outcomes, statistical tests were applied to differences between subgroups with and without recent employment. Between-subgroup differences in impacts are statistically significant for average quarterly employment and total earnings during Year 2 (not shown).

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Table 11

Years 1-2, Impacts on Employment and Earnings for Subgroups

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Employment status in quarter prior to random assignment				
Employed				
Years 1-2				
Average quarterly employment (%)	75.6	74.1	1.5	0.219
Total earnings ($)	22,265	21,209	1,056 *	0.088
Year 1				
Average quarterly employment (%)	79.5	77.6	1.9	0.131
Total earnings ($)	10,917	10,388	529 *	0.082
Year 2				
Average quarterly employment (%)	71.7	70.6	1.1	0.468
Total earnings ($)	11,347	10,820	527	0.159
Sample size (total = 2,450)	1,252	1,198		
Not employed				
Years 1-2				
Average quarterly employment (%)	55.4	57.1	-1.7	0.203
Total earnings ($)	15,337	16,183	-845	0.143
Year 1				
Average quarterly employment (%)	58.0	58.6	-0.6	0.683
Total earnings ($)	7,457	7,666	-209	0.455
Year 2				
Average quarterly employment (%)	52.7	55.6	-2.8 *	0.066
Total earnings ($)	7,880	8,517	-637 *	0.065
Sample size (total = 2,962)	1,458	1,504		

(continued)

Table 11 (continued)

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Region				
Region 1				
Years 1-2				
Average quarterly employment (%)	61.2	60.9	0.3	0.841
Total earnings ($)	17,152	16,601	551	0.465
Year 1				
Average quarterly employment (%)	64.4	61.6	2.9	0.103
Total earnings ($)	8,447	7,830	618 *	0.100
Year 2				
Average quarterly employment (%)	58.0	60.2	-2.2	0.255
Total earnings ($)	8,705	8,772	-67	0.882
Sample size (total = 1,683)	845	838		
Region 5				
Years 1-2				
Average quarterly employment (%)	64.5	65.0	-0.5	0.708
Total earnings ($)	18,182	18,247	-66	0.918
Year 1				
Average quarterly employment (%)	67.4	67.6	-0.2	0.891
Total earnings ($)	8,830	8,722	108	0.728
Year 2				
Average quarterly employment (%)	61.7	62.5	-0.9	0.610
Total earnings ($)	9,351	9,525	-174	0.655
Sample size (total = 2,222)	1,112	1,110		
Region 6				
Years 1-2				
Average quarterly employment (%)	68.5	68.6	-0.1	0.962
Total earnings ($)	20,510	20,772	-261	0.752
Year 1				
Average quarterly employment (%)	72.1	72.9	-0.9	0.630
Total earnings ($)	10,003	10,322	-318	0.422
Year 2				
Average quarterly employment (%)	64.9	64.2	0.7	0.736
Total earnings ($)	10,507	10,450	57	0.909
Sample size (total = 1,507)	753	754		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) records from the State of California.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

control group members in this subgroup to use services, it appears that the RFS program did lead to some employment and earnings impacts for the recently employed subgroup. RFS group members with recent employment earned, on average, $1,056 (or 5 percent) more over two years, compared with their counterparts in the control group. RFS also led to a small (3 percentage point) increase for this subgroup relative to the control group in one measure of employment retention: employment for at least four consecutive quarters (result not shown in tables).[40] However, impacts on employment and earnings appear to have peaked around the beginning of Year 2 for the recently employed subgroup and to have diminished thereafter. By Quarter 9, the final quarter of Year 2, a similar proportion of each research group was working, and neither group earned significantly more than the other (result not shown in table).[41] The analysis also shows that RFS group members in the subgroup with recent employment remained in the job that they had held at the point of random assignment slightly longer than their counterparts in the control group did. When only earnings from sample members' initial job are considered, the RFS group earned about $1,600 more than the control group over the two-year follow-up period (Appendix Table E.11).

As described in the participation analysis, RFS increased participation in services only for sample members who resided in GAIN Region 5. In Region 1, however, RFS group members earned $618 more than their control group counterparts during follow-up Year 1. This impact was not sustained in Year 2. RFS had no effect on employment and earnings for subgroups based on sample members' level of educational attainment at random assignment or on their race or ethnicity.

Conclusions

The RFS program differed from the existing PES program in its smaller caseloads, proactive and aggressive marketing of postemployment services, and greater flexibility in tailoring services to meet the needs of employed welfare recipients. Participation differences between the two programs were greatest during the first months after random assignment, when RFS case managers initially engaged a large portion of their caseload, but these differences then diminished over time. Case managers reported difficulty in sustaining engagement among many RFS members — a situation that has been encountered in many of the models studied in the ERA project. RFS case managers thus tended to work primarily with those who more readily accepted the offer of help and services.

[40]For subgroups with and without recent employment, differences in impacts are statistically significant for total earnings and employment during at least four consecutive quarters during Years 1 and 2 (not shown).

[41]Moreover, it appears that the earnings impacts for the recently employed subgroup are affected by outliers. Two-year earnings impacts decrease to about $750 and are not statistically significant when the top 1 percent of earners from this subgroup are excluded from the calculation.

In the absence of RFS, as measured by outcomes for the control group, about the same number of individuals sought out postemployment services and supports through the PES program, on their own, or from agencies within and outside the Los Angeles Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). The resulting overall difference in service receipt between the two research groups is small.

When the RFS model was being developed, DPSS administrators and staff member believed that relatively few employed welfare recipients sought postemployment services and supports through the reactive, limited PES program or through other resources in the county. Thus, given the marketing, outreach, and flexibility of the RFS program, the small difference in service receipt between the RFS group and the control group is surprising.

DPSS had only recently created the RFS program when the evaluation began. As might be expected when operating a new program using existing staff, case managers needed to shift their emphases and learn new skills, inasmuch as the tasks and client-staff interactions that are focused on encouraging low-income workers to advance in the labor market are different from the tasks and interactions focused on helping people to quickly find jobs. More protocols, training, or staff performance benchmarks in these new aspects of case management might have strengthened the program.

Suggested Lessons

Field research done as part of the RFS test as well as findings from the evaluation of other ERA models suggest additional hypotheses that might explain why the RFS model did not achieve more sustained or broad-based gains in employment and earnings. It is possible that single parents found it difficult to set aside time to talk regularly with case managers while working and attending to family responsibilities. It is also possible that individuals who were already working may not have seen the offered services as valuable or may not have understood how the services could have benefited them. Some individuals simply may not have been ready for such services until they had had more time in the labor market or in a particular job. Some may not have wanted ongoing engagement — beyond what was required — with a public assistance program.

In general, the findings from the evaluation of the RFS model and other ERA models suggest that more consideration is needed of the types of strategies that can support and encourage the engagement of low-income workers in services. In addition, more consideration is needed of the range of services, and their timing, that are seen as potentially helpful from the point of view of low-income workers.

* * *

In the remainder of the ERA evaluation, the project will examine the longer-term employment paths of the low-wage workers in the RFS study and in the ERA study as a whole, and it will explore whether the programs produced other types of changes — such as wage increases, work-hour increases, better working conditions, and improved work schedules and work/life balances. In addition, the study will compare the costs of selected ERA models with their benefits. Much more will be learned through the ERA project about the effects of services and supports that might help low-income adults remain and advance in the labor market.

Appendix A

Supplementary Tables for "Introduction"

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 RFS (Reach for Success)	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)	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

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table A.2

Selected Characteristics of Sample Members at Baseline, by Research Group

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Characteristic	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Total
Characteristics recorded at random assignment			
Gender (%)			
Female	94.1	94.7	94.4
Male	5.9	5.3	5.6
Age (%)			
20 or younger	6.1	6.2	6.1
21 to 30	48.4	48.9	48.6
31 to 40	31.8	29.8	30.8
41 or older	13.8	15.1	14.4
Average age (years)	30.9	30.9	30.9
Race/ethnicity (%)			
Hispanic	39.2	41.6	40.4
Black, non-Hispanic	52.1	49.8	51.0
White, non-Hispanic	5.3	5.0	5.2
Other	3.4	3.6	3.5
Primary language (%)			
Spanish	12.3	12.8	12.6
English	87.7	87.2	87.4
Marital status (%)			
Never married	73.0	75.5	74.2
Married, living together	3.9	3.1	3.5
Married, separated	17.2	15.2	16.2
Widowed	0.5	0.6	0.6
Divorced	5.4	5.4	5.4
Number of children[a] in household (%)			
None	0.0	0.1	0.1
1	35.6	35.9	35.8
2	28.4	29.8	29.1
3 or more	36.0	34.1	35.1
Average number of children	2.3	2.2	2.3
Age of youngest child in household (%)			
2 or younger	39.8	40.4	40.1
3 to 5	25.6	24.9	25.2
6 or older	34.6	34.7	34.7

(continued)

Appendix Table A.2 (continued)

Characteristic	Reach for Success Group	Control Group		Total
Location (%)				
Region 1	31.2	31.0		31.1
Region 5	41.0	41.1		41.1
Region 6	27.8	27.9		27.8
Currently employed (%)	98.0	98.1		98.1
Number of jobs at random assignment (%)				
None	2.0	1.9		1.9
1 job	86.9	88.0		87.5
2 jobs	10.7	9.6		10.1
3 jobs	0.4	0.6		0.5
Hours worked per week (%)				
Fewer than 32 hours	1.6	1.1	*	1.4
32 or more hours	98.4	98.9	*	98.6
Average hours worked per week	38.5	38.4		38.4
Hourly wages (%)				
Less than $6.75	0.2	0.2		0.2
$6.75 - $6.99	31.3	32.1		31.7
$7.00 - $9.99	55.9	54.0		55.0
$10.00 or more	12.7	13.7		13.2
Average hourly wage ($)	8.02	8.02		8.02
Characteristics recorded at most recent appraisal[b]				
Limited English ability (%)	11.1	11.3		11.2
Education (%)				
General Educational Development (GED) certificate	5.2	4.6		4.9
High school diploma	40.2	41.3		40.7
California High School Proficiency Exam (CHSPE)	0.1	0.3		0.2
Technical or associate's degree / 2-year college	2.8	2.8		2.8
4-year college (or more)	1.2	0.9		1.1
None of the above	50.4	50.0		50.2
AFDC/TANF receipt (%)				
None (in the past 5 years)	10.2	9.3		9.7
Less than 2 years (in the past 5 years)	38.6	39.9		39.2
2 years to less than 3 years (in the past 5 years)	17.7	17.6		17.6
3 years or more (in the past 5 years)	23.4	21.8		22.6
3 years or more (not in the past 5 years)	10.2	11.4		10.8
Sample size (total = 5,412)	2,710	2,702		5,412

(continued)

Appendix Table A.2 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Los Angeles GEARS data.

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; and * = 10 percent. The statistical significance indicates the probability that one would be making an error in concluding that there is a difference between research groups for the characteristic in question.

[a]A child is defined as person under the age of 19 and identified as son/daughter, stepson/-daughter, adoptive son/daughter of the case heads. In cases where the relationship between the person under the age of 19 and the case head could not be determined, the person was assumed to be a child.

[b]The appraisal could takes place up to one year before random assignment.

Appendix B

Supplementary Tables for "The Implementation of the Reach for Success Program"

The Employment Rentention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table B.1

Description of Contact Between RFS Case Managers and Clients

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	
Percentage of all client contacts that were:	
In person	21.5
Office visit	16.8
Home visit	2.8
Employer visit	1.0
Elsewhere	0.9
Not in person	78.5
Phone contact	70.1
Written contact	7.8
Other type of contact	0.7
Percentage of all client contacts, over a 2-week period, that were initiated by:	
Staff member	51.9
Client	46.6
Another person	1.6
Number of case managers time-studied	17

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the ERA time study.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table B.2

Topics Covered During Contact Between RFS Case Managers and Clients

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	
Percentage of all client contacts that included the following topics:[a]	
Initial client engagement	16.5
Supportive service eligibility and issues	42.5
General check-in	18.1
Screening/assessment	0.0
On-the-job issues/problems	6.0
Personal or family issues	20.2
Specific employment and training options	19.5
Career goals and advancement	20.0
Reemployment	14.2
Issues related to financial incentives or stipends	0.0
Schedule/referral for work experience position[b]	NA
Enrollment in government assistance and ongoing eligiblity issues	4.3
Assistance with the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)	5.0
Participation/sanctioning issues	21.9
Schedule/referral for screening/assessment	2.6
Schedule/referral for job search or other employment services	3.1
Schedule/referral for education or training	4.2
Schedule/referral for services to address special or personal issues	2.4
Job leads or referrals[b]	NA
Number of case managers time-studied	17

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the ERA time study.

NOTES: NA = not applicable.

[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 used in the Los Angeles RFS evaluation.

Appendix C

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

This exhibit includes only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the California unemployment insurance (UI) program. It does not include employment outside California 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.

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

"Year 1" refers to Quarters 2 to 5. Quarter 1 is the quarter in which random assignment took place.

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

NA = not applicable.

Appendix D

Notes for Tables and Figures Displaying Results 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 follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 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.

NA = not applicable.

Appendix E

Supplementary Impact Tables

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.1

Impacts on Quarterly Employment and Earnings

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever employed (%)				
Quarter of random assignment	78.7	77.8	0.9	0.383
Q2	74.0	74.5	-0.5	0.677
Q3	67.1	66.3	0.8	0.538
Q4	65.3	64.5	0.8	0.530
Q5	64.6	63.5	1.1	0.374
Q6	62.5	62.2	0.3	0.829
Q7	61.4	62.2	-0.8	0.512
Q8	61.2	62.5	-1.2	0.328
Q9	60.4	62.4	-2.1	0.107
Earnings ($)				
Quarter of random assignment	1,846	1,852	-6	0.891
Q2	2,333	2,277	56	0.304
Q3	2,214	2,209	5	0.932
Q4	2,231	2,162	70	0.253
Q5	2,239	2,264	-25	0.696
Q6	2,305	2,271	34	0.605
Q7	2,325	2,386	-61	0.375
Q8	2,372	2,434	-62	0.386
Q9	2,451	2,477	-26	0.724
Sample size (total = 5,412)	2,710	2,702		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) records from the State of California.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.2

Impacts on Quarterly Cash Assistance Receipt and Payments

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever received cash assistance (%)				
Quarter of random assignment	99.9	99.8	0.0	0.619
Q2	91.7	91.1	0.6	0.435
Q3	76.4	74.5	1.9 *	0.091
Q4	69.5	68.5	1.0	0.427
Q5	66.6	64.3	2.3 *	0.064
Q6	62.5	59.8	2.7 **	0.038
Q7	58.4	56.1	2.4 *	0.067
Q8	55.6	52.4	3.2 **	0.013
Q9	51.9	48.9	2.9 **	0.026
Amount of cash assistance received ($)				
Quarter of random assignment	1,629	1,620	9	0.440
Q2	1,241	1,218	23	0.198
Q3	1,041	1,030	11	0.601
Q4	981	958	23	0.283
Q5	942	916	26	0.250
Q6	882	866	16	0.470
Q7	847	810	37	0.100
Q8	793	748	45 **	0.048
Q9	743	703	41 *	0.071
Sample size (total = 5,412)	2,710	2,702		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from public assistance records from the Los Angeles RFS program.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.3

Impacts on Quarterly Food Stamp Receipt and Payments

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever received food stamps (%)				
Quarter of random assignment	93.5	93.1	0.4	0.380
Q2	87.8	88.0	-0.2	0.788
Q3	77.9	78.1	-0.3	0.804
Q4	72.7	71.4	1.2	0.278
Q5	69.3	66.7	2.6 **	0.033
Q6	66.1	64.1	2.0 *	0.098
Q7	62.7	60.7	1.9	0.125
Q8	59.7	57.1	2.6 **	0.040
Q9	56.9	54.2	2.7 **	0.040
Amount of food stamps received ($)				
Quarter of random assignment	677	680	-2	0.726
Q2	579	573	6	0.477
Q3	550	550	0	0.995
Q4	544	533	10	0.334
Q5	549	533	17	0.166
Q6	541	527	14	0.241
Q7	530	519	11	0.413
Q8	520	500	20	0.141
Q9	510	495	15	0.283
Sample size (total = 5,412)	2,710	2,702		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from food stamp records from the Los Angeles RFS program.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.4

Impacts on Characteristics of Current Job

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Employment status (%)				
Ever employed since random assignment	81.3	77.9	3.4	0.227
Currently employed	58.8	52.9	5.9 *	0.082
No longer employed	22.4	25.0	-2.6	0.390
Current working status				
Full-time	48.1	43.3	4.8	0.157
Part-time	10.7	9.6	1.1	0.610
Currently employed at a "good job"[a]	27.5	25.1	2.4	0.433
Hours				
Average hours per week	21.4	18.7	2.7 **	0.044
Total hours per week (%)				
Less than 30 hours	10.7	9.6	1.1	0.610
30-34	6.7	8.1	-1.4	0.443
35-44	33.8	28.9	4.9	0.126
45 or more	6.9	4.7	2.2	0.178
Average hourly wage (%)				
Less than $5	2.9	2.0	0.9	0.408
$5 - $6.99	7.4	5.1	2.3	0.165
$7 - $8.99	21.1	23.3	-2.1	0.460
$9 or more	27.4	22.6	4.8 *	0.096
Average hourly wage among those employed ($)	*9.28*	*9.46*	*-0.18*	*NA*
Earnings				
Average weekly earnings ($)	200	180	21	0.144
Total earnings per week (%)				
Less than $200	9.3	7.9	1.4	0.492
$201-$300	17.6	16.6	1.1	0.674
$301-$500	24.1	20.4	3.7	0.195
$500 or more	7.8	8.1	-0.3	0.872
Average weekly earnings among those employed ($)	*340*	*339*	*1*	*NA*

(continued)

Appendix Table E.4 (continued)

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Benefits (%)				
Employer-provided benefits at current job				
Sick days with full pay	21.5	20.0	1.5	0.599
Paid vacation	27.5	27.7	-0.1	0.966
Paid holidays other than Christmas and New Year	28.8	26.6	2.2	0.467
Dental benefits	21.2	19.6	1.6	0.577
A retirement plan	19.4	16.0	3.4	0.192
A health plan or medical insurance	25.2	22.4	2.8	0.351
Schedule[b] (%)				
Regular	36.6	30.8	5.9 *	0.069
Split	2.0	2.5	-0.5	0.620
Irregular	2.5	3.0	-0.5	0.673
Evening shift	6.3	5.2	1.1	0.499
Night shift	3.2	3.9	-0.6	0.623
Rotating shift	6.6	5.0	1.6	0.326
Other schedule	0.5	0.0	0.4	0.202
Odd job	0.9	2.4	-1.5 *	0.097
Jobs skills index[c] (%)				
Percentage reporting that the job requires at least monthly:				
Reading and writing skills	42.6	42.4	0.2	0.956
Work with computers	26.7	24.2	2.4	0.413
Arithmetic skills	25.1	27.1	-2.0	0.514
Customer contact	49.8	44.8	5.0	0.142
Sample size (total = 848)	428	420		

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

NOTES: See Appendix D.

[a]This definition of a "good job" was adapted from Johnson and Corcoran (2003). A "good job" is one that offers 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.

[b]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.

[c]The job skills index was created by regressing the "good job" measure on 10 dummy variables that indicate whether sample members possess specific job skills. This regression generated weights that ranked each skill based on its association with working at a good job. Each sample member was given a job skills score that was created by multiplying the regression-derived weights by each of the 10 job-skills dummy variables. The result is an index that measures the probability of working at a good job, based on the skills that are required at the current job.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.5

Impacts on Advancement

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome (%)	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Employed in first 6 months and at interview	49.7	45.3	4.4	0.200
Among those employed in first 6 months and at interview:				
Percentage whose weekly earnings:				
Increased	24.0	21.7	2.3	0.421
By less than 20 percent	7.9	5.7	2.2	0.218
By 20 percent or more	16.1	16.0	0.2	0.952
Decreased	9.8	8.6	1.2	0.557
Stayed the same	15.9	15.0	0.9	0.730
Percentage whose hours worked:				
Increased	13.4	13.7	-0.4	0.880
By less than 20 percent	2.9	3.8	-0.9	0.475
By 20 percent or more	10.5	10.0	0.5	0.805
Decreased	9.9	7.6	2.3	0.240
Stayed the same	26.4	24.0	2.4	0.422
Percentage whose hourly pay:				
Increased	26.0	21.9	4.1	0.160
By less than 20 percent	13.8	11.0	2.8	0.222
By 20 percent or more	12.2	10.9	1.3	0.546
Decreased	7.7	7.6	0.0	0.975
Stayed the same	16.0	15.8	0.2	0.946
Sample size (total = 848)	428	420		

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

NOTES: See Appendix D.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.6

Impacts on Job Retention

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever employed in Year 1 (%)	78.4	75.2	3.2	0.269
Average number of months employed in Year 1	7.2	6.9	0.3	0.367
Total number of months employed in Year 1 (%)				
Fewer than 4	10.3	8.6	1.7	0.416
4 to 7	12.7	14.5	-1.8	0.464
8 to 10	10.0	11.2	-1.2	0.573
More than 10	45.4	40.9	4.5	0.187
Worked during Months 1-3 and worked for: (%)				
Fewer than 6 consecutive months	12.4	12.9	-0.5	0.842
6 or more consecutive months	52.0	49.4	2.7	0.436
Number of jobs in Year 1 (%)				
0	21.7	24.8	-3.2	0.269
1	51.8	51.0	0.8	0.816
2 or 3	24.9	22.7	2.2	0.453
4 or more	1.6	1.5	0.2	0.851
Ever worked for one employer for 6 months or more (%)	58.1	56.5	1.7	0.622
Sample size (total = 848)	428	420		

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

NOTES: See Appendix D.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.7

Impacts on Receipt of Services to Address Mental Health, Domestic Violence, and Substance Abuse Issues

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome (%)	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Received mental health services	9.9	11.1	-1.2	0.573
Respondent	6.3	6.2	0.0	0.986
Family member	6.4	6.8	-0.4	0.824
Received domestic violence services	3.9	4.6	-0.7	0.648
Respondent	4.0	3.8	0.2	0.913
Family member	1.0	1.1	-0.1	0.900
Received substance abuse services	0.7	2.2	-1.5 *	0.059
Respondent	0.4	1.2	-0.8	0.214
Family member	0.2	1.5	-1.3 **	0.034
Sample size (total = 848)	428	420		

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

NOTES: See Appendix D.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.8

Impacts on Household Income and Composition

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Household income				
Percentage with each income source (%)				
Own earnings	64.2	61.0	3.3	0.323
Earnings of other members	24.1	24.7	-0.6	0.819
Child support	13.8	11.5	2.3	0.316
Public assistance	69.1	68.4	0.7	0.831
TANF	43.0	43.8	-0.8	0.808
Food stamps	62.6	61.9	0.7	0.844
SSI or disability	9.7	10.1	-0.5	0.823
Total household income in prior month ($)	1,528	1,503	25	0.721
Percentage of household income that is respondent's (%)	82.2	80.1	2.0	0.305
Alternative household income[a] ($)	1,580	1,523	57	0.353
Household composition				
Number in household	3.9	3.9	0.0	0.951
Ever married (%)	30.6	32.4	-1.8	0.534
Current martial status (%)				
Married and living with spouse	5.6	5.5	0.1	0.974
Separated or living apart from spouse	14.5	14.1	0.4	0.854
Living with partner	6.7	7.5	-0.8	0.638
Divorced	9.3	12.2	-2.8	0.176
Widowed	1.2	0.7	0.6	0.388
Sample size (total = 848)	428	420		

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

NOTES: See Appendix D.

[a]This measure was created by combining administrative records data and respondent's earnings from the survey. It includes survey earnings or unemployment insurance earnings where available, food stamps, AFDC, and estimated EITC income in the month prior to the survey.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.9

Impacts on Other Outcomes

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Health care coverage				
Respondent has health care coverage[a] (%)	92.7	89.6	3.1	0.117
Publicly funded	87.3	84.6	2.8	0.251
Publicly funded and not on TANF or SSI	25.5	23.1	2.4	0.404
Privately funded	12.1	10.2	1.9	0.385
All dependent children have health care coverage (%)	92.7	91.1	1.6	0.400
All dependent children have health care coverage and respondent is not covered by TANF or SSI (%)	33.7	33.0	0.7	0.834
Respondent and all children have health care coverage (%)	89.6	87.2	2.4	0.281
Respondent and all children have health care coverage and respondent is not covered by TANF or SSI (%)	28.9	26.9	2.0	0.512
Child care				
Ever used any child care in Year 1 (%)	52.1	55.0	-2.9	0.384
Any informal child care (%)	4.9	6.9	-2.0	0.218
Child care expenses (%)	46.5	47.1	-0.6	0.854
Paid entirely by respondent	4.0	5.6	-1.6	0.284
Paid partially by respondent	15.9	13.8	2.1	0.394
Not paid by respondent	26.6	27.7	-1.1	0.721
Child care was a barrier to school, job training, or work (%)	11.1	14.7	-3.6	0.121
Quit job, school, or training because of child care problems	8.9	11.9	-3.0	0.151
Missed work because of child care problems	3.5	4.1	-0.7	0.620
Transportation				
Own car, van, or truck (%)	57.8	53.5	4.3	0.193
Commuting time (minutes)	*35.4*	*40.3*	*-5.0*	*NA*
Transportation costs per week ($)	*30*	*32*	*-2*	*NA*
Method of transportation to work[b] (%)				
By car	39.5	38.8	0.7	0.834
By bus	23.0	24.0	-1.0	0.737
Gets a ride	16.2	13.5	2.6	0.290
Walks	3.7	3.1	0.7	0.611
Sample size (total = 848)	428	420		

(continued)

Appendix Table E.9 (continued)

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

NOTES: See Appendix D.

[a]Measures of health care coverage combine data from the survey's sections on employment, health care coverage, and income and from administrative records on public assistance receipt. A person can be receiving both public and private health care coverage.

[b]The respondent could state more than one method of transportation.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.10

Year 1-2, Impacts on Employment and Earnings, by Employer Status (Full Sample)

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Working with any employer				
Year 1				
Ever employed (%)	84.5	84.1	0.4	0.668
Average quarterly employment (%)	67.8	67.2	0.5	0.573
Number of quarters employed	2.7	2.7	0.0	0.579
Total earnings ($)	9,017	8,911	106	0.606
Year 2				
Ever employed (%)	75.3	76.3	-1.0	0.369
Average quarterly employment (%)	61.4	62.3	-1.0	0.372
Number of quarters employed	2.5	2.5	0.0	0.367
Total earnings ($)	9,453	9,568	-115	0.650
Working with random assignment employer[a]				
Year 1				
Ever employed (%)	63.9	63.8	0.1	0.934
Average quarterly employment (%)	43.5	41.7	1.9 *	0.076
Number of quarters employed	1.7	1.7	0.1 *	0.076
Total earnings ($)	5,721	5,383	338 *	0.077
Year 2				
Ever employed (%)	27.5	26.5	1.0	0.384
Average quarterly employment (%)	21.4	21.0	0.4	0.682
Number of quarters employed	0.9	0.8	0.0	0.682
Total earnings ($)	3,298	3,196	102	0.583
Working with a post-random assignment employer				
Year 1				
Ever employed (%)	52.7	52.2	0.5	0.726
Average quarterly employment (%)	31.7	32.5	-0.8	0.438
Number of quarters employed	1.3	1.3	0.0	0.438
Total earnings ($)	3,325	3,542	-217	0.159
Year 2				
Ever employed (%)	59.7	60.6	-0.9	0.508
Average quarterly employment (%)	43.9	45.0	-1.1	0.341
Number of quarters employed	1.8	1.8	0.0	0.341
Total earnings ($)	6,229	6,416	-187	0.441
Sample size (total = 5,412)	2,710	2,702		

(continued)

Appendix Table E.10 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) records from the State of California.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

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

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Appendix Table E.11

Year 1-2, Impacts on Employment and Earnings, by Employer Status, Among Those Employed in the Quarter Prior to Random Assignment

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Working with any employer				
Year 1				
Ever employed (%)	94.4	94.3	0.1	0.878
Average quarterly employment (%)	79.5	77.6	1.9	0.132
Number of quarters employed	3.2	3.1	0.1	0.132
Total earnings ($)	10,918	10,388	530 *	0.081
Year 2				
Ever employed (%)	83.8	84.5	-0.7	0.647
Average quarterly employment (%)	71.7	70.6	1.1	0.465
Number of quarters employed	2.9	2.8	0.0	0.471
Total earnings ($)	11,348	10,820	527	0.158
Working with random assignment employer[a]				
Year 1				
Ever employed (%)	77.8	77.5	0.3	0.838
Average quarterly employment (%)	56.4	52.1	4.3 ***	0.006
Number of quarters employed	2.3	2.1	0.2 ***	0.006
Total earnings ($)	7,589	6,636	952 ***	0.002
Year 2				
Ever employed (%)	38.8	34.0	4.9 **	0.010
Average quarterly employment (%)	31.0	27.6	3.4 **	0.037
Number of quarters employed	1.2	1.1	0.1 **	0.037
Total earnings ($)	4,724	4,038	686 **	0.029
Working with a post-random assignment employer				
Year 1				
Ever employed (%)	56.4	55.7	0.8	0.698
Average quarterly employment (%)	33.7	35.1	-1.4	0.348
Number of quarters employed	1.3	1.4	-0.1	0.348
Total earnings ($)	3,374	3,772	-398 *	0.074
Year 2				
Ever employed (%)	62.3	65.0	-2.6	0.172
Average quarterly employment (%)	47.0	48.5	-1.4	0.403
Number of quarters employed	1.9	1.9	-0.1	0.403
Total earnings ($)	6,692	6,811	-119	0.734
Sample size (total = 2,450)	1,252	1,198		

(continued)

Appendix Table E.11 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) records from the State of California.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

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

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Appendix Table E.12

Year 1-2, Impacts on Employment and Earnings, by Employer Status, Among Those Not Employed in the Quarter Prior to Random Assignment

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Working with any employer				
Year 1				
Ever employed (%)	76.2	75.9	0.3	0.826
Average quarterly employment (%)	58.0	58.6	-0.6	0.684
Number of quarters employed	2.3	2.3	0.0	0.676
Total earnings ($)	7,457	7,666	-209	0.455
Year 2				
Ever employed (%)	68.1	69.6	-1.5	0.373
Average quarterly employment (%)	52.7	55.6	-2.8 *	0.065
Number of quarters employed	2.1	2.2	-0.1 *	0.065
Total earnings ($)	7,880	8,517	-637 *	0.065
Working with random assignment employer[a]				
Year 1				
Ever employed (%)	52.2	52.6	-0.4	0.843
Average quarterly employment (%)	32.8	33.0	-0.3	0.845
Number of quarters employed	1.3	1.3	0.0	0.845
Total earnings ($)	4,181	4,323	-143	0.558
Year 2				
Ever employed (%)	17.9	20.3	-2.3	0.103
Average quarterly employment (%)	13.3	15.5	-2.3 *	0.053
Number of quarters employed	0.5	0.6	-0.1 *	0.053
Total earnings ($)	2,113	2,486	-373 *	0.095
Working with a post-random assignment employer				
Year 1				
Ever employed (%)	49.6	49.4	0.2	0.930
Average quarterly employment (%)	30.2	30.3	-0.1	0.910
Number of quarters employed	1.2	1.2	0.0	0.910
Total earnings ($)	3,295	3,346	-51	0.811
Year 2				
Ever employed (%)	57.6	57.0	0.6	0.726
Average quarterly employment (%)	41.4	42.1	-0.8	0.619
Number of quarters employed	1.7	1.7	0.0	0.619
Total earnings ($)	5,852	6,082	-230	0.493
Sample size (total = 2,962)	1,458	1,504		

(continued)

Appendix Table E.12 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from unemployment insurance (UI) records from the State of California.

NOTES: See Appendix C.

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

Appendix F

ERA Survey Response Analysis for the Los Angeles Reach for Success Test

Appendix F assesses the reliability of impact results for the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) 12-Month Survey administered for the Los Angeles Reach for Success (RFS) test. It also examines whether the impacts for the survey respondents can be generalized to the impacts for the report sample. The appendix first describes how the survey sample was selected. Then it discusses the response rates for the survey sample for the RFS and PES (control) research groups. Next, it examines differences in background characteristics between survey respondents and survey nonrespondents, followed by a comparison of the two research groups among survey respondents. Using administrative data, the analysis then compares the impacts of the RFS program on employment, earnings, and receipt of public assistance that were estimated for the full report sample with impacts that were estimated for different subsamples created during the process of survey selection and interviewing. The most important comparison of impacts is between survey respondents and the full report sample. Finally, the appendix compares levels for each research group and impacts on measures of employment and public assistance as calculated using both survey responses and administrative records.

This appendix concludes — with some caution — that the results for the survey respondent sample can be generalized to the report sample. A comparison between research groups among the survey respondents shows no systematic differences among the groups in background characteristics that would affect respondents' likelihood of remaining employed and advancing in the labor market. However, a comparison of impact estimates among the different samples suggests the presence of a "cohort effect," which occurs when (1) selection of the survey sample was limited to a few months of sample intake and when (2) program effects for all sample members in that cohort (survey respondents and others) differ from effects for sample members who entered the study at other times. Cohort effects, if present, decrease the generalizability of the findings calculated from survey responses and require greater caution when interpreting program effects based on survey results.

Survey Sample Selection

As noted in the Introduction, the *report sample* includes 5,412 sample members who were randomly assigned from July 2002 through June 2004.

MDRC used a two-step process to select the sample for the ERA 12-Month Survey. First, the *survey-eligible sample* was selected. It includes 1,219 sample members, or 23 percent of the report sample, who were randomly assigned from July to December 2003. Eligible sample members were able to speak English or Spanish and were age 18 or older at their time of random assignment. The random assignment period for the eligible sample covers one-quarter of the entire sample intake period. Second, MDRC randomly selected 1,150 survey-eligible sample members to be interviewed. This sample is referred to as the *fielded survey sample* and includes 576 RFS members and 574 control group members.

Survey Response Rates

Sample members who were interviewed for the ERA 12-Month Survey are referred to as "survey respondents," or the *respondent sample,* while fielded sample members who were not interviewed are known as "nonrespondents," or the *nonrespondent sample.* Approximately 74 percent of the fielded sample, or 848 sample members, completed the survey. The response rate varied slightly among research groups, with 74 percent of the RFS group and 73 percent of the control group responding. About 84 percent of the nonrespondent sample could not be located or were located after the fielding period expired.[1]

Box F.1

Key Analysis Samples

Report sample. All single parents who were randomly assigned from July 2002 through June 2004.

Survey-eligible sample. Sample members in the report sample who were randomly assigned from July through December 2003 and who met the criteria for inclusion.

Fielded survey sample. Sample members who were randomly selected from the survey-eligible sample to be interviewed for the survey.

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 because they were not located, they refused to be interviewed, or for other reasons.

A response rate of more than 70 percent for each research group inspires confidence that findings calculated from survey responses may be generalized to all members of the report sample. However, response bias may occur even with a relatively high response rate — typically, when respondents from different research groups vary in background characteristics that may affect employment and welfare receipt. In addition, survey results would be less reliable if a large proportion of members of a key subgroup did not complete an interview.

[1]The remaining 16 percent of the nonrespondent sample were not interviewed because they were incapacitated, institutionalized, or deceased or because they refused to be interviewed.

Comparison Between Respondents and Nonrespondents Within the Survey Sample

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

Appendix Table F.1 shows the estimated logistic regression coefficients for the probability of being a respondent to the ERA 12-Month Survey. 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 statistically significant, suggesting that survey respondents and nonrespondents differed in at least one background characteristic. However, the only statistically significant predictor of being a survey respondent was limited English-speaking ability, which suggests that the two groups differed only slightly.

Comparison of the Research Groups in the Survey Respondent Sample

Although random assignment may succeed in creating research groups with similar background characteristics, the process of selecting and interviewing survey respondents may introduce differences between the groups. For example, program members who belong to certain subgroups (such as high school graduates or individuals with recent employment) may be easier (or harder) to find or more (or less) willing to be interviewed than their counterparts in the control group. If so, the composition of each research group in the survey respondent sample will vary. Differences by research group in background characteristics can introduce a serious bias, which diminishes the reliability of the survey results.

Appendix Table F.2 shows baseline characteristics of RFS and control group members. In general, differences between the research groups are relatively small and not statistically significant — a positive result. The only exception to this finding is that sample members with a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate made up a somewhat larger proportion of control group respondents than of RFS respondents. MDRC ran a more rigorous test of differences in background characteristics, using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, and obtained a similar finding in the respondent sample (results not shown).

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Appendix Table F.1

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

Los Angeles Reach for Success

	Survey Sample		
	Odds Ratio	P-Value	Standardized Estimate
ERA group	1.070	0.624	0.019
Youngest child ages 3-5	0.965	0.825	-0.010
Youngest child ages 6-12	1.089	0.622	0.023
Youngest child ages 13-18	1.121	0.530	0.029
Number of children	0.936	0.564	-0.031
Black, non-Hispanic	1.365	0.396	0.086
White	0.775	0.556	-0.034
Hispanic	1.131	0.747	0.033
English is not the primary language	0.804	0.547	-0.040
Limited English	2.152 *	0.052	0.129
No high school diploma/GED certificate	0.846	0.251	-0.046
Employed in the prior year	0.821	0.296	-0.052
Employed in the prior quarter	1.137	0.481	0.035
Received food stamps in the prior year	0.785	0.408	-0.036
Received AFDC in the prior year	0.975	0.210	-0.054
Long-term AFDC receipt	1.114	0.467	0.030
Region 1	0.987	0.949	-0.004
Region 5	0.992	0.967	-0.002
$\chi 2(19)$	31.2652 **		
Sample size (total = 1,148)			

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Los Angeles GEARS data and administrative records.

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Appendix Table F.2

Background Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	
Gender (%)			
Female	95.8	97.1	
Age (%)			
20 years or younger	7.9	5.5	
21 to 30 years	48.1	50.7	
31 to 40 years	30.8	28.6	
41 and older	13.1	15.2	
Average number of children	2.0	2.0	
Age of youngest child (%)			
Under 3 years	41.1	38.6	
3 to 5 years	25.2	25.0	
6 years and older	33.6	36.4	
Race/ethnicity (%)			
Hispanic	37.5	42.4	
Black, non-Hispanic	53.9	49.0	
White, non-Hispanic	5.4	5.2	
Other	3.3	3.3	
Primary language (%)			
English	87.4	84.1	
Limited English ability (%)	11.2	13.1	
Location (%)			
Region 1	34.8	35.0	
Region 5	38.8	40.0	
Region 6	26.4	25.0	
No high school diploma/GED certificate (%)	53.3	47.4	*
Employed in prior quarter (%)	47.0	42.1	
Employed in prior year (%)	64.3	64.3	
Long-term welfare receipt prior to random assignment (2 years or more) (%)	54.7	53.8	
Earnings in prior year ($)	3,570	3,507	

(continued)

Appendix Table F.2 (continued)

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group
Received food stamps in prior year (%)	90.7	92.9
Amount of food stamps received in prior year ($)	2,250	2,205
Received TANF in prior year (%)	97.0	96.2
Amount of TANF received in prior year ($)	5,281	5,181
Sample size (total = 848)	428	420

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Los Angeles GEARS data and administrative records.

NOTES: In order to assess differences in characteristics across research groups, chi-square tests were used for categorical variables, and t-tests were used for continuous variables. Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent.

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

Comparison of Survey Respondents with the Fielded Sample and the Report Sample

Using administrative records data, this section discusses whether respondents' impacts can be generalized to the fielded, eligible, and report samples. Consistency of impact findings among the samples is considered to be the best result, suggesting that impacts on measures calculated from survey responses can be generalized to the report sample. Survey results may be considered unreliable because of response bias when impacts for survey respondents that are calculated with administrative data differ in size and direction from results for all other samples. Other patterns of inconsistency point to additional problems with the survey findings. Limiting sample selection to certain months of sample intake may introduce a "cohort effect" — a pattern of impacts that also occurs in the fielded and eligible samples but that differs from the pattern when all members of the report sample are included. Alternatively, an unlucky sample draw may be inferred when impacts for the respondent sample resemble results for the fielded sample but findings for both samples vary from findings for the eligible and report samples from which they were drawn.

Appendix Table F.3 shows the adjusted means and impacts on several employment and public assistance outcomes for the report, eligible, fielded, and respondent samples in Year 1 and during the last quarter of the follow-up period.[2] The analysis found evidence of a cohort effect. As shown in Appendix Table F.3, impacts for RFS on employment, receipt of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and combined income from earnings and public assistance were stronger for the eligible, fielded, and respondent samples than for the report sample. As a result, greater caution is required when interpreting findings calculated from survey responses.

Consistency of Outcomes and Impacts Calculated with Survey Data and Administrative Data

This section compares the outcomes and impacts on employment and receipt of public assistance that were calculated using survey responses with the findings on similar measures calculated from administrative data for survey respondents. Several factors lead to differences in reported employment rates between the survey and UI-covered employment data. First, some respondents may underreport employment on surveys, whereas others may claim employment when they are not working. Second, employment data reported in surveys include jobs not

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

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Appendix Table F.3

Comparison of Impacts for the Report, Eligible, Fielded, and Respondent Samples

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Quarters 2–5				
Ever employed (%)				
Report sample	84.5	84.1	0.4	0.669
Eligible sample	86.4	82.6	3.8 *	0.052
Fielded sample	86.4	82.8	3.7 *	0.068
Respondent sample	85.6	83.5	2.1	0.380
Average quarterly employment (%)				
Report sample	67.7	67.2	0.5	0.583
Eligible sample	69.2	64.6	4.6 **	0.025
Fielded sample	69.0	64.8	4.2 **	0.045
Respondent sample	69.9	65.8	4.1 *	0.093
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)				
Report sample	50.2	47.8	2.4 *	0.062
Eligible sample	51.5	44.2	7.3 ***	0.008
Fielded sample	51.3	44.0	7.3 ***	0.010
Respondent sample	53.0	46.0	7.1 **	0.033
Number of quarters employed				
Report sample	2.7	2.7	0.0	0.589
Eligible sample	2.8	2.6	0.2 **	0.026
Fielded sample	2.8	2.6	0.2 **	0.047
Respondent sample	2.8	2.6	0.2 *	0.100
Earnings ($)				
Report sample	9,015	8,914	101	0.622
Eligible sample	9,181	8,453	728 *	0.091
Fielded sample	9,144	8,448	696	0.116
Respondent sample	9,354	8,584	770	0.145
Ever received TANF (%)				
Report sample	93.9	93.0	0.9	0.179
Eligible sample	93.1	89.5	3.6 **	0.026
Fielded sample	93.7	89.8	3.9 **	0.015
Respondent sample	94.8	89.6	5.1 ***	0.006
Amount of TANF received ($)				
Report sample	4,207	4,121	85	0.228
Eligible sample	4,105	4,024	82	0.589
Fielded sample	4,156	4,001	155	0.319
Respondent sample	4,132	4,014	118	0.520

(continued)

Appendix Table F.3 (continued)

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever received food stamps (%)				
Report sample	91.3	90.8	0.5	0.493
Eligible sample	91.1	88.3	2.8 *	0.081
Fielded sample	91.0	88.7	2.3	0.167
Respondent sample	90.6	87.9	2.7	0.172
Amount of food stamps received ($)				
Report sample	2,221	2,189	32	0.345
Eligible sample	2,246	2,167	79	0.275
Fielded sample	2,277	2,183	93	0.212
Respondent sample	2,200	2,237	-37	0.667
Total measured income ($)				
Report sample	15,443	15,224	219	0.223
Eligible sample	15,532	14,643	889 **	0.017
Fielded sample	15,576	14,632	944 **	0.015
Respondent sample	15,686	14,835	851 *	0.061
Last quarter in Year 1 (%)				
Ever employed				
Report sample	64.6	63.5	1.1	0.375
Eligible sample	67.2	61.3	5.9 **	0.024
Fielded sample	67.2	61.3	5.9 **	0.030
Respondent sample	68.7	61.9	6.8 **	0.030
Ever received TANF				
Report sample	66.6	64.3	2.3 *	0.062
Eligible sample	65.2	62.0	3.2	0.241
Fielded sample	65.6	62.0	3.6	0.190
Respondent sample	66.4	63.8	2.5	0.433
Ever received food stamps				
Report sample	69.3	66.7	2.6 **	0.032
Eligible sample	71.9	66.5	5.4 **	0.033
Fielded sample	72.5	67.0	5.5 **	0.034
Respondent sample	72.9	69.1	3.8	0.211

(continued)

Appendix Table F.3 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from administrative records.

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

The report sample includes 5,412 sample members; RFS group = 2,710; control group = 2,702.

The eligible sample includes 1,219 sample members; RFS group = 610; control group = 609.

The fielded sample includes 1,150 sample members; RFS group = 576; control group = 574.

The respondent sample includes 848 sample members; RFS group = 428; control group = 420.

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

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Appendix Table F.4

Comparison of Impacts for the Report, Eligible, Fielded, and Respondent Samples, for Sample Members Employed During the Quarter Prior to Random Assignment

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Quarters 2–5				
Ever employed (%)				
Report sample	94.4	94.3	0.1	0.906
Eligible sample	96.3	93.6	2.8	0.143
Fielded sample	96.6	93.4	3.2	0.100
Respondent sample	96.7	93.6	3.1	0.176
Average quarterly employment (%)				
Report sample	79.4	77.7	1.8	0.154
Eligible sample	82.4	74.1	8.2 ***	0.002
Fielded sample	82.3	74.1	8.2 ***	0.002
Respondent sample	84.0	74.0	9.9 ***	0.002
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)				
Report sample	61.9	57.6	4.4 **	0.023
Eligible sample	63.9	52.5	11.4 ***	0.006
Fielded sample	63.9	52.1	11.9 ***	0.006
Respondent sample	68.3	52.4	16.0 ***	0.001
Number of quarters employed				
Report sample	3.2	3.1	0.1	0.154
Eligible sample	3.3	3.0	0.3 ***	0.002
Fielded sample	3.3	3.0	0.3 ***	0.002
Respondent sample	3.4	3.0	0.4 ***	0.002
Earnings ($)				
Report sample	10,892	10,415	478	0.113
Eligible sample	11,510	9,769	1,741 ***	0.007
Fielded sample	11,503	9,686	1,817 ***	0.007
Respondent sample	12,082	9,453	2,629 ***	0.001
Ever received TANF (%)				
Report sample	92.4	91.2	1.2	0.289
Eligible sample	90.5	86.8	3.7	0.176
Fielded sample	91.2	86.5	4.8 *	0.087
Respondent sample	92.1	86.3	5.8 *	0.075
Amount of TANF received ($)				
Report sample	3,860	3,858	2	0.982
Eligible sample	3,663	3,909	-246	0.260
Fielded sample	3,705	3,919	-214	0.343
Respondent sample	3,570	3,998	-428	0.105

(continued)

Appendix Table F.4 (continued)

Outcome	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever received food stamps (%)				
Report sample	90.1	89.9	0.2	0.875
Eligible sample	87.2	86.7	0.5	0.852
Fielded sample	87.0	87.2	-0.2	0.951
Respondent sample	86.4	87.2	-0.7	0.828
Amount of food stamps received ($)				
Report sample	2,185	2,161	24	0.641
Eligible sample	2,117	2,172	-55	0.623
Fielded sample	2,141	2,194	-53	0.648
Respondent sample	2,070	2,325	-256 *	0.056
Total measured income ($)				
Report sample	16,937	16,433	504 *	0.061
Eligible sample	17,290	15,850	1,440 **	0.011
Fielded sample	17,348	15,799	1,550 ***	0.009
Respondent sample	17,722	15,776	1,946 ***	0.006
Last quarter in Year 1 (%)				
Ever employed				
Report sample	75.5	72.7	2.8	0.112
Eligible sample	81.0	70.8	10.2 ***	0.005
Fielded sample	81.5	70.7	10.8 ***	0.004
Respondent sample	83.6	69.0	14.6 ***	0.001
Ever received TANF				
Report sample	65.4	62.4	3.1	0.104
Eligible sample	64.9	62.8	2.1	0.594
Fielded sample	65.6	63.3	2.3	0.571
Respondent sample	63.7	67.3	-3.6	0.456
Ever received food stamps				
Report sample	68.6	66.3	2.3	0.198
Eligible sample	70.3	67.3	3.0	0.435
Fielded sample	71.0	68.1	2.9	0.458
Respondent sample	69.6	71.2	-1.6	0.728

(continued)

Appendix Table F.4 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from administrative records.

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

The report sample includes 2,450 sample members; RFS group = 1,252; control group = 1,198.

The eligible sample includes 543 sample members; RFS group = 288; control group = 255.

The fielded sample includes 510 sample members; RFS group = 273; control group = 237.

The respondent sample includes 378 sample members; RFS group = 201; control group = 177.

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

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Appendix Table F.5

Comparison of Impacts from the Administrative Records and the Survey Responses, for the Survey Respondent Sample

Los Angeles Reach for Success

Outcome (%)	Reach for Success Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Employed in Year 1				
Records impact	85.6	83.5	2.1	0.380
Survey impact	81.3	77.9	3.4	0.225
Employed at end of Year 1				
Records impact	68.7	61.9	6.8 **	0.030
Survey impact	58.7	53.0	5.7 *	0.093
Received TANF at end of Year 1				
Records impact	66.4	63.8	2.5	0.433
Survey impact	43.1	43.8	-0.7	0.838
Received food stamps at end of Year 1				
Records impact	72.9	69.1	3.8	0.211
Survey impact	62.6	61.9	0.7	0.834
Sample size (total = 848)	428	420		

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from administrative records and based on responses to the ERA 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: See Appendixes C and D.

covered by the UI system, such as self-employment, informal employment, and out-of-state jobs. This section also discusses possible mismatches in receipt of public assistance between survey responses and administrative data.

For this analysis, survey results are considered to be less reliable when members of one research group show a greater propensity to underreport their employment or receipt of public assistance than their counterparts in the other research group. Underreporting occurs when a respondent does not report employment or receipt of TANF or food stamps during the survey interview, whereas administrative data show employment or receipt. MDRC performed a match analysis on employment and found no variation by research group in the level of underreporting. About 20 percent of control group respondents reported that they were not working at the end of Year 1 — even though the UI records indicated employment — compared with 19 percent of respondents in the RFS group (results not shown).

Appendix Table F.5 shows a comparison of impacts from administrative records and survey responses for the survey respondent sample. As discussed above, RFS and control group respondents showed a similar propensity to underreport their employment. Respondents from both research groups also underreported TANF receipt and food stamp receipt at the end of Year 1. As a result, the survey shows lower employment rates, TANF receipt, and food stamp receipt for both groups at the end of Year 1, compared with levels calculated with UI wage records, but differences between the groups did not vary.

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