



Examining the Major Barriers to Employment Among TANF Recipients and the Role of Continuing Education in Preparing the Professional Workforce

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Introduction

Working to Unite Families (WtUF) was an innovative demonstration program, designed to increase the employability of mothers in the city of Philadelphia who were at risk or had lost their children to formal or informal foster or kinship care. Developed by the Center for Social Policy and Community Development (CSPCD) of Temple University and funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) from October 1999 to September 2004, the WtUF program provided a comprehensive set of employment and training services to help recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) address their barriers to employment, find employment in order to bring about economic stability and, where appropriate, facilitate family reunification. In the past 35 years, CSPCD has offered a variety of employment and training programs but this program targeted clients who were involved in multiple social services, especially those who were dealing with the child welfare system.

The WtUF clients were a population for whom it was difficult to find employment sources. They were involved in a dual system, i.e. the Department of Public Welfare (a state administered agency) and the Department of Human Services (a city of Philadelphia funded agency). To the added stress of complying with TANF regulations and expectations of being employed, WtUF clients had to act in accordance with a family service plan for family reunification as agreed upon by the Department of Human Services. It is in this context that the paper will highlight the barriers to employment which WtUF clients experienced as they tried to negotiate

the world of work. Furthermore this paper will underscore the importance of continuing social work education in informing workforce development efforts. Clients and their families accessing multi-systems face insurmountable difficulty to comply with all of the demands of each system. These systems are often working in opposition to what might be in the best interest of families. Developing interdisciplinary training models for the various systems so that they might be knowledgeable of demands placed on a client; developing best practice models of intervention; creating a forum for networking and developing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for programs, are all important areas of training to be provided by continuing education programs.

Literature Review

In 1996 President William Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and the Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act effectively terminating what was left of the social safety net in the United States for hard to employ clients. As the title of this act implies, the social climate was shifted from one of mutual support and governmental obligation to advance the welfare of citizens receiving public assistance to one of personal responsibility in which individuals are expected to provide for themselves against the inequalities built into the social structure. Inherent in such an approach, but almost completely ignored by policymakers and many program operators, are the many barriers to employment that are faced by those caught up within the TANF system. These "fragile families" are adversely affected when they also

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become involved in the child welfare system, many times having to work against multiple barriers in efforts to secure meaningful employment and achieve reunification with their children (Garfinkel et al., 2001). For those affected, these barriers have a serious negative impact on the welfare of recipients and their families (Jackson et al., 2001).

These barriers include mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, inadequate social supports and networks, limited access to child care, especially when the child is an infant or has special needs (Wells & Guo, 2004; Rome & Slaght, 1999), access to transportation and the spatial mismatch of urban and suburban areas for employment (Coulton, 2003). Other serious barriers are a lack of work experience, marriage and co-habitation patterns, a lack of education beyond a few years of high school, having three or more children, poor health (Jackson et al., 2001), and the effects of having a disability, either mental or physical (Kim, 2000; Taylor & Barusch, 2004).

Education

As expected, education, or a lack thereof, has been cited as posing a serious barrier to securing meaningful employment and leaving the TANF system (Kim, 2000). In Jackson et al.'s (2001) sample, 40 percent of unwed mothers had no high school diploma, 36 percent had a high school diploma, and only 3 percent had a college degree. Similarly, 32 percent of long-term welfare recipients reported that they did not have a high school diploma or a GED (Taylor & Barusch, 2004). Where job-training education and GED programs are available, confusion exists among recipients over the helpfulness of these programs and their relation to time limits and work requirements (Pearlmutter & Bartle, 2000). As the value of education becomes increasingly recognized, it can be expected that education, especially a high school and or a college degree, will become increasingly vital in making the transition from welfare to work. Accordingly, opportunities for educational advancement should be a cornerstone of any policy or program that seeks to increase the

employability of women, especially unwed mothers, on welfare. (Taylor & Barusch, 2004).

Health

Physical and mental well-being has also been shown to have an impact on the ability of mothers on welfare to find meaningful work (Pavetti, et al; Olson & Pavetti; both cited in Taylor & Barusch, 2004; Stromwall, 2002). Kim (2000) suggests that having a disability exerts the largest effect on the likelihood of employment. It should also be noted that the social stigma that accompanies the label of "mentally ill" can itself serve as a potent barrier to employment (Stromwall, 2002).

Drug and Alcohol Addiction

Drug and alcohol abuse is another frequent barrier to employment. According to a study done by the US Department of Health and Human Services, 10–20 percent of welfare recipients are addicted to drugs (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1997). When all cases of substance abuse are taken into account, the percentage rises even further. The estimate of Columbia University's National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) is that more than one in four welfare recipients abuse alcohol and drugs (Bush & Kraft, 1998). These estimates are much lower when results are restricted to women. For CASA, 9.9 percent of female welfare recipients ages 18 to 44 used alcohol regularly. Twenty percent of women used alcohol and other drugs (Montoya & Atkinson, 2002).

Childcare

Another major barrier to employment for those on TANF is access to quality and affordable child care, especially for infants and children with special health needs and off-hour services (Pearlmutter & Bartle, 2000; Rome & Slaght, 1999). Recipients voice concern about the safety of their children in public day care facilities and assert that such centers are not open during the hours of unconventional shifts such as "graveyard" shifts or those beginning

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in the early morning hours. Additionally, long commutes to work may require children to be dropped off hours before such centers open their doors (Pearlmutter & Bartle, 2000).

Family Partnerships

The existing literature also points to the effect of marriage and patterns of cohabitation on the mothers, ability to find and maintain employment. Among single mothers on TANF, those not cohabitating were found to have the greatest risk of experiencing financial hardship (Jackson et al., 2001). However, co-habiting relationships are not always entirely beneficial to single mothers. Domestic violence and abuse have negative effects on mothers, ability to find employment (Wells & Guo, 2004; Taylor & Barusch, 2004). Jackson et al. (2001) include domestic violence in their narrow definition of employment barriers and found that single mothers in situations of domestic abuse are .28 times as likely to be employed as similar mothers not in abusive situations.

In what seems like a paradox, Mincy and Dupree hold that female employment reduces the likelihood of the father's involvement in her and her child's life (Garfinkel et al., 2001). This same study also found that generous welfare benefits support more beneficial family formation. Marriage and co-habitation should not be seen as a panacea, however. Even if parents are interested in marrying and raising children together, structural deficits such as lack of well-paying and steady employment and a lack of meaningful, universal supports will create obstacles and disincentives to marry (Garfinkel et al., 2001). As a result of high economic and emotional expectations for married life but few social opportunities to achieve them, poor women often put motherhood before marriage (Edin & Kefalas, 2005).

Transportation

Issues of transportation, and more generally the "ecology of work" also present a substantial barrier to the achievement of employment by TANF

recipients, especially among those 58 percent of recipients who live in urban areas (Coulton, 2003; Pearlmutter & Bartle, 2000). Welfare to work policies impose mandates on recipients without addressing the reality of sprawl or the increasing concentration of low-income workers in urban areas. That low-skill work is most needed in suburban areas, combined with limited public transportation systems and a lack of cars among low-income workers creates a "spatial mismatch" making it difficult for welfare recipients to access the jobs most readily available to them (Coulton, 2003). Furthermore, this spatial mismatch creates a significant burden on successfully balancing the demands of work and home life and also may pose an obstacle to finding affordable and quality child care (Coulton, 2003). Transportation concerns and the required "commute time" can also have a negative impact on welfare recipients' ability to create an informal support network (Coulton, 2003).

TANF Families and Foster Care

There is little research done on the effects that welfare reform has had and is likely to have in the future on foster families and the ability of parents on welfare to be reunited with their children (Rome & Slaght, 1999). Paxson & Waldfogel (2000) however, studied welfare and child welfare data in all states except Maryland from 1990–1998. They concluded that decreases in welfare benefits (and more recently, welfare reform has decreased monetary benefits even further) corresponded to increases in the number of children being neglected and placed in out-of-home care. Similarly, Wells & Guo (2004), in a study of 903 children in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, found that since the 1996 welfare reform there are a higher percentage of children being neglected, placed in foster homes, and in foster care for longer than a year. Children from the pre-reform sample were reunited with their families at a speed 46 percent faster than those children in the post-reform sample (Wells & Guo, 2004). This research conducted by Wells and Guo (2004) has led them to conclude that "we may see an increasing proportion

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of foster children moving into permanent state custody because their vulnerable single mothers are too impoverished to care for them" (91). In *Shattered Bonds*, Dorothy Roberts also states that children risk moving from "the welfare rolls to the child welfare rolls" because of increasing poverty rates (Roberts, 2002, 180).

Findings by Billings et al. (2003) buttress these claims of a connection between the TANF and child welfare systems. They cite a DHHS study indicating that children in families below the poverty level are 22 times more likely to experience abuse or neglect as children in families that earn \$30,000 or less a year.

Housing Patterns

Billings et al. (2003) point to increased physical and mental health problems that result from frequent moving and the sharing of residences that is characteristic of welfare recipients. Laws that require teen parents to reside with their parents can also place children at risk for abuse, as many teen parents themselves come from abusive households (Rome & Slaght, 1999). As noted above, such health problems also pose significant barriers to allowing recipients to successfully transition into the labor market. Nationally there is also a shortage of affordable housing. According to the 2003 report *Closing the Gap, Housing (un) Affordability in Philadelphia*, nationally, "Between 1997 and 1999, the number of units affordable to extremely low-income households dropped by 750,000" (Hiller & Culhane, 2003, 5). Philadelphia follows this problematic national trend with "at least 30,000 fewer affordable housing units" in 2003 (Hiller & Culhane, 2003, 4). "Affordable" in the latter case are units accessible to household incomes below \$20,000.

In summary, as indicated in the literature, the barriers to employment are closely correlated to low education; lack of job skills and job readiness; lack of adequate childcare; lack of housing options; drug and alcohol addictions; lack of transportation and poor mental health. These barriers were present

with WtUF clients and the program tried to address many of these barriers through its programming, even in the face of the "Work First" mandate set by the federal and state legislation.

Description of the WtUF program phases and services

CSPCD has 35 years of experience managing employment and training programs and providing continuing social work education to the Philadelphia Department of Human Services social workers and foster parents. CSPCD staff was acutely aware, while providing workforce development services to TANF clients that some clients had children in foster care or were at risk of losing their children to the foster care system. This loss often exacerbated the barriers to employment resulting in their inability to get a job, let alone maintain a job and climb up the job mobility ladder.

Recognizing that at least two agencies (The Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW) were involved in the lives of these TANF families, the program design for WtUF included a comprehensive service plan to assist these clients. The menu of services provided by WtUF included: careful assessment of the literacy and work readiness capacity of the clients; allowing clients to identify their own barriers to employment; individual goal setting activities, resulting in an Employment Development and Retention Plan (EDRP). In addition to job coaching, job training and case management services, the supportive services included referrals for child care, mental health assessment, funds for transportation, and referrals for special services. Very significant and unique among the supportive services, a memorandum of understanding was signed with the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA), committing PHA to provide 200 Housing Choice Vouchers. Clients who complied with the requirements and standards of the WtUF program in the first six to seven weeks were able to qualify for the critically needed housing vouchers.

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Orientation

Clients were referred to the WtUF program by DHS and its provider agencies. Clients attended a two to four day orientation to establish whether they met the program's eligibility criteria. The orientation included motivational speeches, presentations by prior successful clients, and general expectations of the program and an outline of program services. Clients met with their Employment Advisors for case management services and at the completion of the intake process an individualized Employment Development and Retention Plan (EDRP) was developed. Each new cohort went through a basic program which was flexible enough to meet individual needs.

Workforce Foundation Skills

After the orientation phase, the clients would then attend the Workforce Foundation Skills (WFS) program, for a period of four weeks. During this four-week intensive training, clients would attend classes to review basic skills in reading, writing, comprehension and math. In addition, a heavy emphasis was placed on job readiness skills training (resume writing, conflict resolution, interviewing, role playing etc.). After this intensive period of job coaching and preparation to face the world of work, the clients attended two to three weeks of computer training, where clients learned Microsoft Word basics and enhanced their typing skills.

Job Club

After completion of the six to seven weeks of instruction, clients participated in Job Club (twice a week until employed) in which they found out about new employment opportunities. Once in Job Club, clients who attended the program regularly, and who needed housing, filled out applications for the PHA voucher process. The housing voucher served as a reward for attendance and active participation in the program. At this stage, if requested,

they were also referred to a GED and/or skills training program to advance their employment skills. Clients, who exceeded the state-mandated 24-month time limit, started Paid Work Experience as soon as possible so they would not be in violation of the federal and state legislation. Case managers, employment advisors, and administrative staff worked to coordinate services within CSPCD and with other public service providers to provide a seamless support system.

Methods of Research

The results reported in this research are a part of a larger evaluation study conducted over a period of five years by the WtUF Evaluation committee for CSPCD. The research team and the staff used both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data on the experience of WtUF clients. Demographic, education and employment barrier data was collected at orientation. Information regarding training and employment were entered after clients who participated in WFS were trained and/or employed. For the purpose of this paper, data are analyzed from the WtUF database designed by the evaluation team.¹

Research Participants:

The participants in this study were clients enrolled in the WtUF program, totaling 571 persons. These clients were referred to the program by DHS case managers and other agencies and service providers. The DPW cross referenced their Client Information Systems to verify that the WtUF eligibility standards were met. At least 70 percent of WtUF clients were part of the hard-to-employ category (i.e. were either long-term TANF recipients, previously in foster care or had children in care).

Data Sources:

Case managers collected demographic information via a self-administered questionnaire, and administered assessment tests which included the

¹ The Evaluation Team consisted of Seymour J. Rosenthal, Professor Emeritus, Rita S. Fierro, PhD, and Wayne M. Thomas, MCom.

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Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), the Holland Self Directed Assessment, and the self-administered "Employment Barrier Form." In addition, program records of participation and milestones achieved were maintained.

TABE:

The Tests of Adult Basic "is a battery of tests designed to measure the level of educational achievement among adults"². It has been used extensively in adult education programs and has been shown to have good internal consistency and reliability.

The Holland Self Directed Assessment:

The Self-Directed Search (SDS) is a "self-administered, self-scored, and self-interpreted instrument"³ used by individuals to identify their skills and aptitude. Holland is often used as a tool for individual and group counseling by employment and training programs to identify an individual's work interest and ability. The Holland helps expand one's horizons by allowing one to select a profession from a wide pool that corresponds to one's strengths, personality and preferences.

Employment Barrier Form:

The Employment Barrier Form was an instrument developed by the evaluation team based on the literature and reviewed by experts in the field and staff who had extensive experience working with the difficult to employ client population. The questionnaire had a series of items that listed barriers to employment and the clients had an opportunity to self identify their barriers to employment. The 18 items on the scale had questions related to special needs classes; drug and alcohol dependency; use of drug and alcohol prevention services; health and mental health issues; criminal history; housing and transportation.

Data Analysis:

The data analyzed for this paper emphasizes the salient findings that relate to clients, employment barriers and the implications this demonstration program has for continuing social work education. For the demographic profile of the clients frequency tests were run. Correlation, Chi Square and t-tests statistics were run between status of employment and the identified barriers to employment for statistical significance. Summary data indicate the number of clients employed and the wages earned while in the program. The results are limited to WtUF clients and are not representative of clients in programs with different selection criteria.

Socio Demographic Profile of Clients

Gender, Race, Marital Status, Area of Residence:

The WtUF clients were more female (87.9 percent) than male (12.1 percent). Most clients were single parents (90.8 percent) rather than married (5.3 percent), separated (2.2 percent) or divorced (1.3 percent). The overwhelming majority of clients were African American (89 percent). Most clients came from North Philadelphia 34.3 percent and from West Philadelphia (24.1 percent). These two regions comprise a major component of the city's poor (Rosenthal & Fierro, 2004).

Age:

The majority of WtUF clients were under 35. The average age was 30.27 (Median= 30). Not only 50 percent of clients were between 18 & 30, but 73.9 percent of the WtUF were between 18 & 35 years of age (Rosenthal & Fierro, 2004).

Children:

Upon enrollment in WtUF, 54.3 percent (N=275) of clients had children 4 years of age or younger and 75 percent of WtUF clients had

² <http://www.mhcontemporary.com/pages/tabe.php> retrieved on April 30, 2006.

³ <http://jobs.esc.state.nc.us/soice/planning/page2.htm> retrieved on April 30, 2006.

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children below 8 years of age. The average age of the youngest child was 5.57 years of age. The median number of children per family was three children (56 percent of parents had 3 children or less); 33 percent of WtUF families had four children or more and 11 percent had missing information (Rosenthal & Fierro, 2004).

Education:

Only one fourth (25.4 percent) of WtUF clients completed high school. Seventy-two percent of the clients completed the 11th grade or less. Among those who did not complete high school, 18 percent had their GED upon entry. Fifty-three percent of WtUF clients had neither a high school diploma nor a GED. Most of the clients had at least an 8th grade education. In addition, there is a positive relationship between age and last grade completed. The younger clients had the least years of school completed (Rosenthal & Fierro, 2004).

Employment Barriers of the WtUF Clients

Upon enrollment, clients were asked to check the statements that applied to them on the employment barrier form; this allowed the assessment of personal employment barriers. Most clients listed Transportation (56.7 percent; N=268) as one of their barriers. Housing (52 percent; N=246) was the second most frequent employment barrier. The third and fourth most frequent barriers were depression (43.3 percent; N=205) and childcare (33.6 percent; N=159). One cannot infer clinical depression from this result for the lack of clinical assessment. However, clients, self-assessment is an indicator of psychological uneasiness and maybe fragility.

Although not among the four most common barriers, other issues are also frequent among WtUF clients such as having learning differences (18.2 percent; N=86), being victims of crime or

abuse (18 percent; N=85), currently struggling with substance abuse (11.4 percent; N=54)⁴, suffering from a mental disability (9.5 percent; N=45), having a felony record or criminal conviction (18.8 percent; N=89). Having the clients identify personal barriers, the program tried to address them by developing appropriate institutional supports. (Rosenthal & Fierro, 2004).

Self Identified Barriers to Employment

The clients in the WtUF program were mostly female because the program targeted parents whose children were in the foster care system. In most cases, women are the primary caregivers and are responsible for their children, accounting for high representation in this program. In Philadelphia there is disproportionate representation of African Americans in the DHS and the DPW systems accounting for a high representations in the WtUF program.

More than 50 percent of WtUF mothers had children who were not school age and therefore the mothers were responsible for child care all the time. In addition, more than 89 percent of families had at least three children making it difficult to be in the job market. Issues of day care, health and well being of the children impact one's ability to engage in the job market.

It was found among WtUF clients that women who have children at a younger age were more likely to have less formal education. Fifty-three percent of WtUF clients had neither high school diploma nor GED (even higher than the 32 percent in Taylor & Bausch's 2004 study). Early parenthood impacts the ability of clients to finish high school (Poverty Law Center, 2004). Limited education, coupled with other identified barriers makes it difficult to compete in a highly skilled job market, making low paying and highly irregular service industry jobs the only viable option.

⁴ The program required that clients be free from substance abuse for at least six months upon enrollment. Yet, some clients still saw themselves as "struggling" with substance abuse.

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When asked to self identify the barriers to employment, 56.7 percent of the clients identified transportation to be one of the biggest factors. Reverse commute has become more prevalent where the poor are residing in the city and service jobs are in the suburbs. Non-dependable travel, expensive transportation costs and long commute hours are factors that often make it difficult for clients to get and keep a job. Affordable housing was another issue highlighted by the clients. The city of Philadelphia has had a major housing crisis and affordable housing is limited. In fact, applications for the housing voucher program directly with PHA were last submitted and closed in November of 2000. The only way the new homeless can access housing vouchers is through specific programs, such as WtUF. While efforts have been made to refurbish and renovate public housing, high rise public housing has been demolished and instead the PHA has been creating scatted sites along with mixed housing options. These efforts have been necessary but they are limited and create high competition with the increasing gentrification and refurbishing of old housing stock. It is in this environment that the city faces a challenge to provide affordable housing.

Results Based on the Program Goals

Client Outcomes: Employment

The goal of the WtUF program was to work with parents whose children were in formal or informal foster or kinship care. The basic concept underpinning this program was if a client could overcome barriers to employment, get a job, and create a stable home environment, then the client would be prepared for family reunification. The focus of the intensive "job first" program was to move the clients into the workforce quickly so that they would comply with the Department of Labor's welfare to work regulations and then would work with a case manager to address other personal barriers, in order to facilitate family reunification.

Employment rate, days to employment and training

The employment rate of WtUF clients was lower than anticipated despite the range of support services and employment advising, job coaching, subsidized job placement and training. Out of the 571 clients enrolled, 187 (32.7 percent) achieved employment (Rosenthal & Fierro, 2004).

WtUF clients who became employed earned on average \$7.93 an hour and worked 33.3 hours a week for an average of 264.07 a week. On average, it took 148.16 days (4.9 months) from enrollment to employ the clients. The Median time was 112 days (3.7 months) (Rosenthal & Fierro, 2004).

Clients were employed mainly in five areas: hospitality (20 percent), customer service (18 percent), clerical work (18 percent), food service (15 percent) and healthcare (10 percent), a growing workforce in the city. Health insurance was provided by the employers for 31 percent of employed clients. Among those employed more than once, 43.5 percent received health insurance at their second employment (Rosenthal and Fierro, 2004).

WtUF also provided skills training for 72 clients. Clients participated in training anywhere from 3 weeks to a year and a half. Most clients (34 percent) were trained in a healthcare profession, whether in Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), medical records or other healthcare profession. Of those who received training, 48 (65.8 percent) were employed (Rosenthal & Fierro, 2004).

Programmatic findings:

1. Although WtUF had more women than men enrolled, a significantly higher percentage of the men were employed than the women (46.4 percent of men were employed vs. 30.9 percent of women) (Rosenthal & Fierro, 2004).
2. The employed population was significantly older than the unemployed population and had more years of school completed. Few WtUF clients attended college (8.6 percent); those who did, were employed more (53.1 percent) than those who didn't (30.8 percent) (Rosenthal & Fierro, 2004).

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3. In relation to the staff's contribution to clients' employment, the majority of the employed population had an employment advisor that had established with them a relatively continuous relationship (more contacts). Also clients who had more contact with their employment advisors worked for longer hours once they were employed (Rosenthal & Fierro, 2004).
4. The longer it took clients to become employed, the higher their hourly wage earned (and vice versa). Also, the higher their wage, the longer they worked a week (and vice versa) (Rosenthal & Fierro, 2004).
5. It took WtUF longer to place in employment the clients who had more children (Rosenthal & Fierro, 2004).
6. Clients who were employed for longer hours also had had higher hourly wages. These clients had a richer employment history, having worked for longer hours and at a higher wage on their previous jobs as well (Rosenthal & Fierro, 2004).
7. Although the percentage of employed clients was lower than expected, WtUF made a substantial impact by obtaining good employment rates on the hardest-to-employ (Rosenthal & Fierro, 2004).
8. Challenges in employing people with a criminal conviction or more specifically, a felony, were major and required specific networking strategies. Employers willing to hire clients with a criminal background or felonies were identified. By so doing, WtUF placed in employment 30 percent of the clients that admitted having a felony record and 42.4 percent of those that admitted having a criminal conviction (Rosenthal and Fierro, 2004).

Discussion of Findings:

As indicated earlier, the majority of the participants in the program were women, however a significantly higher percentage of men were placed in employment when compared to women. This could

be related to the fact that women had additional children at home and were responsible for them or that low-skill jobs are still least accessible to women. Also, it took longer to employ clients who had three or more children. This finding corresponds to what is highlighted in the literature that childcare poses a significant barrier to employment. Therefore in the development of employment and training programs, reliable and flexible daycare or child supervision needs to be systemically planned and provided.

Those who were employed were older and had more years of school completed. It is clear that literacy and education are important elements for the job market. Even in the low paying service industry, education is a necessary criterion for employability. Improved education not only increases job opportunities but improves the health, mental health, nutrition, money management and quality of life for families and their children.

Networking and being in a supportive environment is important for accessing employment and furthering employment opportunities. As found in the WtUF program, it was clear that those clients who had more contacts with their employment advisor or case manager became employed more frequently and for more hours a week. Clients perform better in the job search market if they feel supported, can brain storm, role play, and creatively problem solve with a case manager. Case managers can also serve as advocates and can negotiate for their clients in a multi-service environment such as the public welfare agency and child welfare services.

Clients who had more work experience and had worked longer hours received higher wages upon placement through the WtUF program. Also, the longer it took for a client to get employed, the higher the wage they received and the longer they worked in a week. This suggests there is a benefit to investing more time assisting a client to be job ready and assisting them to apply for a better wage earning job with longer hours. This increases their ability to move closer to earning a "livable wage"

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rather than seeking multiple jobs to make ends meet. Also, while in employment it is important for clients to continue their education and skill training to have job stability as well as career mobility.

Given the fact that WtUF worked with the difficult to employ client population, the numbers employed are remarkable. Fifty-three percent of WtUF's clients in fact did not have a high school diploma or GED. In a difficult job market, environmental and personal barriers to employment can seem overwhelming to overcome. A special sub-population targeted was those clients who had a criminal conviction. Networking, vouching for the credibility of a client, and finding creative job outlets were indicators of the tenacious commitment of staff to help clients find employment.

Continuing Education's Role in Preparing Service Providers to Meet the Needs of the Difficult-to-Employ Population

Continuing education must play a critical role in the training and education of service providers about the demands and the barriers that clients experience as they navigate the world of work. Human service providers, especially in the employment and training programs, the public welfare agencies and even in child welfare agencies, are not all trained in the field of social work. In case planning with the clients, service providers must be aware of the literature that sensitizes and makes them knowledgeable of the barriers that often face the hard to employ population. Continuing education should play a vital role in developing curriculum and providing training to the service providers to prepare them to be flexible and resourceful with clients who have multiple barriers to employment so that their challenges may be overcome.

TANF recipients are often involved in multiple systems as in the case of the target population of WtUF. At the very least, these clients had to negotiate two very different and demanding systems which have different policies and expectations. Each system has a specific focus. The DPW was

looking for their clients to move off the welfare rolls and the DHS, was looking after the best interests of the child. On occasion the agencies are working at cross-purposes to each other inadvertently. Continuing education can provide a useful tool in helping each system's workforce understand the complexities of each system and that working together on some critical issues could lessen the burden for such endeavors.

The WtUF program developed another model which could be useful for continuing social work education. WtUF developed an infrastructure committee which met once every two months. The infrastructure committee was comprised of executives of the various public social services in Philadelphia such as the DHS, the School District and Office of Mental Health, as well as the U.S. Department of Labor, the DPW, PHA, and other major service providers. The Infrastructure Committee met to develop strategies to create a seamless system for clients. Problems could be quickly solved by identifying an individual within an agency who could understand the problem, assist in the immediate service for a client or advocate for policy change that would assist the client. The program realized that it was necessary to have a two pronged approach to address the barriers of clients. One was at the individual level and the other at programmatic or service provider's level. Continuing education can help advance such partnerships by identifying and training human service providers on strengthening networking and collaboration efforts.

The success of the WtUF program was enhanced as a result of a comprehensive evaluation and monitoring plan. The process and outcome evaluation created a systematic mechanism to inform the program about need for changes and the indicators that warranted attention for the success of the program. Continuing social work education can play a critical role in helping organizations and human service providers to create measurable objectives to collect and analyze data to inform impact and outcome.

Examining the Major Barriers to Employment among TANF Recipients and the Role of Continuing Education in Preparing the Professional Workforce

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