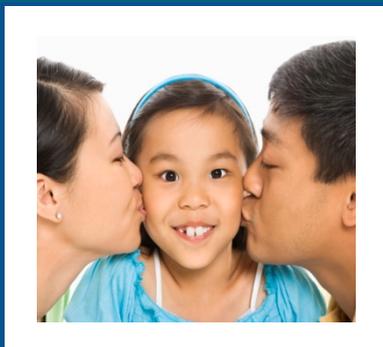


THE URBAN INSTITUTE



Elaine Sorensen
esorensen@urban.org
202.261.5564



WORK-ORIENTED PROGRAMS IN CHILD SUPPORT

October 20, 2011

Need for Employment Programs for Noncustodial Parents is Great

2

- ❖ More than one-quarter of all children in the United States are eligible for child support, but less than half of them receive child support.
- ❖ The child support program works well for families in which the noncustodial parent is steadily employed. But it is less effective for families in which the noncustodial parent has little or no reported earnings.
- ❖ Most unpaid child support is owed by these parents. Many of them face multiple employment barriers, including intermittent employment, limited education, and a criminal record and could benefit from employment-oriented programs.

Key Lessons Learned from Prior Demonstrations -- Recruitment

3

- ❖ Recruitment can be a challenge, but programs have developed strategies that work. Successful recruitment strategies include:
 - court referrals,
 - internal referrals,
 - television advertising, and
 - community outreach.
- ❖ Do not restrict eligibility criteria too narrowly. Age restrictions and restricting cases to those with TANF involvement have limited eligibility.
- ❖ Programs need to gain participants' trust. Having a history of working in the community helps.

Key Lessons Learned from Prior Demonstrations – Services

4

- ❖ Successful programs use a case management model, where each participant is assigned a case manager who works with that participant throughout their involvement.
- ❖ Basic employment assistance – job search and job readiness training – are not enough.
- ❖ Job developers and job placements appear to be a necessary component for successful employment outcomes.
- ❖ Skills training has also been successful with a portion of the caseload.

Key Lessons Learned from Prior Demonstrations -- Services

5

- ❖ Child-support related services are needed. Many participants fear the child support program or the family court. Having a child support advocate to help navigate these systems is an important service. Specific needs include: help re-instating drivers' licenses, modifying orders, obtaining custody and visitation rights.
- ❖ A fatherhood/parenting curriculum, especially if taught in an interactive peer support format with trained facilitators, appears to generate increased child support payments.
- ❖ Texas conducted a random assignment evaluation of its PEER curriculum, a fatherhood/parenting curriculum, which consisted of 4 weekly two-hour group workshops lead by a trained facilitator. They found that parents who received this intervention were more likely to pay child support than the control group.

Key Lessons Learned from Prior Demonstrations – Incentives

6

- ❖ Incentives can help with recruitment and retention. Examples include:
 - ❑ Offering state-owed debt forgiveness for enrolling in an employment program and additional forgiveness for obtaining the first job.
 - ❑ Offering financial incentives for obtaining the first job and remaining in the job for 3 months, 6 months.
 - ❑ Transportation assistance is used to encourage participants to show up to case management meetings.
 - ❑ Dinners and small financial incentives are used to encourage participation in fatherhood/parenting workshops.

New York State Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers

7

- ❖ NY implemented a 3-year pilot program in 2006 that funded 5 organizations to provide employment and other support services to noncustodial parents.
- ❖ The five organizations were located in Buffalo, Jamestown, Syracuse, and New York City (two sites)
- ❖ The purpose of the pilot was to help low-income noncustodial parents find work, pay their child support, and be involved with their children.
- ❖ The total cost of the pilot program was \$7 million and it served 3,668 people over 3 years, for an average cost of \$1,917 per person served.

Geographic Location of the Sites



Five Funded Organizations and their Key Partners

9

❖ Chautauqua County DSS

- ❑ Ross Innovative Employment Solutions

❖ Erie County DSS

- ❑ Erie Community College
- ❑ University of Buffalo, Educational Opportunity Center

❖ Onondaga-Cortland-Madison Board of Cooperative Educational Services

- ❑ Center for Community Alternatives
- ❑ Syracuse Model Neighborhood
- ❑ Westcott Community Center

❖ STRIVE

- ❑ Fortune Society
- ❑ Rockaway Redevelopment Revitalization Corporation
- ❑ Saint Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation

❖ Seedco

- ❑ Upper Manhattan Workforce 1 Career Center
- ❑ Citizens Advice Bureau
- ❑ Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation
- ❑ Saint Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation

Eligibility

10

Eligibility was limited to those who:

- ❖ had a child support order with the NY child support program;
- ❖ were unemployed or working less than 20 hours/week;
- ❖ had incomes below 200% of the poverty threshold; and
- ❖ were between 16 and 45 years old.

Recruitment

- ❖ About half of participants were family court referrals; about half were self-referrals.
- ❖ The programs that relied on self-referrals were well-established programs that had developed successful methods of recruitment, including television advertisements and internal referrals from other parts of their program.
- ❖ All programs were considered voluntary. No one was ordered into the program. For court-referral participants, the threat of jail was present but not immediate.

Program Services

12

- ❖ Case Management
- ❖ Employment-oriented services:
 - job readiness training,
 - job search assistance,
 - access to job developers, and
 - job training (at some locations)
- ❖ Fatherhood/Parenting Curriculum
- ❖ Child Support-Related Services

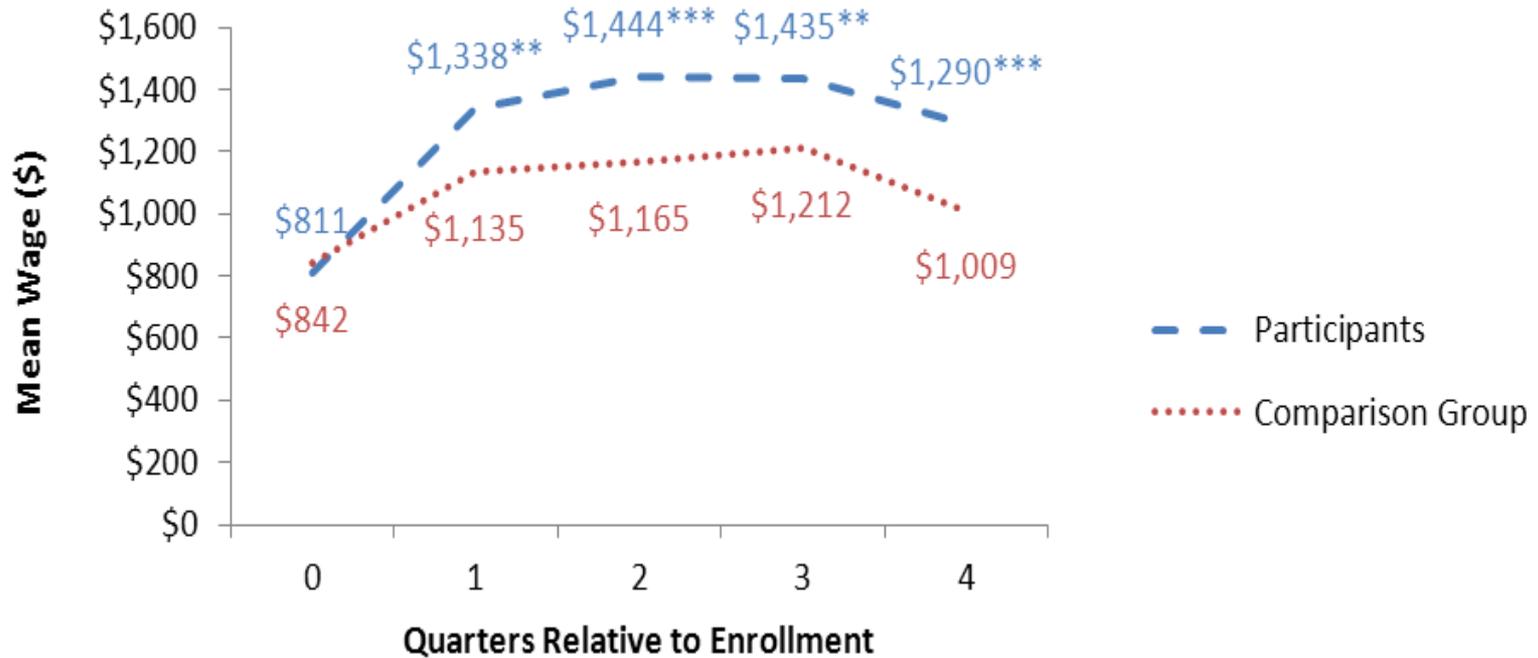
Participant Characteristics

13

Participants were a disadvantaged group:

- ❖ 93% were male
- ❖ 79% had a high school education or less
- ❖ 69% were never married
- ❖ 72% had a criminal record
- ❖ 81% were African-American or Hispanic
- ❖ 86% were unemployed at enrollment

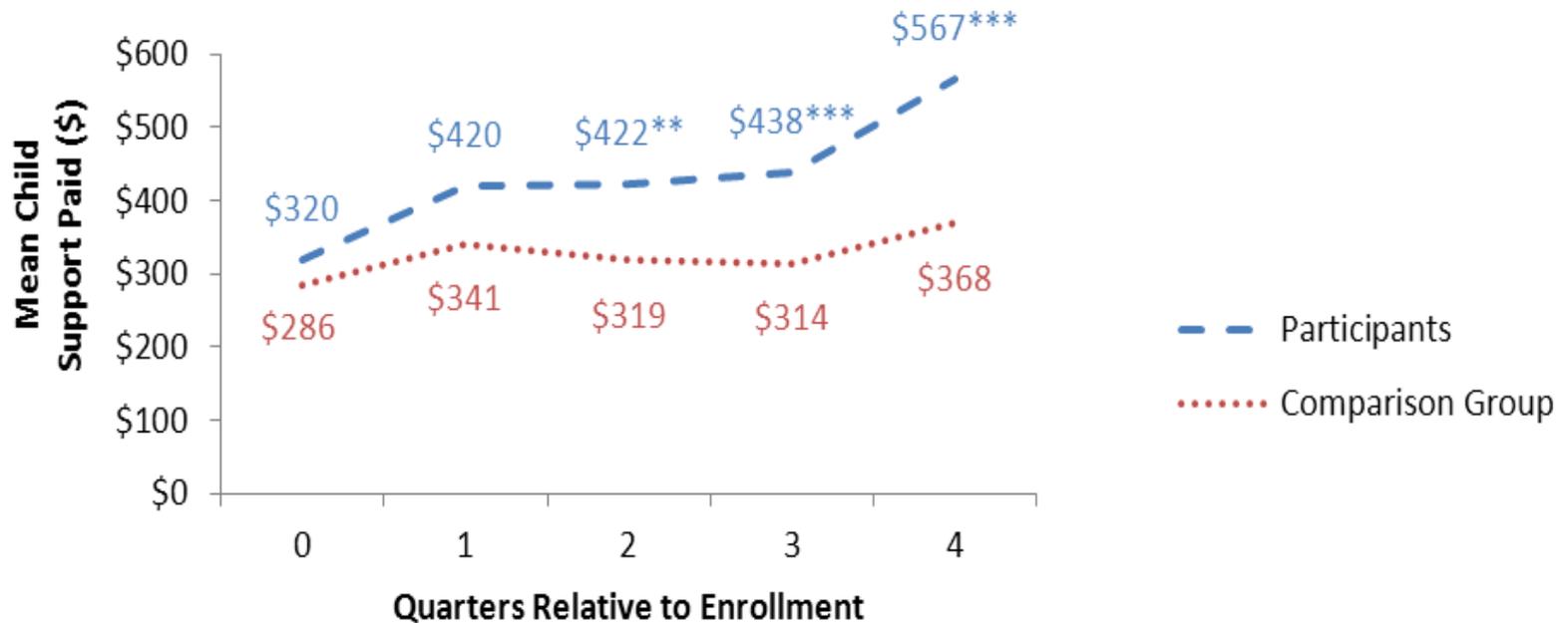
Figure 4.1 - Wages of Participants and Comparison Group Before and After Program Enrollment



Stars indicate significant difference between groups: † $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.
 Enrollment quarter mean is unadjusted for covariates, but presented for comparison purposes.

Quarterly earnings were 22% higher in the year after enrollment for participants compared to the comparison group

Figure 4.3 - Child Support Paid by Participants and Comparison Group Before and After Program Enrollment (in final year of program only)



Stars indicate significant difference between groups: † p < .10; * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001. Enrollment quarter mean is unadjusted for covariates, but presented for comparison purposes.

Child Support Payments were 38% Higher in the Year After Enrollment for Participants compared to the Comparison Group

Conclusions

- ❖ Unemployed noncustodial parents who are behind in their child support are a very hard-to-serve population.
- ❖ To be successful, it appears that services need to include case management, employment services that includes job placement services, and help navigating the child support/family court systems. Fatherhood workshops led by trained facilitators can also help.
- ❖ Incentives can also help with recruitment, retention, and meeting employment and child support goals.