

Discussion Papers

TANF Policies for the
Hard to Employ:
Understanding State
Approaches and Future
Directions

Pamela Loprest
Pamela A. Holcomb
Karin Martinson
Sheila R. Zedlewski

The Urban Institute

07-03

July
2007



Assessing
the New
Federalism

*An Urban Institute
Program to Assess
Changing Social
Policies*

Assessing the New Federalism is a multiyear effort to monitor and assess the devolution of social programs from the federal government to the state and local levels. In collaboration with Child Trends, the project studies changes in family well-being.

Key components of the project include a household survey and studies of policies in 13 states, available at the Urban Institute's web site, <http://www.urban.org>. This paper is one in a series of discussion papers analyzing information from these and other sources.

The *Assessing the New Federalism* project is currently supported by The Annie E. Casey Foundation and The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

The nonpartisan Urban Institute publishes studies, reports, and books on timely topics worthy of public consideration. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, its funders, or other authors in the series.

Publisher: The Urban Institute, 2100 M Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037

Copyright © 2007. Permission is granted for reproduction of this document, with attribution to the Urban Institute.

Contents

Executive Summary	v
Context	2
Study Methods	6
State Approaches to Hard-to-Employ TANF Recipients	8
Evolution in State Approaches to Hard-to-Employ TANF Recipients	31
State Approaches and TANF Reauthorization	36
Policy Implications	42
References	45
About the Authors	46

Executive Summary

A primary goal of state Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs is to move recipients into employment. Many state TANF programs have specific strategies to increase employment among parents with serious barriers to work, sometimes called the “hard to employ.” This paper summarizes how states serve this population and recent changes in states’ approaches. Understanding how states’ TANF programs work with this population is particularly important as states consider possible changes to their welfare programs to meet the increased work requirements mandated by TANF’s reauthorization in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA).

This study summarizes states’ approaches to serving this population in fall 2006 and the changes states anticipate in the near future to help recipients move into work and off the caseload. The study is based on interviews with TANF program officials in 15 states, the District of Columbia, and New York City supplemented with relevant written materials, state policy information, and several local interviews. The states included are California, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin.¹

Findings

Almost all the states and localities we surveyed recognized by the fall 2006 that some groups of TANF recipients with barriers need a different or enhanced strategy from other TANF recipients if they are to move to work. This is a departure from a pure “work-first” model that required most recipients to find jobs immediately. There is a fairly dynamic environment in the states in

¹ In California, we also conducted interviews with Los Angeles and Alameda County administrators. In New York, our interviewing was only with New York City. Throughout this summary we refer to our sample as “17 states” for brevity.

their changes around serving hard-to-employ recipients. This fits with the increased flexibility TANF provides states to adjust their programs as the needs of their caseloads change over time. Considerable variation across states remains in their specific approaches toward hard-to-employ recipients. Here we summarize what we have learned from the states we interviewed.

Hard-to-Employ Population

- Many states report a reluctance to use the term “hard to employ,” concerned that such a label implies an inability to engage in meaningful work activities. Most states recognize a collection of specific problems, such as mental or physical health problems, substance abuse, and domestic violence, as potential barriers to moving toward work. Several states focus on long-term recipients as a population in need of specialized services.

Assessments and Timing

- States identify barriers in different ways and at different points in the TANF program. Some states have adopted fairly comprehensive initial assessments, occurring soon after receipt begins. Others use a “work test” to identify those who fail to meet work-related requirements and need assessment or services. Still others focus on those nearing time limits as an indication of need for assessments or additional services.
- Many states recognize the importance of an individualized approach. These states often use comprehensive assessments and individualized planning.

Work Participation

- Some states rely on universal or near-universal participation of recipients, including hard-to-employ recipients, in work preparation activities. These states typically recognize the needs of hard-to-employ recipients through a broad definition of participation activities that include barrier-alleviation activities.
- More than half the states we interviewed retain a category of recipients that they do not believe can successfully move into work. In most states, this category is limited to recipients with serious mental or physical health problems or disabilities. State programs also vary in how these recipients are identified and the size of this group. Most states without a specific

exempt category have some other way (within universal participation) to identify those who need some specialized services and cannot, at least temporarily, participate in work activities.

- States with strong economies tend to say that fewer recipients need help with barriers in order to find employment.

Services for Hard to Employ

- Some states focus on intensive case management and individual counseling as a main strategy for hard-to-employ recipients, along with services to address barriers. These states often stress the multiple barriers faced by recipients and the need for a service broker. Some report that intensive case management or counseling itself helps many recipients move successfully to work without specific barrier services.
- While almost all states incorporate services to address barriers as part of their strategy for hard-to-employ recipients, states vary in how this is implemented. Some states contract for these services at the state level or require that localities provide specific types of services. Other states allow much more local autonomy and variation. Some states and localities rely mostly on referrals to services available in the community. Others use TANF dollars to fund services sometimes through direct pay-for-performance contracts.
- A few states report having significant transitional or community jobs programs that are focused on recipients who have a difficult time finding work. These programs typically combine work with a range of additional supports and services to address barriers.
- Several states have formal processes to assist TANF recipients in applying for SSI disability benefits. These efforts focus on helping those with serious health problems who have difficulties working. States report needing to be careful not to broaden this pool of applicants too widely as the application process can be lengthy and those found ineligible will have lost time to prepare for work.

Issues in Coordinating Services

- States vary by whether they combine work-related activities with barrier services versus following a more sequential model of services, then work. Few states have developed programs that actually integrate work with barrier services (as opposed to requiring some hours of both). Transitional or community jobs programs for the hard to employ are an example of states integrating work and barrier-support services.

- While several states indicate having contracts with other service agencies such as vocational rehabilitation and mental health, few states report extensive coordination with state agencies or programs in terms of planning, cross-staff education, and joint provision of services.

Evolution of State Programs

- State TANF programs continued to change after the initial flurry of activity post-1996, and not all in response to federal rule changes. More than half the states we surveyed have changed their approach toward hard-to-employ recipients since 2000. Some changes were largely in anticipation of reauthorization changes, but many others were the result of states' ongoing monitoring and recognition of problem areas.
- Many states that have not changed their programs since 2000 were early adopters of a universal participation model and early experimenters with welfare reform. Seeking to have all recipients “do something,” these states were early to incorporate alternate activities and goals and, in some cases, services addressing recipient barriers to work.

Responses to DRA

- States report various responses to DRA related to their work with hard-to-employ recipients. These include “tightening up” their TANF process (quicker assessments and less time in barrier-alleviation services), combining work and barrier services, improving connections with other non-TANF service programs, helping recipients in the SSI application process, and working more intensively with sanctioned families.
- States report concerns over their ability to continue offering certain activities such as education and counseling. Many states feel that these activities are important enough that they will find a way to continue them.
- States also report concerns over the greater need for monitoring activities and the potential impact of redirecting resources toward these activities.

Policy Implications

Recent changes in state approaches to the hard to employ provide some insight into the challenge of serving this population. States must struggle with maximizing work participation while still recognizing that some clients have a difficult time finding and keeping sustainable, paid work.

Programs recognize the multiple barriers facing recipients, but assessing needs and providing effective services that address these needs while preparing recipients for work can be daunting. Solutions toward the hard to employ also must fit the general program philosophy and the current economic and political environment in the state. In addition, many activities that address barriers to work no longer count toward work participation and will lead to further changes in states' TANF programs.

The future implications of DRA for states are unclear at this time. Some states argue that increased work requirements and narrowing of countable activities run counter to the needs of hard-to-employ recipients. States also mention the potential for increased vulnerability to sanctions for not meeting work requirements as the focus on hours increases. Other states anticipate needing to spend more time and money on documentation and tracking that might divert funds from other activities. Even states that do not expect difficulties in meeting work participation requirements, report that the new regulations do not give the states "credit" for the harder work it takes to get recipients with multiple barriers to work.

Some states report on the potential for positive outcomes for DRA. Several respondents explain that the changes could encourage more engagement of hard-to-serve recipients and focus this engagement more closely on work preparation. Some states' activities already support this direction. Several states and localities mention efforts to better integrate activities that address barriers with activities more directly work related. In addition, states will likely provide more assistance to those applying for SSI to facilitate the application process.

Ultimately, the impact of DRA on the hard to employ remains to be seen. This study shows, however, that most states have some focused efforts on this group, and these efforts likely

will continue. It will be important to monitor state policy changes over the next few years, especially outcomes for hard-to-employ parents on TANF.

TANF Policies for the Hard to Employ

A primary goal of state Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs is to move recipients into employment. Many state TANF programs include specific strategies to increase employment among parents with serious barriers to work, sometimes called the “hard to employ.” This paper summarizes how states serve this population and recent changes in states’ approaches.

A large literature has documented the relatively high prevalence of barriers to work among the TANF recipient population, including such problems as low levels of education and literacy, physical and mental health issues, substance abuse, experience of domestic violence, learning disabilities, and criminal records. These studies also have found strong negative connections between having multiple barriers and the probability of work.² Understanding how states’ TANF programs work with this population is particularly important as states consider possible changes to their welfare programs to meet the increased work requirements mandated by TANF’s reauthorization in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA).

While several early studies examined specific innovative TANF initiatives focused on the hard to employ in different parts of the country,³ there has been limited recent information about states’ approaches and whether they have been changing. This paper summarizes states’ approaches to serving this population in fall 2006 based on interviews with TANF program officials in 15 states, the District of Columbia, and New York City. These interviews are supplemented with relevant written materials, state policy information, and several local interviews. The states included are California, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South

² See, for example, Hauan and Dougals (2004).

³ See, for example, Dion et al. (1999) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2002).

Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin.⁴ We asked states about their current approaches to the hard to employ, how their approach has evolved in recent years, and whether they think their approach will change in response to the DRA.

The paper is organized as follows. First, we describe the context for and methods used in our study. We then discuss states' definitions of the hard-to-employ TANF population, and state approaches to this population in the areas of work participation, assessment, and service strategies. We go on to discuss the evolution of policies for the hard to serve in these states and future changes states are considering, particularly in relation to passage of the DRA.

Context

Federal TANF regulations seek to promote work through mandatory work participation requirements, limited exemptions from work requirements, sanctions for those that do not comply with requirements, and time limits on benefit receipt. Although states have considerable flexibility to set policies within this framework, TANF clearly focuses on work more than its predecessor, Aid to Dependent Families with Children (AFDC). Although AFDC included employment-related programs, it exempted a large share of the adult caseload, and most state programs did not have a strong focus on work (U.S. General Accounting Office 1995). As TANF programs have matured over the past 10 years, state and local office directors have had time to observe how initial programs and policies were working for the hard to employ.

Policies Affecting Hard-to-Employ Recipients

Many TANF policy choices that states make have important implications for hard-to-employ recipients, including choices on sanctions, time limits, and work requirements.⁵ These decisions

⁴ In California, we also conducted interviews with Los Angeles and Alameda County administrators. In New York, our interviews were only with New York City officials. Throughout the paper we refer to our sample as "17 states" for brevity, although results are actually for 15 states, the District of Columbia, and New York City.

often reflect a broad state philosophy toward the TANF program in general and sometimes hard-to-employ recipients in particular.

As context for our discussion on the different approaches to the hard to employ in the 17 states we interviewed, table 1 shows information on TANF policy choices for these states.⁶ These policies include whether the state has established a separate state program (SSP) for the hard to employ, whether it has a full-family sanction, and how the state has structured its time limit on benefits. Since SSPs are funded with state (and sometimes local) money, participants placed in these programs are not covered by federal TANF work participation rules.⁷ Full-family sanctions eliminate the total cash TANF grant from families who are not in compliance, as opposed to allowing a partial benefit to continue. Shorter time limits mean fewer months for individuals to prepare for and find work. Federal rules allow states to exempt 20 percent of the caseload from the five-year federal time limit. We also include in the table our calculation from state reports on the percentage of the TANF caseload that is exempted from work requirements owing to illness or incapacity.⁸

⁵ See Zedlewski, Holcomb, and Loprest (2007) for a broad discussion of how state policy choices may affect hard-to-employ TANF recipients.

⁶ This information is from secondary data and not obtained from the interviews conducted for this study. The Welfare Rules Database (Rowe and Murphy 2006) contains information on state welfare policies using caseworker handbooks and reviews by state agencies. TANF administrative data reported by the states to the federal government also contain information on persons subject to work exemptions, in sanction status, nearing or exempt from time limits, and in separate state programs.

⁷ The DRA changed this rule to require inclusion of all families in SSPs if the state money used to fund them is counted in required maintenance-of-effort (MOE) funds for TANF.

⁸ This includes those in TANF or an SSP who are ill or incapacitated as a percentage of families on TANF or in a SSP with an adult in the family or on sanction. See table for details.

Table 1: State Policies Affecting the Hard to Employ, 2005

State	Has separate state program for ill or incapacitated ^a	Percent of total caseload ill or incapacitated ^b	Full-Family Sanction: ^c		First time limit (months)
			First	Last	
California	X	10.9			60 ^d
District of Columbia	X	5.9			—
Florida	*	1.5	X	X	48
Georgia	X	1.2		X	48
Maryland	X	16.0	X	X	60
Michigan		30.5	X	X	—
Minnesota	X	6.8		X	60
New Jersey	X	13.3		X	60
New York	X	17.2			—
Ohio		1.0	X	X	36
Oregon		29.7		X	24 of 84
Pennsylvania		19.4		X	60
South Carolina	X	29.6	X	X	24 of 120
Tennessee	*	4.3	X	X	18
Texas		24.1	X	X	12, 24, or 36 ^e
Washington	*	5.6		X	—
Wisconsin		0.9			60

Source: National TANF Database as of 4/6/2005, tables 12, 27, and 65. Data at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov//programs/ofa/character/FY2005/indexfy05.htm>.

^a States that have a separate state program that includes ill or incapacitated adults. * indicates states where less than 1 percent of combined SSP/TANF adult caseload is reported in separate state program (SSP) and exempt due to illness or incapacitation.

^b Percent is state report of ill or incapacitated adults in TANF or SSP as a percent of all families in TANF or SSP with an adult in the case or in sanction.

^c First refers to use of a full-family sanction for the first instance of noncompliance. Last refers to the use of full-family sanction as the ultimate sanction after other instances of noncompliance and less severe sanctions.

^d The time limit applies only to the adult in the unit; children continue to receive benefits.

^e Time limits vary by recipients education and work experience.

Of the states in our study, three do not have a full-family sanction at all (California, the District of Columbia, and New York) and seven have a full-family sanction that is imposed at the first incidence of noncompliance with work requirements (Florida, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas). In our sample, seven states have time limits that are shorter than the 60-month federal limit (Florida, Georgia, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas). Four other states have eliminated the time limit by using state funds for those who remain on TANF after reaching the federal limit (the District of Columbia, Michigan, New York, and Washington). California cuts the adult portion of the grant at 60 months but

continues the child portion. Seven of our 17 states have SSPs for those who are ill or incapacitated that included at least 1 percent of their overall TANF caseload in 2005.

Across the 17 states in our study, the size of state TANF caseloads that are exempt owing to illness or incapacitation varies greatly. For example, Michigan, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas each report about 20 percent of their 2005 caseload (including TANF and SSP recipients) is exempt for this reason. Florida, Georgia, Ohio, and Wisconsin report less than 2 percent exempt. As discussed later, exemption policies and practices vary considerably across states, so this categorization both reflects state policy choices regarding whether to use and how to define an official exemption category, as well as the actual prevalence of hard-to-employ recipients within the caseload. In addition, these figures mainly reflect exemptions related to health. States have other exemption categories (for example, based on age of youngest child) that are not included here.

TANF Reauthorization and the Hard to Employ

Some states' current policies and approaches toward hard-to-employ TANF recipients may change as a result of the DRA. Most states will need to meet higher work participation requirements than they did before DRA and will find that the group subject to these requirements is broader.⁹ For example, states must include adults in SSPs when calculating their participation rates. While states will still be able to exempt hard-to-employ parents from work requirements, DRA places much more pressure on states to move a broader group of families into jobs quickly. In some states, it may provide incentives to engage hard-to-employ recipients in activities to prepare for work who were not engaged in the past. Our interviews provide an early picture of how some states are planning to react to DRA regarding hard-to-employ parents.

⁹ We describe some details of the DRA requirements in a later section of the paper. Also, see the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the Center for Law and Social Policy (2007) for a thorough discussion of the changes in federal TANF rules included in the DRA and potential ways states can react.

Study Methods

This study is based primarily on telephone interviews with state-level TANF program administrators and interviews with local level administrators in two large states. Many states have specific, innovative programs operating in one county or region. However, because we are interested in statewide policies and approaches that potentially influence the entire state TANF caseload, we primarily focus on the state level. We aim to better understand how state's decisions may already have or will change toward the hard to employ and how this fits within the broader TANF system rather than to provide information on innovative or best practice programs.

State Selection

Given limited study resources, we selected a sample of states to interview. We based our state selection on a variety of state factors. We wanted the final group of states to include a relatively high percentage of the national TANF caseload; variation in TANF policies on sanctions, time limits, and the use of SSPs; and regional geographic variation. In addition, among states of similar caseload size, TANF policies, and geography, we gave preference to those states that we had previous experience studying or special knowledge of their TANF program.

In California and New York, we conducted interviews at the local level. Because California is such a large state geographically, includes a high percentage of the national TANF caseload, and its counties make many TANF policy choices, it is useful to provide a local perspective on these issues. We conducted interviews with staff of the Los Angeles and Alameda County TANF programs as well as at the state level. Our results reflect California state policy, with some reports of local initiatives. In New York, we interviewed New York City TANF program staff because of the large share of the state's caseload living there and the differences in

policies and systems in New York City versus in the rest of the state. Also, previous study of New York City’s approaches to the hard to employ and recent innovations provided an important rationale for a city-level interview. We did not interview New York state TANF program officials. Our reported results reflect New York City’s approach to the hard to employ.

Table 2 shows the states included in the study and each state’s TANF caseload in 2005, defined as families receiving TANF or in a TANF SSP with an adult in the case (including sanctioned adults). The table also shows the state caseload as a percentage of the national caseload. The states we surveyed include 868,000 TANF families, more than two-thirds of the national caseload.

Table 2: Share of the Caseload in Study States, 2005

State	Caseload (excluding non-sanction child only cases) ^a	Caseload as percent of U.S. total
U.S. total	1,267,379	100.00%
California	284,981	22.49%
District of Columbia	13,828	1.09%
Florida	22,502	1.78%
Georgia	16,773	1.32%
Maryland	16,370	1.29%
Michigan	53,048	4.19%
Minnesota	23,186	1.83%
New Jersey	32,510	2.57%
New York	131,895	10.41%
Ohio	39,450	3.11%
Oregon	10,852	0.86%
Pennsylvania	70,824	5.59%
South Carolina	10,369	0.82%
Tennessee	53,389	4.21%
Texas	41,434	3.27%
Washington	37,534	2.96%
Wisconsin	9,532	0.75%
Total caseload covered by states in study	868,477	68.53%

Source: National TANF Database as of 4/6/2005. Data at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov//programs/ofa/character/FY2005/indexfy05.htm>.

^aThis caseload is the sum of all families on TANF and in Separate State Programs with an adult in the case or in sanction. Note that sanction data for child-only units is not available for Maryland.

Interviews

For each state and local office, we conducted an interview with one or more TANF program administrators and staff who were knowledgeable about policies for hard-to-employ recipients. The types of positions held by the individuals we spoke with include directors and deputy directors of state TANF programs, directors and deputy directors of state workforce or employment programs that administer TANF work programs, and directors of research and program or policy analysts for TANF programs.

We used a semistructured interview protocol for all interviews that asked about whether and how states define the hard to employ; their current approach toward the hard to employ including services, requirements, and connections with other public agencies; recent changes and assessment of their current approach; and plans for future changes related to hard to employ. All interviews were conducted via telephone in fall 2006.

State Approaches to Hard-to-Employ TANF Recipients

In the post-welfare reform era, states have overwhelmingly focused on the central importance of work for families receiving welfare. But states vary broadly in how this philosophy translates into specific policies for hard-to-employ recipients. This section discusses the results of our survey interviews on state approaches to hard-to-employ TANF recipients. We first discuss how states define “hard to employ” and then describe the different elements of states’ approaches from our sample of states. For reference, table 3 includes short paragraphs highlighting important aspects of each state’s approach to the hard to employ for the 17 states (or localities) in the study.

How Do States Define “Hard to Employ”?

While there is clear consensus among states that some share of TANF recipients find it more difficult to find and maintain employment owing to various personal and family barriers, there is

no common formal definition or criteria used by states to identify and categorize these families within their TANF caseload. The term “hard to employ” is thus best understood as a catch-all term for individuals with barriers to employment that has sufficient familiarity to be used as a short-hand reference for the purpose of general discussion. Some states note that they purposely avoid using this term (or the term “hard-to-serve” which shares a similar connotation), finding the concept of labeling clients based on their “inabilities” or “barriers” antithetical to their overall program philosophy, stigmatizing, or sending a counterproductive message to both clients and program staff. A few states use specific definitions to identify groups of recipients eligible for specific programs or services targeted at the hard to employ but suggest that recipients in the caseload with similar problems might not be captured by these specific definitions.

Table 3: State Approaches to the Hard to Employ

State	Approach
California	California exempts a group of hard to employ from work requirements. Others with barriers are required to participate, but barrier-alleviation services can be counted as participation. The state allows a great deal of flexibility across counties in structuring services and defining categories. The state provides separate dedicated funding to counties for substance abuse and mental health services.
District of Columbia	D.C. allows for exemptions from work requirements for incapacity. TANF funds are used to administer a home visiting program targeted primarily, although not exclusively, at long-term recipients and those in sanction status to identify barriers and help them access additional supports—from child care and transportation problems to such personal barriers as domestic violence and substance abuse problems.
Florida	Florida’s TANF program has a strong work focus. The state does not exempt clients from work, although they can receive a “good cause” exemption from the time limit. Hard-to-employ clients with exemptions or extensions must work on resolving their barriers. TANF and the workforce development system are integrated; barrier-alleviation services are coordinated through the one-stop system and vary locally in funding and availability.
Georgia	Georgia focuses on barrier-identification and referral to barrier-related services. There are no exemptions from work requirements for hard-to-employ recipients, but individuals can be “deferred” from work activities until their barriers are addressed, and individuals can combine treatment and work activities. Georgia also has a transitional jobs program for hard-to-serve TANF recipients.
Maryland	Maryland has a separate state program (SSP) for adults with disabilities and otherwise a universal engagement model. The state has a full-family sanction but also an active sanction reconciliation process that attempts to bring clients into compliance. Maryland has a good deal of local variability designed to fit the employment and service characteristics of the local area.
Michigan	Michigan has traditionally operated a strong work-first program combined with exemptions for serious health and disability problems. All other recipients are required to participate in work-oriented activities, with minimal and informal connection to barrier-alleviation services. More recently, the state has adopted a new approach, the Jobs, Education, and Training program (JET) that is currently being piloted in various sites and will be implemented statewide in 2007. JET places much greater emphasis on assessment for barriers and individualized service planning for those identified with employment barriers.
Minnesota	Minnesota has no exemptions from the work requirements but allows those with documented illness and injuries to develop a modified employment plan with fewer hours of work and more flexibility around services. This enables individuals to receive treatment services or combine work and treatment. Minnesota also has a service integration pilot project, with substantial county variation, focusing on developing sustainable strategies that coordinate services across different systems and allow for earlier barrier identification.
New Jersey	New Jersey’s Supportive Assistance to Individuals and Families (SAIF) program provides intensive case management to those nearing the 60-month time limit to identify and address their barriers. In general, New Jersey allows work activities that are not federally countable and have good cause exceptions. It also has special statewide initiatives on substance abuse and mental health. Counties vary in trying to tailor activities to those with barriers.

State	Approach
New York City	NYC's WeCARE program uses pay for performance contractors to conduct intensive services and case management designed to address employment barriers. Services include barrier-stabilization activities and job search and employment preparation when the individual is ready. The goal is to get medical problems under control and then move individuals gradually into work.
Ohio	Ohio requires participation by all recipients but does allow the hard to employ to engage in "alternative activities" that can include activities aimed at removing or stabilizing barriers to employment. As a county-administered welfare system, the extent to which recipients are placed in alternative activities and delivery of barrier alleviation services varies considerably at the local level.
Oregon	Oregon emphasizes combining barrier alleviation services with work-oriented activities. There are no exemptions for the hard to employ. Oregon requires localities to contract for services that address a wide range of barriers, including mental and physical health, rehabilitation services, domestic violence, and transitional jobs.
Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania moved to a universal engagement model in 2005. Under this approach, the state uses individual assessments to identify employment barriers. Those who are identified receive intensive case management to focus on such issues as disability, mental health, and drug problems. Afterwards, these clients are required to work, with the number of hours and type of work matched to their abilities in an accommodated employment model.
South Carolina	South Carolina identifies the hard to serve at application and exempts those identified from work, sanctions and time limits. The Specialized Training and Rehabilitation program refers TANF recipients who are hard to serve to community non-TANF funded services.
Tennessee	Tennessee operates under a waiver until July 2007. Tennessee's program has a strong focus on adult education for those with low education and literacy. The Family Counseling Services (FSC) program provides counseling to those who have multiple barriers or have failed at work activities. FSC participation counts as a work activity and is designed to be used (and usually is) in combination with other activities. Counselors can refer people to community services, which vary across areas.
Texas	The state exempts a group of persons with serious health and disability problems or caring for a family member with disability when eligibility is determined. All nonexempt are referred to employment services. Those who do not find jobs in 4-6 weeks enter a community jobs program. Connection to barrier-alleviation services is only minimal and informal.
Washington	Washington has a statewide transitional jobs program for hard-to-serve TANF recipients. Participants work 20 hours a week in a temporary, paid job for up to 6 months, with an additional 20 hours a week spent on barrier management, including soft skills training, mental health and substance abuse counseling, or basic education. In 2006, the state implemented a "comprehensive assessment" to more effectively identify barriers for TANF recipients. Washington provides an exemption from the work requirements for individuals with barriers to employment that need to be "stabilized" before they can enter an employment pathway.
Wisconsin	Wisconsin's W-2 program assigns those assessed as not job ready due to significant employment barriers to the W-2 Transitions program. Those participating in this program tier receive TANF cash assistance and individualized case management and services to address barriers for up to 24 months, with review and extensions on a case-by-case basis. Wisconsin added a formal barrier screening tool three years ago to improve upon its initial screening.

Source: Authors' interviews with TANF program staff and supplemental materials.

Despite the lack of a formal or common definition for what constitutes a hard-to-employ TANF recipient, the most commonly noted “working definition” refers to individuals with significant (and often multiple) barriers to employment who need more specialized services in order to move to work than typically available through a welfare or employment agency. As part of this definition, several states use the idea of recipients who are “not work ready.” Another working definition mentioned by several localities (including DC, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee) is long-term welfare receipt, where duration on welfare serves as a proxy for those with barriers.

Physical incapacity, substance abuse, mental health problems, and family violence are most often mentioned as examples of recipient circumstances that create barriers to employment and contribute to longer stays on welfare. Low literacy, learning disabilities, limited English proficiency, and criminal records are also commonly mentioned factors associated with clients that need additional help.

Based on our discussions, state respondents do not share a consistent view on the portion of the TANF population that is hard to employ or whether the share of the caseload that falls within this group has changed over the past five years. A few states estimate that the hard to employ accounts for just a small portion of the TANF caseload—10 percent or less. Seven states provide estimates that one-third or more of their caseload is hard to employ. About half the respondents interviewed perceive no change in the relative share of the caseload that could be classified as hard to employ over the past five years. The rest are roughly split between those who think that it has increased and those who think it has decreased.

Given the variation in TANF policies and program designs and the absence of a common definition of who makes up the hard to employ, the divergence in perceptions regarding the

relative share of TANF recipients with conditions that make them hard to employ is not surprising—although it is striking that at the 10-year mark of welfare reform, there remains so little consensus across states on this issue.

Work Participation Requirements and Allowable Activities

All the states surveyed emphasize the general view that most TANF recipients, regardless of the prevalence or severity of barriers, can and should participate in some activity that will move them closer to work. States vary, however, in how much recipients are required to participate and the activities in which recipients can participate.

All TANF programs provide and require some work-related activities such as job search, job readiness classes, training, or community service jobs. However, many states supplement these traditional work activities with barrier-alleviation activities—activities that seek to address hard-to-employ recipients’ specific barriers to work, including mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, or rehabilitation activities. These states typically view barrier-alleviation activities as a necessary step in work preparation for some recipients. Most states we interviewed include barrier-alleviation activities as part of their allowable activities.

Some states take the approach that *all* recipients, including those with barriers, can and should be actively engaged in some work or work preparation activity that is monitored by the welfare program. Often this is part of a structured plan of activities that moves recipients toward work readiness and eventually into private-sector employment. Of the 17 states we interviewed, 6 (Georgia, Florida, Minnesota, Ohio, Oregon, and Wisconsin) report they require all recipients to participate in some activity. The other states interviewed define a group of recipients for whom they do not require participation.

Most states requiring universal participation have some status for individuals who are not ready or able to participate in direct work-related activities and allow for alternatives to traditional work activities. For example, Georgia allows work activities to be deferred but requires the individual still be involved in some activity working toward a goal appropriate for that family, even if that goal is moving onto disability benefits. Florida reports it has “good cause” exemptions that mark individuals as temporarily not in the work program but still required to participate in some activity, decided individually. Ohio and Oregon also recognize that some individuals may be able to do less than full work participation. Ohio allows various alternative activities with the goal of leading to work. Oregon reports the state will work with medical personnel to craft a plan for what an individual can do. Minnesota allows for a “modified work plan” that may mean fewer hours in work activities and engagement in barrier alleviation services. Wisconsin’s tiered system has an entirely separate track (W-2 Transitions) for individuals that are screened as not ready for unsubsidized employment and unable to participate in community service jobs. Recipients are limited to 24 months in this track, with extensions on a case-by-case basis.

Although each state with universal participation has recipients who are not participating in work-related activities, all recipients must engage in some goal-oriented activity. Another potentially important distinction is that for the most part, states refer all participants to employment services when they become eligible for TANF, as opposed to separating them into a different track. Several states mentioned this connection is important for the eventual goal of moving into work, even if recipients do not initially participate in work-related activities.

Some states designate a group of hard-to-employ recipients for whom there are no participation requirements.¹⁰ In most of these states, this group is considered “unemployable”; this term often refers to those who have serious physical or mental disabilities. Several states report that they reserve this category for those with the most severe health or substance abuse problems. Other states include a much broader set of individuals. How states define and identify (up front or over time) this group and its size varies considerably. For example, about 11 percent of Maryland’s adult cases are in its disability SSP. All these recipients have a documented disability lasting 12 months or longer. Several states, including California, New Jersey, and Texas, exempt those “who cannot work at all” determined largely by self-reports verified with medical documentation.

Several states report that they do not have exemptions per se, but they have a defined or systematic process that puts those identified as having serious barriers in a separate, temporary track or program with required activities to prepare them to move into work activities. Pennsylvania, Washington, and Wisconsin all fall under this category. Washington refers to this separate track as a time where recipients can “stabilize” their problems through counseling or rehabilitation. Pennsylvania has a new initiative that is trying to work intensively with recipients with barriers to prepare them for work activities.

None of the states we interviewed have decided that *all* recipients can be moved toward work and independence from TANF with just direct work-related activities. Michigan and Texas both emphasize mainly work-related activities, but both have a fairly significant portion of the caseload exempted from activity participation. Texas reports that over 30 percent of TANF

¹⁰ Some states, including Maryland and Michigan, require certain recipients with exemptions from work to apply for SSI benefits. State efforts to provide support for this process are described later. Many states have additional groups of recipients who are not required to participate, such as those caring for disabled family members or with young children. These additional exemption groups are not part of our discussion here.

recipients are exempted from work activities owing to their own illness or disability or because they are caring for a child or adult with an illness or disability. Michigan reports that about one-quarter of TANF recipients are exempt because of disability. Michigan is currently moving to change its policies to provide greater emphasis on assessment and barrier-alleviation activities.¹¹

Screening and Assessment of Barriers

Most states have some level of screening and assessments to identify TANF recipients' employment barriers. The extensiveness and timing of these barrier identification methods is integrally linked with states' overall approach toward the hard to employ.

Before TANF, states generally had little experience either identifying or addressing the types of barriers frequently experienced by the hard to employ. The identification of barriers was mainly confined to determining exemptions from participation in the employment and training program that preceded TANF under AFDC. Exemptions generally were based on the existence of a condition that fell under the broad heading of illness or incapacity and were self-reported by the client with verification from a medical professional.

Given time limits and the increased emphasis on moving recipients to work under TANF, the use and timing of screening and assessment has taken on greater importance as a tool for helping states determine how recipients should be treated under welfare-to-work program expectations and requirements. In the years since TANF began, there has been much work on developing screening and assessment tools for use by welfare offices (Thompson, Van Ness, and O'Brien 2001). Many different models of how and when to screen and assess TANF recipients have been adopted by states.

¹¹ This change is described further in the section on policy evolution.

In many states, the details of screening and assessment implementation are decided at the local level. The state can play a role, however, in developing or adopting varying screening and assessment tools to make available to local offices, providing resources or connections to non-TANF experts to conduct assessments, or implementing more comprehensive assessments as part of a statewide strategy for serving the hard to employ. All these activities were reported in the states we interviewed.

In general, states use screening and assessment for three primary purposes: (1) to determine whether a recipient qualifies as exempt from having to participate in TANF activities they would otherwise be required to fulfill, (2) to determine if additional services beyond those directly tied to obtaining a job are needed in order for a recipient to ultimately become employable and leave welfare and what those services should be, or (3) to determine that exemptions or additional barrier-alleviation services are not needed.

States that have some group of recipients not required to work are more likely to have screening at the point of application to determine exemption status. This type of screening often allows recipients to self-disclose a reason that might qualify them for an exemption, followed by required verification by a medical professional.

Some states that include barrier alleviation activities in their approach to hard-to-employ recipients use screenings and assessments early in the TANF eligibility process to identify barriers. The assessment then becomes the starting point for designing a service plan to provide clients with assistance and resources needed to alleviate or mitigate barriers and take steps that are necessary for the client to ultimately become employable and leave welfare. In some states, an outcome of these assessments is determination of an “unemployable” or group exempt from work requirements.

We find a great deal of variation in assessment activities among states with barrier alleviation as part of their approach to hard to employ. Staff in several states note the need for better assessments, including the District of Columbia, Michigan, Ohio, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Many states, including most with engagement strategies that require all recipients to participate in some activity, do not have statewide assessment strategies. Many allow local areas to decide how assessment is carried out, sometimes making assessment tools available for localities to use if they want. For example, Tennessee has a job readiness assessment tool that contractors are given and can use as they see fit, and Ohio leaves the use of assessment tools up to county discretion. Some states have screening tools for particular barriers, such as substance abuse, that are administered to all or many recipients. Maryland, for example, has 77 addiction specialists statewide (one in every TANF office) to screen TANF recipients and refer those in need to services. In some states, beyond initial screeners, case managers determine individually what assessments are necessary.

Five states report having a statewide up-front assessment strategy to identify barriers and direct recipients toward different activities (Georgia, Minnesota, New York City, Washington, and Wisconsin), although these strategies vary in the comprehensiveness of the assessment. Washington reports that in the past recipients were not getting into the right service pathway or were staying too long in a certain pathway. The state has determined that a more comprehensive up-front assessment will increase the likelihood that recipients are placed in the most appropriate activities from the start. The resulting comprehensive assessment is given to everyone on TANF. The assessment was designed with four partners: the Department of Social and Health Services; the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges; the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development; and the Employment Securities Department. Individuals are

assessed when they first enter TANF, and a team leader makes referrals to appropriate activities. The types of barriers being regularly identified include family violence, criminal history, lack of skills or training, and mental health problems.

New York City reports that a growing number of recipients were facing challenges to work and needed more intensive services and that identification of client barriers was fragmented and treated sequentially, potentially resulting in longer stays on TANF. In response, the city recently implemented a new program that includes a comprehensive medical assessment. Vendors conduct a “biopsychosocial” assessment that categorizes recipients into four groups: fully employable, employable with limitations, needs treatment for unstable medical condition that affects employability, or unemployable. The biopsychosocial assessment is a medical examination designed to be holistic, identifying all relevant medical and mental health conditions as well as social and community circumstances that affect client employability. Based on the assessment, the client is provided with an individualized plan that is used to determine appropriate activities and next steps.

Georgia also has implemented statewide an early assessment that identifies clients as “job ready,” “near-job ready” (with short-term barrier issues that could be addressed within six months), or “not job ready” (cannot work and unlikely to be able to for a year). The assessment happens around the time eligibility for TANF is determined. The state describes this assessment as a guide for case managers to help determine appropriate activities.

Other states have focused their efforts on improving assessments or are in the process of doing so. Wisconsin relies heavily on a combination of informal employability assessments, a Barrier Screening Tool, and formal assessments to determine assignment to the most appropriate “program tier” for an individual. This includes determining if an applicant belongs in the

program tier for those with significant barriers to work who are not ready to be in community service jobs or regular employment.

Finally, some states feel that the best way to determine if someone isn't "job ready" is to send them into the job market to look for work. For example, Oregon uses a "labor market test" to see if someone is employable, requiring recipients to first search for jobs before additional assessment.

State Service Strategies to Engage the Hard to Employ

States trying to actively engage TANF recipients with significant barriers to employment have developed a range of specific strategies and services beyond what is provided through their standard TANF welfare-to-work program. We describe three different types of strategies here: specialized case management and counseling, improved access to specific barrier-alleviation services; and transitional jobs programs for the hard to employ. Some states use combinations of these strategies. Here we describe statewide activities and strategies that guide activities across the state.¹² In addition, many states retain considerable flexibility at the local level for structuring activities. Individual localities within a state may be carrying out these or additional activities to engage the hard to employ.

Specialized Case Management and Counseling. Staff in many states discussed the importance of creating individualized plans for hard-to-employ recipients given the variety and multiplicity of problems they face. One service strategy that allows for this individual approach is intensive case management. This strategy typically entails program staff working closely with clients to map out a plan to address their barriers and prepare for work. Case managers play an

¹² In addition, three states—Michigan, Minnesota, and Ohio—have developed pilot projects focused on the hard to employ. While these efforts are not in operation statewide, the general goal is to learn from the experiences and perhaps expand more widely in the future. Michigan already has plans for statewide expansion of their pilot program.

important “service brokering” role in connecting individuals with a range of services that address their needs, such as mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, and domestic violence services. These services are typically provided by other staff or outside organizations. Case managers generally track recipients’ progress and status, helping them to move forward. States that use this approach include Georgia, New Jersey, Tennessee, and Wisconsin. In addition, New York City’s Wellness, Comprehensive Assessment, Rehabilitation, and Employment (WeCARE) initiative is a comprehensive approach to serving the hard to employ using intensive case management combined with comprehensive assessments and appropriate service referrals (box 1).

Box 1
New York City’s WeCARE Program

The WeCARE program, implemented by the Human Resources Administration in New York City in 2005, is an intensive program model to provide wellness and economic self-sufficiency services for public assistance clients with physical, mental health, and substance abuse challenges. All WeCARE referrals receive a comprehensive assessment that includes a medical examination and identification of issues that interfere with employability. A comprehensive service plan is developed to address all of participants’ barriers to employment. For those with an untreated or unstable medical condition, a wellness/rehabilitation plan is developed. Diagnostic vocational evaluations, as indicated, are performed to assess participants’ functional abilities and limitations and vocational rehabilitation services are provided. The program provides intensive case management services as required to help participants achieve the goals of the service plan. The program also monitors and tracks participants’ compliance with prescribed activities and services and provides job placement services and retention support.

There are some variations in the states’ case management strategies, including who provides case management. Tennessee’s Family Services Counseling (FSC) program uses clinical social workers as counselors and service brokers for other providers. The social workers are contracted by the TANF agency and work full time with the TANF program. Many are co-located in TANF offices. Under FSC, social workers counsel recipients to try to directly address and resolve their problems. For recipients with more extensive long-term needs, FSC social

workers provide referrals to services available in the community and through some TANF contracts. The state reports that most or many people use only the counseling services of the FSC workers without need for additional referrals.

Case management models also vary in the timing of when this service is provided. While some states focus on individuals after an initial assessment or when they first have trouble meeting TANF work requirements, New Jersey's Supportive Assistance to Individuals and Families (SAIF) program provides intensive case management services to individuals who are approaching the time limit (five months away from the 60 month limit on benefits). These individuals for the most part are required to continue to participate in work activities while in the SAIF program. The state reports that for some individuals, intensive case management is enough to "motivate" recipients to get them to work, or to work enough to leave TANF. Others who participate in SAIF but do not find work quickly can be exempt from the time limit as chronically unemployable but continue to have a mandatory work requirement.

Other states include unique service elements in their approach. In addition to case managers, the state of Georgia provides resources to local offices for a community resource specialist on staff, with sole responsibility for connecting clients with the range of services available in the community. These specialists work with all recipients, not just the hard to employ. Starting with presentations to applicants at orientation, these staff connect clients to TANF-funded and community resources and help workers monitor participation in activities.

Using TANF Funds to Provide Barrier-Alleviation Services. A number of states use TANF resources to make such barrier-alleviation services as vocational rehabilitation, mental health counseling, or substance abuse treatment directly available to specific TANF recipients. States use TANF dollars in various ways to provide these services including directly hiring

specialized staff, contracting with outside organizations for slots for TANF recipients, developing specific initiatives tailored for TANF recipients using outside providers, coordinating with other public agencies to provide additional services to TANF recipients, or providing targeted resources to local offices to provide or contract for services.

State staff report several reasons for employing this service strategy. Some areas lack certain barrier-alleviation services. Either there are not enough services or the available services do not meet the needs of TANF recipients. Although these services may be available to the community at large, providing TANF funding to support the delivery of these services fosters links and referrals, thereby increasing TANF recipients' access to these services. Having TANF-funded services can also make referrals easier for TANF staff. In addition, staff in several localities, including New York City and Alameda County, report that using TANF funds to directly provide or contract for these services allows the TANF program to better track recipients' activities and progress. States that do not use TANF funds directly for barrier-alleviation activities typically refer clients with specific needs to providers in the community, many of which do not have a direct connection to the TANF program.

Several states use TANF funds to either hire specialized providers or to pay for slots in existing service programs for TANF recipients. Georgia's TANF program contracts with private and public providers of mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence services to ensure adequate slots are available for staff at local offices to make referrals. Maryland contracts with the state health department to provide addiction specialists in every TANF office in the state, mainly to provide screening and then refer clients to follow-up services. Other states contract with vendors to create special programs for TANF recipients. For example, New Jersey has created a statewide comprehensive substance abuse initiative that provides assessments by

professionals and contracts with specialized vendors for treatment. New York City has performance-based contracts with vendors where payments are made as the TANF recipients they serve successfully achieve specific milestones. In another variation, Michigan's Jobs, Education, and Training (JET) pilot program devotes a significant portion of TANF resources to providing additional staffing and services at Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS, the state's vocational rehabilitation agency). MRS has been able to redirect 31 direct services staff to serve TANF recipients with these resources.

Other states such as Oregon and California provide resources that localities must use to provide these services (either directly or through contracts). Oregon requires localities to establish contracts for services for mental and physical health services and domestic violence, but allows localities to work out the details. California provides counties additional allocations (over and above their standard "single" TANF allocation) for mental health and substance abuse services. Counties are required by law to work with local agencies to provide assessments and services to these groups.

Minnesota is unique in its approach to providing services for hard-to-employ recipients, having tried several program models focused on a broad perspective of what families with barriers need to move into work and off TANF. From 2000 to 2003, Minnesota provided block grants from TANF funds for counties to develop initiatives to serve long-term hard-to-employ recipients with broad flexibility at the local level.¹³ The idea behind this model, called the Local Intervention Grants for Self-Sufficiency (LIGSS), was to allow localities flexibility to identify different ways to work with TANF recipients about to reach the 60-month time limit. Most counties focused on health and disability problems, although some counties focused on language

¹³ Additional funds were distributed through a competitive process.

and transportation issues. While the money for LIGSS was discontinued, state staff report that many counties retained elements of what they had created.¹⁴

Transitional Jobs. Another approach for addressing the needs of hard-to-employ TANF recipients is “transitional” jobs programs. These programs focus on getting recipients with some barriers into employment where they receive a paycheck in combination with a range of other supports and assistance. The wages of participants are subsidized for a specified period using TANF funds. For example, the assistance transitional jobs programs can include short classes that focus on skills needed to succeed in the workforce and resolution of challenges at work, such as drug treatment, compliance with parole and probation requirements, and family services interventions. Classes may also include guidance on continuing job-search activities. Participants typically also receive some type of support and supervision before, during, and possibly after the placement, by job coaches and on-site mentors. Of the states in our study, two—Washington (see box 2) and Georgia—have statewide transitional jobs programs that operate at a significant scale. Oregon operates a relatively small-scale program of this type, and Los Angeles has a mid-sized program that is being expanded in July 2007.

Box 2
Washington’s Community Jobs Program

Since 1997, Washington has offered a statewide paid transitional employment program for hard-to-serve TANF recipients. The program is operated by 18 service providers across the state that are primarily community-based organizations. After being referred to a provider by the TANF agency, participants develop an employment plan and work 20 hours a week in a temporary, paid job for up to six months (with extensions available to nine months). An additional 20 hours a week are spent on individualized barrier management, which can include soft-skills training, mental health or substance abuse counseling, and basic skills training. Individuals receive support services, such as transportation subsidies, work clothing, and child care assistance. Program staff maintain a close relationship with participants and their supervisors and conduct monthly workplace visits. Participants receive some job-search assistance and receive support services for up to 90 days after obtaining unsubsidized employment. The Community Jobs program serves approximately 2,100 participants a year.

¹⁴ Minnesota also has a new pilot program that is described further below.

Making the Transition to the SSI Program

In addition to the service strategies outlined above, several states in our study provide assistance to certain TANF recipients in completing the application process for the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program (federal cash assistance for low-income persons with disabilities).¹⁵ This assistance is targeted to individuals with disabilities considered severe enough to be eligible for the program, usually those individuals who have a physical or mental disability that leaves them unable to work. For TANF recipients with health problems severe enough to qualify for SSI, the advantage of the latter is that federal benefits under SSI (supplemented by some states) are higher than the adult portion of the TANF grant and are not time limited. (Recipients cannot receive TANF and SSI benefits at the same time.) States also benefit because SSI benefits are paid at the federal level, reducing state expenditures, and individuals on SSI are not included in federal TANF work participation requirements.

Applying for SSI is a time-intensive and complex effort, requiring extensive documentation of disabilities and sometimes multiple hearings. Many individuals find it difficult to successfully complete the process on their own, and often applicants have legal representation. The burdensome nature of the SSI application process as well as time limits on TANF assistance have led some states to develop specific programs or processes to assist TANF recipients in moving onto the SSI program, in many cases providing targeted resources for this effort.

States in our study that include a formalized process to assist TANF recipients in moving to SSI include Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. For example, in Minnesota, the state provides specific resources to counties to contract with appropriate providers to help individuals move through the SSI application process. In Pennsylvania, the

¹⁵ Recipients may also apply for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), the federal benefit program for individuals with disabilities who have worked a required number of quarters. Fewer TANF recipients qualify for SSDI benefits, although the application process is the same as for SSI and disability eligibility determination for individuals eligible for both are made simultaneously.

state operates the Disability Advancement Program, where staff oversee and monitor applications for SSI and contract with Legal Services and private lawyers to assist as needed. Other states did not have a statewide initiative, although counties or local offices may have developed these services on their own. For example, while California does not have a specific mandate in this area, both Alameda and Los Angeles counties have initiatives. In New York City, the TANF program hires contractors to assist recipients with SSI application and appeals using performance-based contracts that pay only for clients' receipt of SSI/DI. . Ohio, Georgia, and Wisconsin also report that some counties provide support for recipients applying for SSI.

Some respondents noted that programs needed to carefully consider which recipients are referred to SSI. Given that SSI applicants generally cannot participate in work activities (program eligibility requires proving they cannot work) and the lengthy approval process and high rate of denial of SSI applications, recipients can risk spending many months in the SSI application process without preparing for work or ending up with benefits. However, SSI application assistance can increase the probability of an application being accepted.

Service Issues for the Hard to Employ

In our interviews, we also discussed issues around providing services for hard-to-employ TANF recipients. These include service coordination and links to other agencies and combining work activities with barrier-reduction activities.

Service Coordination and Institutional Linkages. As states have focused on the hard to employ, some have expanded organizational ties with other providers with expertise in serving this population. Some states have developed institutional links or partnerships at the state level with other public agencies to address the needs of the hard to employ. Beyond simply increasing service or treatment slots available, these connections can involve more joint planning,

cooperation, and education across agencies to serve hard-to-employ TANF recipients. They may or may not involve use of TANF funds, although resource constraints in service systems usually mean TANF funding is important. Among the states we interviewed, a range of agencies were mentioned including the state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency, state or local mental or behavioral health agencies, agencies responsible for education, and community colleges.

VR is an important partner in several places including the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Ohio, and Oregon. The VR agency can be particularly helpful in determining the capabilities and options available to those with serious barriers. For example, the District of Columbia reports that the VR agency creates treatment plans and follow-up for TANF recipients referred there, including those with learning disabilities. Florida provides connections to these services through workforce development centers, where VR is a mandatory partner by federal law. Pennsylvania reports coordination with VR happens at the local level; some localities have successful connections, but demand exceeds supply in Philadelphia. Other states, including Minnesota and New Jersey, report difficulties developing connections with VR, in part because VR funding levels limit service availability. Tennessee notes that when VR services are oversubscribed, the agency is required by federal law to first serve those with the most severe disabilities who can benefit from services; this requirement may exclude many TANF recipients.

Although staff in several states report having contracts with mental health service providers or local agencies to provide services to recipients, few report coordination with state-level agencies responsible for mental health or substance abuse issues. The two exceptions in our sample are Georgia and Maryland, both of which have developed partnerships with the state mental health agencies. In several states, this lack of state coordination may simply reflect the state policy of allowing counties to create their own service linkages.

Several states report connections with community colleges and, in some cases, state education departments, mainly to provide job skills training. This is another area with considerable local variation. In Florida, representatives of the Department of Education are on the state Workforce Board. In general, most states we spoke with have connections with community colleges at the state or local level, but they think of these partnerships as separate from efforts to work with hard-to-employ TANF recipients. A few states, however, including Pennsylvania and Tennessee, have a strong focus on improving the skill levels of TANF recipients, viewing lack of education (particularly a high school degree or GED) more centrally as a barrier to work.

There are several different state models of more holistic coordination and planning activities. Michigan coordinates planning for hard-to-employ recipients across TANF and other agencies in its JET pilot sites. These sites have a Family Self Sufficiency Plan that outlines services to be provided and is available through a web-based system that allows both TANF case managers and other JET partners to contribute to one plan for the family, without having duplicate plans at different organizations. Florida's TANF employment program is operated by one-stop centers. Although these centers serve all jobseekers, they bring diverse partners together.

Florida reports it starts with an agreement between agencies at the state level and then these partnerships can devolve down to the local level. The particular combination of service providers that are co-located at each center varies. In 2005, Minnesota created the Integrated Services Project pilot, making service coordination and integration across a range of delivery systems the cornerstone for hard-to-serve TANF recipients (box 3).

Box 3
Minnesota's Integrated Services Project

In 2005, the state of Minnesota initiated a pilot project designed to address the serious and complicated barriers of long-term cash assistance recipients, many of whom were in danger of reaching their time limit on cash assistance benefits. With pilots in eight sites across the state, this project seeks to increase access to more comprehensive services that address multiple needs, coordinate services provided by multiple service systems, and focus on the needs of both adults and children in the household. While program models vary across sites, they generally involve institutional partners with expertise in substantive areas (such as mental health or substance abuse) but also use intensive case management (with very low staff/client ratios) to broker access to a wide range of services in the community (Martinson et al. forthcoming).

Combining Work and Barrier-Alleviation Services. An issue for states providing barrier-alleviation services is whether and how to combine these activities with activities more directly related to finding employment. Some states take a sequential path of having recipients work on barriers first and then move into the traditional work-related activities, such as job search and job readiness. One concern raised by staff in some states about this sequential approach is that recipients can languish in this “pre-work-activity period” without a clear process for moving onto work activities. In response, some staff are trying to more actively manage and limit recipients’ time in this “pre-work activity” period.

Washington and Pennsylvania have both taken this approach. After an initial comprehensive assessment, Washington puts individuals into the most appropriate pathway that can handle their up-front needs and “stabilize” them so they can move back onto an employment track. Pennsylvania focuses on providing intensive case management for between six months to one year to address barriers and then moves the client to a work participation activity geared to their abilities. They refer to this approach as “accommodated employment.”

Some states have tried to more explicitly combine work and barrier-related activities, but this remains difficult in many programs owing to the level of coordination between different

institutions and programs that is required. Oregon reports that combining participation in work-oriented activities and services to alleviate barriers is a hallmark of its program. While some people will only be doing barrier-removal activities, most combine these with work activities. A few states are also taking steps to more explicitly combine work-related activities with barrier services or counseling, including New York City and Tennessee. States with transitional jobs programs also report more success in this area. But few states give examples where the barrier service and work-services are integrated.

Evolution in State Approaches to Hard-to-Employ TANF Recipients

A key question addressed by this study was how much states have continued to modify their TANF program approaches toward the hard to employ in recent years, particularly since 2000, after many states had implemented TANF's key provisions. Results from our interviews with TANF program administrators indicate that states continually review program performance and adjust their programs in light of changes in the caseload and broader program environment. While respondents often note the lack of formal evaluation of their programs, they cautiously report what they think is working or not. About half the locations we interviewed (9 of 17) report making some significant changes in their approach to serving hard-to-employ TANF recipients over the past five or six years.

We discuss the evolution of state and local approaches to the hard to employ since 2000 by roughly grouping our sample into three categories: states that recently implemented a major shift in their approach to the hard to employ, states that recently changed important aspects of their policies toward the hard to employ, and states without major changes to their approaches. Among our interviews, four states completely revamped their initial approaches toward the hard to employ, and five others changed at least one important element of their programs. Changes

generally occur in response to dissatisfaction with one or more program outcomes and sometimes because the political environment has changed.

Staff in the other eight states report no significant change in their programs since 2000. These states express the view that their general approach to the hard to employ is the right approach, and most report that their approach is working well from their perspective. Only one of these states reports significant frustrations with how their program is working, although several others report a need for program improvements within their current approach.

Recent Major Shifts in Approach toward Hard-to-Employ TANF Recipients

Recent changes among the states we interviewed suggest a consensus that hard-to-employ clients need appropriate services to remove the barriers if they are going to successfully move into work. Georgia, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and New York City made major changes (or are about to, in Michigan's case) in their TANF program related to hard-to-employ recipients. These states and localities have adopted roughly similar philosophies toward the hard to employ, including recognition of the need for assessment of job readiness and service needs and provision of services to eliminate barriers to work.

Pennsylvania adopted a full engagement model in 2005 . The TANF recipients in this state that are identified as hard to employ are now fully engaged in barrier elimination or stabilization activities, and work activities are added as soon as possible. Staff at the state level note that the impetus for this shift was a desire to increase the low levels of engagement among TANF recipients and in anticipation of changes in federal TANF reauthorization.

In 2004, Georgia started a new initiative to identify and provide more intensive services to those determined to be “not job ready” while adopting a universal engagement model that requires everyone to participate in some activity. Georgia reports that its increased focus on

services and resources for the hard to employ represents a major improvement over its previous program, which typically did not engage the hard to employ.

Under its current approach, staff in Michigan report that over half of recipients leaving TANF return within one year, and many others are exempt from participation. In response, a new approach reflecting the view that barriers to employment must be resolved before long-term economic success can be expected was established. In 2006, Michigan established its JET pilot program, featuring a stronger initial assessment and individualized services, that operates in only a few counties. Individuals deemed not ready for work are assigned to services to remove barriers or engage in skills training. This program is scheduled to be implemented statewide in 2007.

New York City revamped its approach to serving the hard to employ in 2005 after concluding that the needs of the hardest to employ were not being met. Under its previous model, hard-to-employ individuals were “deferred” from work and referred to services in the city to address their barriers. Individuals were expected to connect to services on their own and maintain their deferral status through individual doctors’ certification of their condition. New York’s WeCARE program, in combination with a range of other services discussed above, also seeks to provide closer tracking of recipient progress. While staff in New York City cautiously report that there has not been a formal evaluation of this more intensive service model for the hard to employ, they report more better employment outcomes and higher approval rates for individuals referred to federal disability programs.

Important Elements of Program Change

Five states in our study (the District of Columbia, Minnesota, New Jersey, Texas, and Washington) report recent changes in some elements of their approaches to the hard to employ.

These changes were made in response to a range of concerns regarding this population including relatively high sanction rates, rapidly approaching cash assistance time limits, and an overall lack of progress in moving off TANF. Some of these states report trying different strategies over time as available resources changed, demonstrating the continuing variability in strategies across the states and across time.

Several states with partial sanctions for noncompliance with work participation report making changes in response to high numbers of recipients being sanctioned . For example, the District of Columbia implemented a home visitation program to reengage sanctioned clients with employment services. Similarly, in an effort to reduce the number of sanctioned recipients, Los Angeles County also developed a program focused on providing extensive outreach to sanctioned families and noncompliant participants that are on the path to becoming sanctioned. In contrast, Texas responded to many of these same issues by introducing a full-family sanction in hope of improving compliance through this route.

Staff in Minnesota also describe variation in its approach to the hard to employ over time, in large part because resources that became available to counties to focus on this population were later scaled back as the state's financial situation worsened. Staff in this state also report moving away from a broad exemption policy for the hard to employ because of political pressure to strengthen work requirements and produce greater caseload reductions. The pilot program Minnesota is now operating (see earlier discussion) will inform future statewide efforts in addressing the needs of this population.

Approaches in other states reflect specific situations. New Jersey reports its focus on the hard to employ and introduction of an intensive case management program began once a greater

share of recipients neared the time limit. The state of Washington's new comprehensive assessment strategy was developed in response to the lack of progress among the hard to employ.

Stable Program Approach

Eight states report they have not made any major program changes over the past five or six years (California, Florida, Maryland, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Washington).

Most of these states report strong support for their general approach to hard-to-employ recipients, although these approaches vary. Most also report that they are generally satisfied with how their program is working, although several report some need for program change within their general approach.

Many states reporting a relatively stable approach for the hard to employ were among those experimenting with welfare reform well before the introduction of TANF. Florida, Ohio, Oregon, and Wisconsin all operated welfare programs under waivers before 1996 that differed significantly from the AFDC program. These programs emphasized near-universal engagement for TANF recipients but also recognized that some individuals may not be able, at least initially, to fully participate in strictly defined work-related activities. While each of these states has structured its program in a very different way, they all have incorporated to some extent the need for barrier-alleviation activities or separate goals for hard-to-employ recipients. In part, these states have more stable program designs in recent years because the early push for universal participation led them to consider appropriate activities for hard-to-employ recipients before other states did.

A few other states such as California and Tennessee have established relatively stable program models since 2000 that in some way acknowledge the needs of hard-to-employ recipients. Staff in these states report strong support for their approach for the hard to employ but

also acknowledge that some program changes are needed, both to comply with DRA and in reaction to other factors. For example, staff in Tennessee report that the expiration of its waiver in 2007 in addition to DRA changes will require program changes. State staff in California report that it could work on increasing the efficiency of its process (reducing the time recipients spend in waiting stages) and targeting recipients who are partially engaged but could be fully engaged.

South Carolina is one of the few states that expresses dissatisfaction with its current approach but has been unable to make major changes owing to resource constraints. The state TANF program aims to help hard-to-employ recipients with referrals to services in the community, but this has been difficult given cuts in state-funded services due to state budget shortages. As a result, few TANF recipients receive services as intended.

State Approaches and TANF Reauthorization

The DRA made a number of changes that likely will have significant implications for states' approaches to the hard to employ (box 4). These changes will require many states to engage a greater share of TANF recipients in work activities than they have in the past or face significant federal financial penalties. Our study asked respondents whether they thought that TANF reauthorization would change their policies and procedures. While respondents were waiting for final decisions at the state level at the time of our interviews, most believed that reauthorization eventually will change their TANF programs substantially.¹⁶

Some states in our study expect little change as a result of the DRA (Florida, Georgia, Texas, and Wisconsin). Two of these (Florida and Texas) have experienced caseload decline since 2005 at a significant enough level to help them meet the new requirements. These two states also report that low unemployment and job availability make it easier for recipients to find

¹⁶ States have multiple options for changes to help meet DRA requirements. We focus here only on the strategies that have implications for hard-to-employ TANF recipients.

Box 4
Selected DRA Requirements

The DRA maintains a 50 percent work participation requirement for adults on TANF, but replaces the original caseload reduction credit with one based on more recent (and much slower) caseload changes. DRA also requires nearly all adults to be included in the participation rate calculation, including adults exempt due to a disability, those in SSPs, and adults in sanction status. In addition, DRA provides more strict definitions of allowable work activities, including limiting the amount of barrier removal activities that can count towards work participation. Generally, clients can receive a maximum of six weeks of job readiness assistance each year, including assistance designed to address barriers such as mental health counseling. Adults can only receive a lifetime total of 12 months of vocational educational training. Some additional job training, such as completion of a GED program can count as a “noncore” activity, limited to 10 out of 30 hours per week work requirement. States must submit changes to their current TANF plans before the end of fiscal year 2007, and new participation requirements will be effective for fiscal year 2007.

employment. Some states support the new requirements but acknowledge the challenges they present. For example, staff in Oregon report that the DRA “will help us to get moving and get things in place” but also note concern over the state’s ability to meet work participation rates with so many recipients with multiple barriers.

Most respondents report that the DRA will increase program emphasis on the hard to employ and possibly lead to significant program changes. States expecting change in their policies toward the hard to employ discussed strategies for increasing work activities, improving connections between TANF and other assistance for hard-to-employ individuals, and increasing resources and staffing to meet the new requirements.

Increasing Participation in Work Activities

For many states, increasing participation in work activities includes improving procedures to identify those with barriers to employment more quickly, limiting exemptions, changing the activities that can count toward participation, and actions to combine work with barrier removal.

Most states generally are changing some aspects of their programs rather than considering wholesale change to procedures now in place for a decade.

Assessment. As discussed earlier, states place different emphases on client assessment to identify barriers to employment. Two states, Ohio and South Carolina, say that the DRA increased the importance of identifying employment challenges quickly. Maryland already plans to roll out a new, self-administered assessment system that might facilitate the transition to the DRA. The state has found that well-established scales used on surveys to identify poor mental health work and domestic violence issues work well and can help local programs match individuals to services.

Exemptions. Some states plan to exempt fewer hard-to-employ individuals from work participation and to toughen requirements for continued participation. Florida, for example, will eliminate “excused absences” from work participation. Tennessee plans to reduce the number of exemption categories and has talked about modifying its generous policy toward temporary exemptions (periods that do not count toward time limits).

Allowable Activities. Many states discussed the difficulty they would have in keeping some activities they currently count as participation for the hard to employ. Pennsylvania and Tennessee, for example, report their reluctance to reduce emphasis on education for the hard to employ. Pennsylvania notes that only 30 percent of its caseload has a high school degree or GED equivalent, a far greater share than when TANF initially rolled out. Pennsylvania is considering placing TANF clients into a SSP for the second year of a community college program to enable recipients to complete this education. Tennessee reports that it will need to revisit its focus on providing education to adults who had not gone beyond the 9th grade. Tennessee also reports it will no longer be able to count counseling through its FSC program as work participation, but it

will still allow its work activity vendors to offer counseling as an ongoing support service to combine with hours of work activities. New York City will only be able to count wellness activities for up to six weeks of participation, but will continue to provide these activities beyond the six weeks if results continue to be positive for clients.

Quicker Processes for Moving Individuals In and Out of Activities. More states plan to introduce work preparation and paid work activities more quickly for the hard to employ. Washington, for example, expects to transition those in education to vocational training to temporary jobs in six weeks. Pennsylvania has a revised program (being implemented statewide in 2008) focusing on quicker stabilization and wellness activities (90 days) for recipients before moving them into appropriate work activities. The state calls the barrier removal activities combined with a quick focus on work matched to an individual's abilities an "accommodated employment" approach.

Combining Work with Barrier-Removal Activities. States also talked about doing better at combining work and barrier activities. Washington expects to expand its Community Jobs Program and continue its focus on combining 20 hours of work with 20 hours of barrier-addressing activities. Florida plans to add job search for those engaging in substance abuse services. New Jersey will try to create new integrated programs with vendors providing substance abuse services that will combine work activity hours with treatment service hours. Tennessee is hoping it can issue performance-based contracts to engage creative vendors with new ideas about how to combine education with work activities.

Sanctions. States using partial sanctions now face the requirement that these adults must be included in the caseload for purposes of calculating a work participation requirement. As noted earlier, a few states report using more active procedures to reengage sanctioned clients.

Sanctioned clients already have difficulties complying with participation requirements, and many are classified as hard to employ. California is unlikely to pass a full-family sanction (a proposal to that effect has already failed to pass the legislature), but the state has eliminated “durational” sanctions, required minimum time periods for sanctions, allowing families off sanction as soon as they are in compliance. Also, local offices will likely focus more efforts on these families. Los Angeles, for example, reports that it will intensify its efforts to reengage sanctioned families and noncompliant participants on the path to sanctions in response to the DRA. Michigan says that the debate over adopting a full-family sanction has not been resolved.

Other State Responses to DRA Changes

In addition to efforts to increase work participation of hard-to-employ recipients, some states report other potential responses to the new DRA requirements relating to hard to employ recipients.

Solely State-Funded Programs. While most states talk about including more hard-to-employ recipients in work participation activities, some states talk about separating out those with the most severe disabilities into solely state-funded programs. New Jersey plans to pull out the long-term health deferrals into a separate solely state-funded program and to tighten up the process for awarding deferrals. Minnesota is also considering a solely state-funded program for those with severe health challenges. Oregon has proposed this for people applying for SSI, and the District of Columbia plans to move recipients in its SSP for people with disabilities into a solely state-funded program. Maryland reports that it will eliminate the SSP for those applying for SSI because it would be too expensive to devote non-MOE monies for this part of their caseload. Several areas report potential difficulties of tracking and addressing child support assignment for those moving in and out of solely state-funded programs.

Improving Connections between TANF and Other Programs Addressing Barriers.

Most states talk about improving connections with other state programs that serve the hard to employ, including vocational rehabilitation, mental health, and substance abuse services. As discussed earlier, states and local offices vary considerably in the extent and effectiveness of connections between TANF and these service programs. As an example of new activities in this area, New Jersey is putting together a new four-week program with VR vendors focused on full assessment and job preparation for the hard to employ.

Supporting the SSI Application Process. We noted earlier the difficulties individual clients with disabilities and local offices face in completing the SSI application process. Many states also talk about improving connections between TANF and SSI. Some states and local offices already have contracts with their Legal Services Offices to monitor clients' progress through the application process. More states plan to monitor and strengthen this process as a result of the DRA. For example, Michigan reports that it will reestablish an SSI advocacy office within the Department of Human Services. South Carolina hopes to establish a contract with Legal Aid Services, although there are concerns that the cost might be prohibitive. Oregon's separate program for SSI applicants will provide assistance for the process.

Increasing Staffing and Resources for Monitoring. Nearly all states talk about the cost of DRA's increased monitoring requirements, especially for hard-to-employ clients engaged in noncore work activities. They also talk about needing more staff to actively engage the hard to employ in work activities. Some talk about needing staff to actively engage sanctioned families, often hard-to-employ individuals who find it difficult to comply with participation requirements.

South Carolina has already changed its staffing to separate eligibility and caseworkers and give caseworkers more training in assessment of the hard to employ. The state already has

reduced workloads to 40 clients per caseworker from 70 or 80. California counties will receive more money from the state to implement changes in response to the DRA. Alameda is increasing staff orientation training. Maryland also reports using more state dollars to invest in “work participation specialists” who will monitor progress in local offices and provide some “eyes and ears” on the ground reporting back to the state.

Many respondents believe that DRA’s monitoring requirements will require significant changes in procedures and systems. California is developing a master data plan to track activities and outcomes. Ohio counties report their frustration over having to focus on verification and monitoring because it will take time away from helping people get into jobs.

Policy Implications

Almost all the states and localities we surveyed recognized by the fall 2006 that some groups of TANF recipients with barriers need a different or enhanced strategy from other TANF recipients if they are to move to work. This is a departure from a pure “work-first” model that usually requires most participants to find a job before receiving services that address serious barriers to employment. There is a fairly dynamic environment in the states in their changes around serving hard-to-employ recipients. This fits with the increased flexibility TANF provides states to adjust their programs as the needs of their caseloads change over time. States vary tremendously in their specific approaches toward hard-to-employ recipients.

Recent changes in state approaches to the hard to employ provide some insight into the challenge of serving this population. States must struggle with maximizing work participation while still recognizing that some clients have a difficult time finding and keeping sustainable, paid work. Programs recognize the multiple barriers facing recipients, but assessing needs and providing effective services that address these needs while preparing recipients for work can be

daunting. Solutions toward the hard to employ also must fit the general program philosophy and the current economic and political environment in the state. In addition, many activities that address barriers to work no longer count toward work participation and will lead to further changes in states' TANF programs.

Before welfare reauthorization, states were converging toward increasing the number of recipients required to participate while recognizing a broader variety of activities that can play a role in work preparation. Almost all states express the view that participation in activities that are monitored and part of an overall plan focused on work (even if the activities are not narrowly work-related) is important for realizing the eventual goal of moving off welfare into work. States vary, however, in terms of their experience implementing these broad participation models, their ability to coordinate services across programs, and the resources available to accomplish their goals.

The future implications of DRA for states are unclear at this time. Some states argue that increased work requirements and narrowing of countable activities run counter to the needs of hard-to-employ recipients. States also mention the potential for increased vulnerability to sanctions for not meeting work requirements as the focus on hours increases. Other states anticipate needing to spend more time and money on documentation and tracking that might divert funds from other activities. Even staff in Florida who reported they do not expect difficulties in meeting work participation requirements, said that the new regulations do not give the states "credit" for the harder work it takes to get recipients with multiple barriers to work.

Some states see the potential for positive outcomes resulting from the DRA. Several respondents report that the changes could encourage more engagement of hard-to-serve recipients and focus this engagement more closely on work preparation. Some state activities

already support this direction. Several states and localities mention efforts to better integrate barrier-removal with work activities. In addition, states will likely provide more assistance to those applying for SSI to reduce denials. States that foresee less difficulties meeting DRA requirements include those with tighter labor markets and more recent caseload declines.

Ultimately, the impact of DRA on the hard to employ remains to be seen. This study shows that most states have some focused efforts on this group, and these efforts will continue. It will be important to monitor state policies toward the hard to employ as well as the work and self-sufficiency outcomes for this group of parents on TANF.

References

- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the Center for Law and Social Policy. 2007. *Implementing the TANF Changes in the Deficit Reduction Act: "Win-Win" Solutions for Families and States*. Second Edition. Washington, DC: Center for Budget and Policy Priorities.
- Dion, Robin, Michelle Derr, Jacquelyn Anderson, and LaDonna Pavetti. 1999. *Reaching All Job-Seekers: Employment Programs for Hard to Employ Populations*. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research.
- Hauan, Susan, and Sarah Douglas. 2004. *Potential Employment Liabilities among TANF Recipients: A Synthesis of Data from Six State TANF Caseload Studies*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Martinson, Karin, Caroline Ratcliffe, Elizabeth Harbison, and Joanna Parnes. Forthcoming. *Minnesota Integrated Services Project: Participant Characteristics and Program Implementation*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Rowe, Gretchen, and Mary Murphy. 2006. *The Welfare Rules Data Base, 2005*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Thompson, Terri, Asheley Van Ness, and Carolyn O'Brien. 2001. *Screening and Assessment in TANF/Welfare to Work: Local Answers to Difficult Questions*. Washington, DC: ACF/USDHHS.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2002. *State Strategies for Working with Hard-to-Employ TANF Recipients*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General.
- U.S. General Accounting Office. 1995. *Welfare to Work: Most AFDC Training Programs Not Emphasizing Job Placement*. HE15-95-113. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Zedlewski, Sheila, Pamela Holcomb, and Pamela Loprest. 2007. *Hard to Employ Parents: A Review of Their Characteristics and the Programs Designed to Serve Their Needs*. Low-Income Working Families Paper 9. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

About the Authors

Pamela Loprest is a senior research associate in the Income and Benefits Policy Center. Dr. Loprest's research focuses on barriers and supports for work among low-income families and persons with disabilities. Her recent work examines welfare reform and work policies and families recently leaving welfare.

Pamela A. Holcomb is a senior research associate at the Urban Institute. Her work focuses on program operations and service delivery, particularly as they relate to welfare reform, employment and training, and social services.

Karin Martinson is a senior research associate at the Urban Institute. Her research interests include welfare reform, employment and training programs, service delivery systems, and work supports. She has worked on numerous program evaluations in these areas, with a focus on implementation studies of programs and services for low-income families.

Sheila R. Zedlewski is director of the Urban Institute's Income and Benefits Policy Center. Her research deals with low-income program participation, poverty, and supports for hard-to-employ parents. Her recent articles deal with the link between welfare reform and food stamp participation, and the changing characteristics of families participating in cash assistance programs.