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**Testing Case Management
in a Rural Context: An
Impact Analysis of the
Illinois Future Steps
Program**

**Findings from the Rural
Welfare-to-Work Strategies
Demonstration Evaluation**

Final Report

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30 - MONTH IMPACTS OF THE ILLINOIS FUTURE STEPS PROGRAM: KEY FINDINGS

The Rural Welfare-to-Work Strategies Demonstration Evaluation used random assignment experiments to assess the effectiveness of innovative strategies to help the rural poor find and sustain employment and move toward self-sufficiency. This final report presents 30-month impact analysis findings for the Illinois Future Steps program, an employment-focused case management program in rural, southern Illinois. Future Steps provided intensive job search and placement assistance, skill-building and support services, and postemployment assistance. The program targeted Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients, food stamp recipients, and other low-income people and was designed to prepare them for work and help them become and remain employed, particularly in jobs with desirable characteristics such as high wages and benefits. By teaming the welfare agency with a regional community college, Future Steps aimed to connect people with services and employment opportunities in rural, southern Illinois.

The particular economic, geographic, and social conditions of rural areas often create additional hurdles for welfare recipients and other disadvantaged people hoping to find jobs, maintain employment, and secure long-term well-being (Weber et al. 2002). In rural labor markets, for example, jobs are generally scarcer than in urban markets, and the available jobs more often involve low wages and/or part-time work (Lichter and Jensen 2000). Education and training opportunities, as well as services like health care and mental health treatment, are more dispersed and may also be more difficult to obtain in less populous areas. Moreover, a lack of public transportation, common in rural areas, can make access to existing jobs and services difficult (Weber and Duncan 2001; Friedman 2003). Finally, tight-knit social networks in some rural communities can make jobs difficult to obtain for long-term residents with poor personal or family reputations (Findeis et al. 2001). On the other hand, the same close-knit nature of many rural communities can make jobs more difficult to obtain for people with a lack of local connections. Overall, families in rural areas are more likely than those in nonrural areas to be poor, and to be poor for longer periods (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2004).

To provide evidence on programs to address the particular problems of rural communities, the Rural Welfare-to-Work Evaluation tested two promising interventions: Future Steps and Building Nebraska Families (BNF). Although these programs were similar in their goal to support the transition to employment and self-sufficiency among low-income rural people, they diverged in their program components and target populations. Future Steps emphasized employment-focused case management, and BNF provided home visitation and life skills education to improve basic life skills and job readiness. While BNF targeted hard-to-employ TANF recipients with multiple obstacles, Future Steps was open to TANF and food stamp recipients, as well as to low-income volunteers. Both programs relied on partnerships between state welfare agencies and postsecondary institutions: a regional community college for Future Steps, and a state university extension service for BNF.

Random assignment was used to assess whether Future Steps and BNF improved the employment, earnings, and well-being of the low-income populations they served. For each program, more than 600 people eligible for limited program slots were randomly assigned to either a treatment group (which was offered a program's services) or a control group (which was not offered a program's services, but which could access all other services available in the area). To determine each program's net impact, the behaviors and outcomes of the two groups were compared over a 30-month follow-up period using both survey and administrative records data. Given the use of random assignment, the evaluation's findings provide rigorous evidence of program effectiveness. Both evaluations included an impact study, as well as an implementation and cost study. A benefit-cost study was also conducted for BNF but not for Future Steps, because, overall, as this report details, there was no evidence that Future Steps produced impacts.^{1,2} Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) and its subcontractor, Decision Information Resources, Inc., conducted the evaluations with funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Administration for Children and Families.

This final report focuses on Future Steps. In this report, we (1) chronicle the design and operation of Future Steps, assessing program participation, service delivery, and costs; (2) examine 30-month impacts on employment, earnings, welfare dependence, self-sufficiency, and well-being; and (3) draw lessons and recommendations about implementing, designing, and testing future welfare-to-work programs in rural areas. The text box that follows provides a brief overview of these three points, with the rest of the report providing a more detailed discussion of each. We begin with a summary of the Future Steps model and a description of the evaluation's design and analytic methods.

¹ A detailed interim report on Future Steps included an 18-month impact analysis, along with a comprehensive assessment of program operation (Meckstroth et al. 2006). Where relevant, this final report summarizes findings described in the earlier report. For example, please refer to the earlier report for an in-depth discussion of Future Steps' implementation, participation, and costs.

² Findings from the BNF evaluation are detailed in a separate report that includes a 30-month impact and benefit-cost analysis, along with assessments of program implementation, participation, and costs (Meckstroth et al. 2008). Early cross-site implementation lessons from the Rural Welfare-to-Work Evaluation are described in Burwick et al. (2004).

AN OVERVIEW OF THE EVALUATION OF FUTURE STEPS

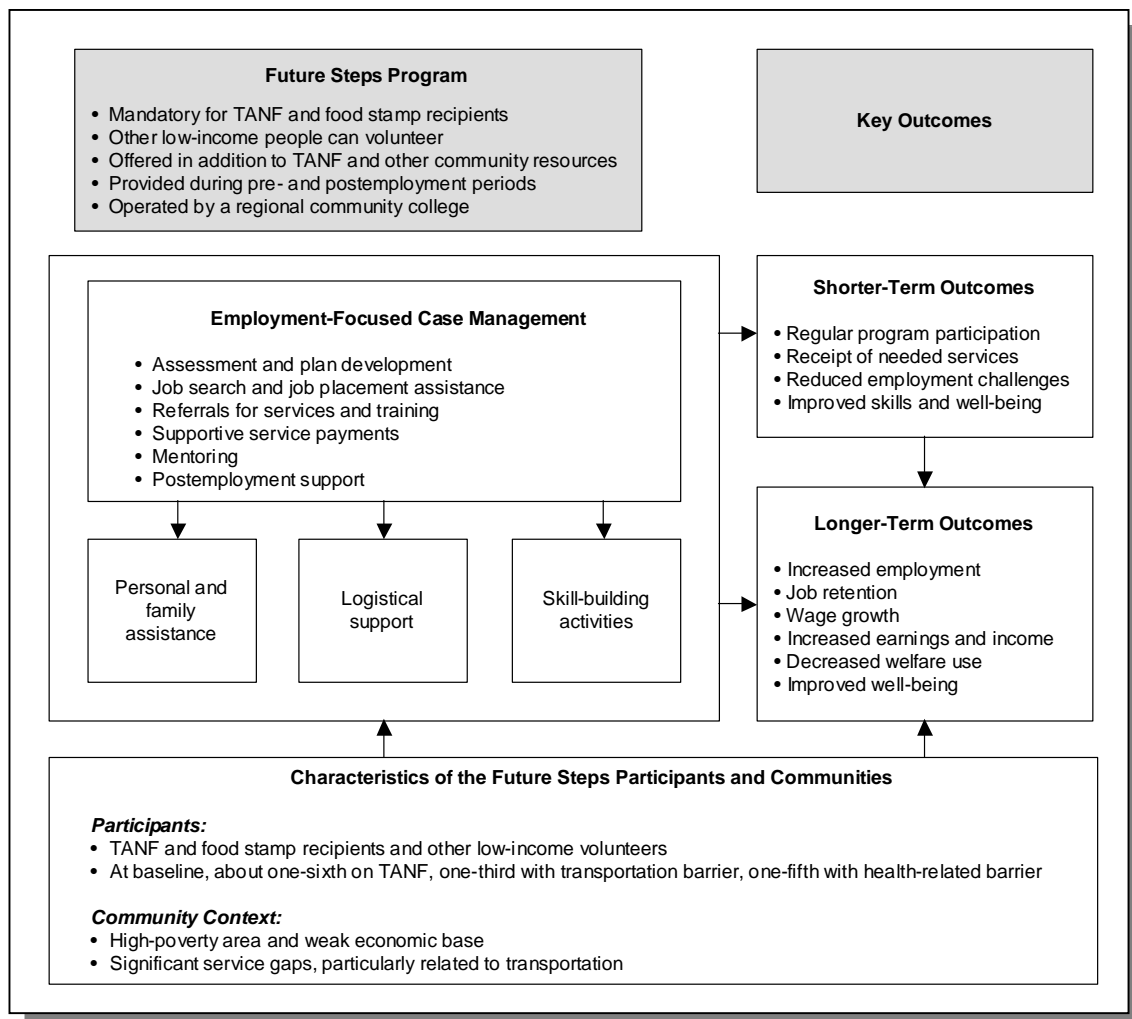
The Rural Welfare-to-Work Evaluation represents the first rigorous, systematic evaluation of programs designed to help low-income rural families transition from welfare to sustained employment, job progression, and self-sufficiency. The key findings from the Future Steps evaluation are:

- ***Program Design and Operation.*** The evaluation provided one of the few tests of an employment-focused case management model in a rural context. Similar case management models have been tested in urban areas, but have demonstrated few positive impacts. Still, Future Steps was viewed as a potential improvement over previous case management models, because it (1) teamed the welfare agency with a regional community college to help promote access to services and jobs; (2) drew on the local connections of program staff to help clients gain access to services, jobs, and other resources; and (3) provided small caseloads of 15 to 35 active clients per case manager. The Future Steps implementation study showed that participation rates were high, and the program operated largely as planned, especially in the first year (Meckstroth et al. 2006). However, one potentially important component—employer-focused job readiness and vocational training—was not implemented. In the second year, organizational and budget pressures weakened implementation, although participation remained fairly steady.
- ***30-Month Impacts.*** Despite relatively good fidelity in implementing its case management assistance and job placement services, Future Steps had few positive impacts on the employment, self-sufficiency, and well-being of low-income people in rural Illinois. Still, Future Steps clients were more likely than control group members to receive services, which supported their access to public benefits and financial support at somewhat higher rates than control group members. They were also employed at higher rates than the control group during a couple of the very early and late months of the 30-month follow-up period, but this was not enough to improve earnings or self-sufficiency, and in most months there were no impacts on employment.
- ***Lessons Learned.*** Although Future Steps was not shown to be an effective means to alleviate rural poverty, the evaluation does provide some lessons for policy and practice. First, implementation challenges confounded Future Steps' efforts to provide an intervention that truly went beyond case management. Foremost among these problems were limited ties with local employers and difficulty retaining and supporting qualified staff. Moreover, the program was not able to capitalize on the job-training resources and employer connections available through its community college partner. Second, while case management may have helped clients address some barriers to work and self-sufficiency, many obstacles remained, at least some of which may be structural in nature, such as the limited availability of jobs and public transportation. This suggests that expanded job opportunities and infrastructural improvements may be needed to overcome persistent barriers to self-sufficiency common to depressed rural areas.

FUTURE STEPS: PROMOTING WELFARE-TO-WORK IN RURAL ILLINOIS

Through extended case management, Future Steps intended to help clients not only overcome obstacles and develop practical and vocational skills, but also find and keep good jobs and progress toward economic independence. To encourage clients to quickly enter or re-enter the labor force, the program provided four core services: (1) an assessment of skills and interests; (2) individualized job search, job placement, and skills enhancement plans; (3) help in overcoming personal and logistical barriers through outside referrals, mentoring, and \$500 in flexible supportive service payments; and (4) extended postemployment support. In general, clients received regular services and support from the program until they had found a job and been employed for three months. After that, they accessed services as needed. Overall, the average client had 25 service contacts with a Future Steps case manager over a 16-month period. Figure 1 illustrates the key elements of Future Steps and how the program aimed to support clients' efforts toward employment and self-sufficiency.

Figure 1. The Future Steps Program Model for Supporting Work and Economic Independence



Future Steps operated as a partnership between the job placement center at Shawnee Community College (SCC), based in Ullin, Illinois, and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). By situating the program in the context of a community college, it was hoped that participants might benefit from access to the college's well-developed job placement services, as well as education and training opportunities. The program operated from July 2001 to September 2003, serving more than 300 participants across five counties in an economically distressed area of southern Illinois. Most Future Steps clients were referred to the program by IDHS staff, though some were referred by SCC or other organizations in the community. The Future Steps staff included a part-time program director (who doubled as the SCC placement center director), a program coordinator, and five case managers (called "career specialists"), who were stationed in each of the five county-level IDHS offices. Career specialists carried an average caseload of between 15 and 35 active clients, allowing them to provide frequent, individualized support to clients.

Future Steps targeted both mandatory and voluntary participants. To be eligible, a person had to be available and willing to work at least 30 hours per week. The program was mandatory for TANF and food stamp clients who were required to work. It was voluntary for other low-income people who were interested in receiving the services and able to meet the work requirement.³ We estimated that between one-quarter and one-third of eligible Future Steps applicants were volunteers. For mandatory clients, TANF and food stamp benefits could be sanctioned if clients did not comply with Future Steps requirements.

At the time of their referral to the program, more than 9 in 10 Future Steps clients had worked for pay in the past two years, and about three-quarters had at least a high school diploma or GED (Table 1). Moreover, only one-sixth were receiving TANF when they were referred to Future Steps, although more than half had received TANF or AFDC at some point in their adult lives. In terms of obstacles to employment, one in five reported that they or another member of their household had a health problem that limited their (the sample member's) ability to work, attend training, or go to school, and one in three did not have regular access to a car or other vehicle.

The Future Steps service area covered five rural counties in the southern tip of Illinois. Among the combined population of about 64,000 during the time of the evaluation, most residents in the five-county area of Alexander, Johnson, Massac, Pulaski, and Union counties were white, although there was a substantial minority population, including about 13 percent African American. Entry-level jobs in this area were most commonly with retailers, fast-food restaurants, and nursing homes. The area had a few large employers, including chemical and cement factories, state prisons, and a riverboat casino. Economic challenges were substantial, with unemployment and poverty rates above the state average (including poverty as high as

³ Clients were considered low-income if they lived in households with income under 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Some in the group of volunteers included TANF or food stamp recipients who were not required to work, as well as those who received other types of support from IDHS, such as medical assistance.

Table 1. Key Characteristics of Future Steps Sample Members at Baseline (Percentages Unless Noted Otherwise)

Characteristic	Program Group	Control Group	All Sample Members
Age and Gender			
Average age (years)	30	30	30
Female	76	78	77
Race/Ethnicity			
Hispanic	4	3	3
White, non-Hispanic	47	44	46
Black, non-Hispanic	48	52	50
Other race/ethnicity	1	1	1
Education			
No high school diploma or GED	30	24	27
High school diploma or GED	44	42	43
More than high school diploma or GED	27	34**	31
Employment History			
Currently working for pay	20	16	18
Worked during past two years	93	90	91
Earnings in Prior Year			
None	21	21	21
\$1 to under \$5,000	45	45	45
\$5,000 to under \$10,000	21	21	21
\$10,000 to under \$20,000	11	11	11
\$20,000 or more	2	3	2
Duration of TANF or AFDC Receipt Before Random Assignment			
Never received TANF or AFDC	46	42	44
Received TANF or AFDC 1 to 12 months	27	22	25
Received TANF or AFDC 13 to 24 months	9	8	9
Received TANF or AFDC 25 to 60 months	8	13**	10
Received TANF or AFDC more than 60 months	10	14	12
Public Assistance at Baseline			
Receiving TANF or AFDC	16	15	16
Receiving food stamps	80	77	78
Receiving housing subsidy	3	6*	5
Household Characteristics			
Average household size (number of people)	3.1	3.2	3.1
Average number of children in household	1.4	1.5	1.5
Average age of youngest child (years)	4.9	5.1	5.0
Youngest child younger than 3 years old	31	27	29
Household Composition			
Single-adult household	56	56	56
Married or partner household	17	19	18
Other multiple-adult household	27	25	26
Obstacles to Employment			
Own or other's health condition limits activities	18	23	21
Owens or has access to a working vehicle	69	65	67
Sample Size	313	317	630

Source: Rural WtW baseline information forms, compiled by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

*/**/***Program and control group mean differences are significantly different from zero at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

24 percent in one county). Qualitative interviews with IDHS and Future Steps staff highlighted the scarcity of entry-level jobs and the long distances that some clients traveled for job opportunities. All five counties offered very little public transportation, further limiting access to jobs. Similarly, obstacles arose because of the area's scarcity of low-income housing and dependable, accessible child care.

EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODS

The goals of the Rural Welfare-to-Work Evaluation were to assess the effectiveness of promising welfare-to-work interventions in rural areas, provide recommendations for improving programs, and guide future policymaking and program development in rural areas. In particular, the evaluation of Future Steps aimed to answer three key sets of research questions:

1. How was Future Steps implemented and operated, and what did it cost?
2. How effective was Future Steps over a 30-month period at increasing employment and earnings, reducing welfare dependence, and improving well-being? Was it more effective for certain subgroups of clients?
3. What are the implications and lessons for policy and programs?

This section describes our approach to answering these questions, as well as the data sources, outcome measures, analytic methods, and subgroup analyses.

Implementation and Cost Study

The implementation and cost study sought to document the Future Steps program model and service delivery strategies, describe client experiences, assess implementation, and, more generally, provide a context for interpreting the impact study findings. To explore these topics, we relied on quantitative data from the Future Steps Information System and qualitative information collected through two rounds of in-depth program site visits and focus groups. We also examined service use data collected through a survey conducted 18 months after random assignment. In addition, we used a careful methodological approach to develop an estimate of the cost of the program during a typical ongoing year of operation. These data sources and methods together provide a detailed picture of the management and operation of Future Steps. For additional detail on the implementation and cost study research methods, see Meckstroth et al. (2006).

Experimental Design Impact Study

An experimental design was used to determine the difference Future Steps made in employment rates, earnings, welfare receipt, and well-being. During an 18-month enrollment period, 630 people eligible for scarce program slots were randomly assigned to either the treatment group or a control group. A balanced design was used, with the probability of selection into the treatment group essentially equal to 50 percent (313 were

assigned to the treatment group and 317 to the control group). Treatment (or program) group members were enrolled into Future Steps and offered program services (generally on the same day or within a day or two of random assignment), while control group members were not offered program services (although they had full access to all services otherwise available in the area). Participation in the program was nearly universal; 93 percent of program group members participated in or received at least one activity or service, and all but one had some type of verbal contact with program staff.

Random assignment was successfully implemented. The baseline characteristics of the two groups were very similar (Table 1).⁴ In addition, careful monitoring of program enrollment throughout the demonstration ensured that no members of the control group enrolled in the program.

Data Sources and Collection Methods. Researchers relied on three sources of data for the study of program impacts:

1. ***Baseline Information Form.*** Program staff collected baseline demographic and socioeconomic data on all sample members just before random assignment using information forms developed for the evaluation and completed by sample members.
2. ***Follow-Up Surveys 18 and 30 Months After Random Assignment.*** We conducted two follow-up surveys with sample members. For both, we used comprehensive telephone interviewing methods, along with intensive field followup. The first survey was a 45-minute interview conducted 18 months after sample members were randomly assigned. We achieved a response rate of 83 percent (520 completes out of 630 sample members). Of the completes, 252 were program group members, and 268 were control group members. The second survey was a 30-minute interview conducted 30 months after random assignment. We attempted to conduct interviews with all sample members, whether or not they had completed an 18-month interview. We achieved a response rate of 85 percent on the 30-month survey (536 completes out of 630 sample members). Of the completes, 261 were program group members and 275 were control group members. Seventy-six percent of sample members responded to both surveys. Appendix A contains a full discussion of survey data collection and weighting methods.
3. ***Administrative Records from the State of Illinois.*** We obtained state-level administrative records data on all sample members for (1) monthly TANF and food stamp receipt, and (2) quarterly employment and earnings based on Illinois

⁴ The few significant differences between the two groups are within the range of expected chance variation for a randomly assigned sample. Moreover, all impact estimates are adjusted with regression techniques that control for any residual differences between the program and control groups in observed characteristics.

state unemployment insurance (UI) records. Data were obtained for a 42-month (14-quarter) period after random assignment.

The key findings that relate to Future Steps' employment and earnings impacts were based on data collected from the follow-up surveys. Where appropriate, we also describe the findings based on administrative data (which, overall, were consistent with those based on the survey data). We rely on the surveys as the primary data source for employment and earnings because they provide a detailed picture of clients' labor market experiences. Although administrative data represent accurate information for *all* sample members on the jobs and earnings reported by employers in Illinois, these data are incomplete because they exclude sample members' self-employment, out-of-state employment, and informal jobs. All of these can be important sources of earnings, but they are unlikely to be captured through the state UI system. However, these earnings sources typically are reflected in the survey data. Next, we describe data sources used for particular outcome measures.

Outcome Measures. The analysis assessed the effects of Future Steps on outcomes related to labor market success, dependence on public assistance, use of services, individual and family functioning, and family well-being and poverty status. The surveys included detailed employment timelines that allowed us to construct monthly estimates of employment and earnings. The surveys also included variables on the characteristics of jobs held at followup, income sources, and family income. Depending on the source, measures were defined by month or quarter, as well as for aggregated periods (such as the full 30-month follow-up period and the last 12 months of the follow-up period). To adjust for inflation, estimates were converted into 2003 dollars using the Consumer Price Index.

While the 30-month survey was our primary data source for most outcomes, we relied on the 18-month survey for two types of measures. First, data related to service use and to self-esteem and other personal-functioning measures were collected primarily through the 18-month survey. Second, when sample members responded to both the 18- and 30-month surveys, we drew on their responses to the 18-month survey for data on their monthly employment and earnings for the first 18 months after random assignment. Then, we used their 30-month responses for data on their monthly employment and earnings since the time of the 18-month survey. For sample members interviewed through the 30-month followup only ("30-month-only respondents"), we collected monthly employment and earnings data for the full follow-up period from the 30-month survey.⁵

⁵ The early employment and earnings histories of the 30-month-only respondents are probably more affected by recall error than those of the respondents to both surveys. However, both the program and control groups should be equally affected by recall error, so it is unlikely that this error biases the estimated impacts. To make certain that the results did not vary substantially with the choice of sample, we repeated all analyses conducted on the full 30-month sample with the subset of sample members who responded to both surveys. Findings across the two samples were highly consistent, as described in Appendix B.

Analytic Methods. Because random assignment was used to create the program and control groups, we can attribute the subsequent differences in the groups' outcomes to the incremental services the program offered. We estimated impacts by comparing mean outcomes for the program and control groups 30 months after random assignment. The differences between the mean outcomes represent unbiased estimates of the average effects of Future Steps.

To improve the precision of the impact estimates, we used multivariate regression methods. We controlled for relevant demographic and socioeconomic variables collected at baseline, as well as two key contextual variables (clients' county of residence and year of program enrollment) that we identified through the implementation study as factors that may have influenced the key outcomes.⁶ We estimate that the variance of the impact estimates was reduced by 15 percent as a result of using multivariate modeling.

We identified program impacts if treatment group outcomes differed from control group outcomes by a margin that was statistically significant using a two-tailed test at the 90 percent confidence level. Given the size of the program and control group samples, to have a high probability of detecting significant impacts, we needed to observe monthly earnings differences of about \$112, TANF benefit differences of \$38, and employment and welfare impacts of 8 to 10 percentage points.⁷ Specifically, if the program had effects of these magnitudes, we had an 80 percent chance of detecting them.

Subgroup Analyses. Using analytic methods similar to those described above, we examined findings for key subgroups. We anticipated that, by examining patterns of subgroup effects, we would enhance our understanding of the Future Steps program experience and how it may have affected outcomes for key groups in the target population. We focused our analyses on two subgroups, defined by sample members' (1) time of random assignment, and (2) degree of disadvantage at baseline. These subgroups are defined and discussed below in the section on subgroup impacts.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND SERVICE USE

To put the impact findings into context and to identify important operational issues and challenges, we recap the findings from the evaluation's implementation study, described in more detail in Meckstroth et al. (2006).

⁶ Table 1 shows the baseline demographic and socioeconomic characteristics that were used as control variables in our regression-adjusted models. We used ordinary least squares estimation for continuous outcome variables and logistic regression for binary outcomes. We also examined the sensitivity of the impact estimates and found that they were largely insensitive to alternative model specifications. Appendix C presents unadjusted impact estimates for key outcomes.

⁷ Minimum detectable differences were somewhat smaller when administrative records data were used, because administrative data for all 630 sample members were available. The evaluation was able to detect quarterly earnings differences of \$309, monthly TANF benefit differences of \$35, and employment and welfare impacts of seven to nine percentage points based on the administrative data.

Fidelity of Implementation

Analyses show that, overall, the core Future Steps program model of employment-focused case management and job search and job placement assistance was implemented largely as intended. Many program group members received substantial services and support over an extended period. On average, clients had 25 contacts with a career specialist over a 16-month period, with contacts often made up of several activities, such as employment assistance, transportation support, and mentoring on personal and family matters. The average contact lasted about 25 minutes. For employed clients, Future Steps contacts were most frequent before clients secured a job and during the first three months afterward. The average client also received three or four supportive service payments (for example, for child care, transportation, and work-related supports), totaling nearly \$300. However, this amount was far less than the \$500 per client that was planned.

Future Steps offered greatly enhanced support to program group members, at an average overall cost of \$2,901 per participant. Indeed, although control group members had access to all services otherwise available in the local area, the 18-month survey data showed that Future Steps program group members received substantially more services than their control group counterparts. These services included job search and job placement assistance, job readiness training, work-related counseling, and logistical support services. However, the implementation study showed that the Future Steps program was implemented with less intensity in its second year. This seemed to be partly a result of (1) staff turnover (the program's resourceful and experienced director left, as did some other staff); and (2) budget pressures and changing priorities within SCC as the program approached its end.

Implementation Challenges

Despite a high level of service use for many, about one-fifth of Future Steps clients received few services. This group met at least two of three criteria that suggested a low level of program involvement: (1) fewer than five service contacts, (2) less than three hours total contact time, and (3) \$100 or less in supportive service payments. This group tended to include those clients who did not obtain employment or those who were served during the evaluation's second year, when program implementation was weaker. Along with limited service coverage for some clients, the program did not use its supportive service funds as actively as planned in helping clients address challenges and ongoing needs. Future Steps spent only about half the budgeted amount on supportive service payments to clients.

One potentially important component of the original Future Steps program plan was not carried out at all. The component that was to build on the resources available at the community college—customized job readiness and vocational training tailored to the needs of local employers—was not implemented. This was because it had not been properly piloted and would have required more staff resources than were available.

Contextual Issues

IDHS (through its TANF and food stamp programs) emphasized a rapid attachment to work, with little support for education or training. The focus was on getting and keeping participants employed and off the TANF rolls. Although most Future Steps enrollees were not receiving TANF when they enrolled in the program, more than half had received TANF at some point in their adult lifetime. It is also worth noting that, in focus groups, even those participants who received substantial Future Steps services sometimes expressed concerns about the program's ability to provide effective assistance in a weak job market. Others, in describing the context of rural, southern Illinois, highlighted difficulties that they had faced related to their race, class, or local reputation.

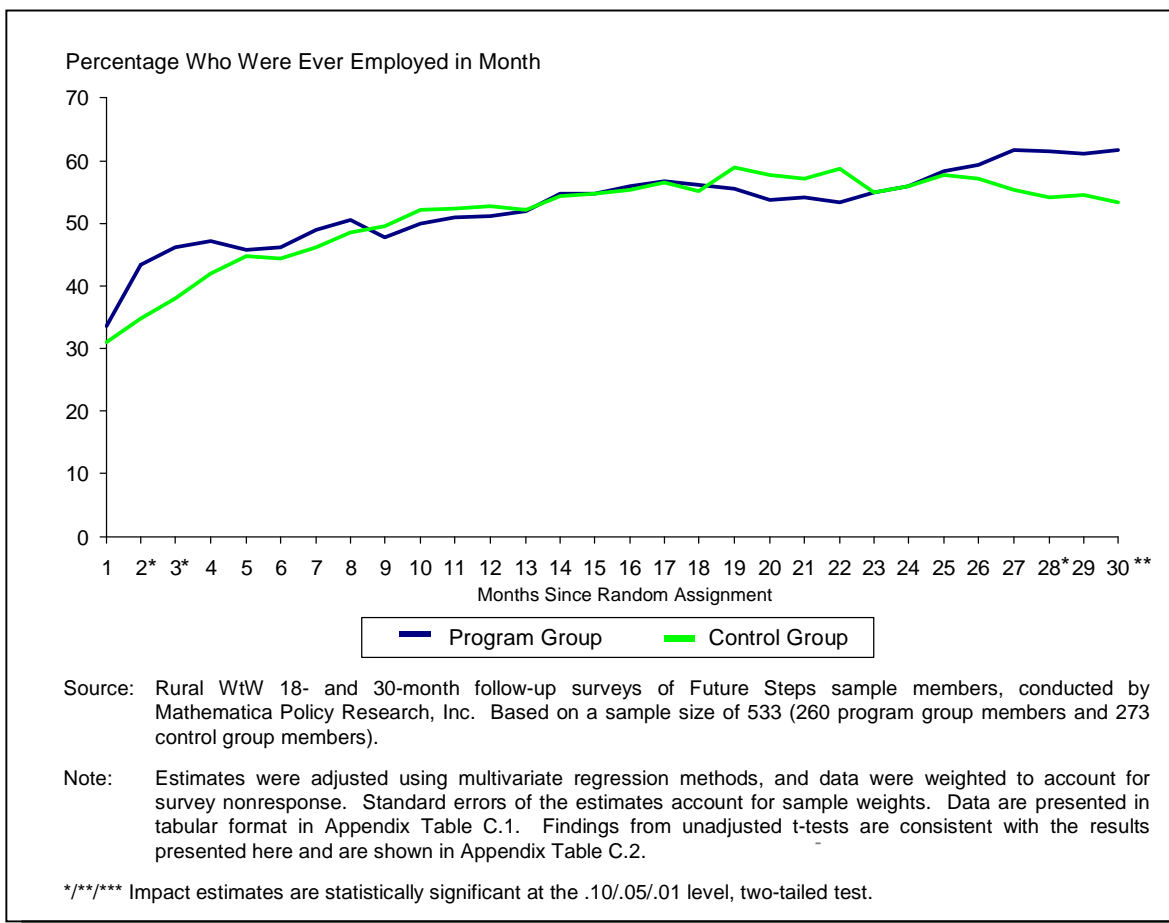
30-MONTH IMPACTS ON EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

A primary goal of Future Steps was to increase clients' employment and earnings, both by helping them find and secure jobs—particularly those with desirable characteristics such as high wages and benefits—and by providing services to help them keep, and advance in, those jobs. As noted, the program philosophy was essentially a “work-first” approach, with services focused on clients' securing employment. Nonetheless, Future Steps had few impacts on the employment or earnings of its program group members.

- ***Future Steps did not improve clients' employment status over the full follow-up period, despite somewhat higher employment rates for program group members during the early and late stages of the evaluation period.***

During most months of the 30-month follow-up period, program and control group members reported statistically equivalent rates of employment, with both groups experiencing large increases in employment from the time of random assignment to the final interview. However, clients in the program group were significantly more likely than control group members to be employed at the very beginning and end of the evaluation period (Figure 2). That is, Future Steps clients were about eight percentage points more likely than their control group counterparts to report having a job in the second and third months after random assignment. This finding is consistent with the increase in job search and job placement services that they experienced relative to control group members. The divergence of employment rates in the last months of the follow-up period is perhaps more difficult to interpret. During months 28 and 30 of the follow-up period, program group members were employed at rates about eight to nine percentage points higher than control group members. Data from administrative records also show significant differences in employment between groups in the 9th and 12th quarters, corresponding to months 25 to 27 and 34 to 36 after random assignment (Appendix C, Table C.3).

Figure 2. Employment Rates During the 30-Month Follow-Up Period, by Month After Random Assignment



The late program impacts on employment are somewhat surprising, given both the work-first program emphasis and weaker implementation in Future Steps' second year. However, because of the services program group members received while they were in Future Steps, they might have become more knowledgeable about, and more connected to, other services and opportunities available in their communities, even after their involvement with the program had ended. Indeed, qualitative interviews with IDHS staff suggest that the group of later entrants into the program might have been able to capitalize on an economic upturn that occurred near the very end of the 30-month follow-up period. Moreover, two public initiatives were undertaken in this late period—one sponsoring job fairs in the area, and another promoting public transportation—and some Future Steps clients may have been well positioned to capitalize on these programs as well. These late period employment impacts, however, did not translate into higher earnings for the program group, as detailed below. Moreover, the long delay in these impacts, coupled with the lack of employment impacts for most months, suggests that, overall, there is not compelling evidence that Future Steps improved clients' employment status.

- ***Across the 30-month follow-up period, Future Steps did not increase average employment rates or job tenure, though job turnover was more common among program group members.***

Most sample members in both the program and control groups worked at some point during the 30-month follow-up period. Based on survey data that collected information on job start and stop dates, about 9 in 10 sample members in both the program and control groups held a job at some point during the 30-month follow-up period (Figure 3). Similarly, Future Steps did not affect the average number of months sample members were employed during the 30-month period—about 16 for both the program and control groups (Figure 3). Moreover, there were no significant differences in the fraction of the two groups who were employed continuously, which was about 1 in 10 sample members across the full 30 months and about 1 in 3 during the last year of the followup (months 19 to 30). Summary measures for the first 18 months and for the last year of the follow-up period also do not reveal significant differences in the average employment rate and the overall number of months worked (Figure 3).

The only significant difference in the employment patterns of Future Steps program and control group members relates to movement between jobs. Program group members experienced greater turnover, holding, on average, just over two jobs during the entire follow-up period, compared to the control group average of just under two jobs for the period. This does not, however, reflect movement into better jobs (see analyses of job characteristics below). Rather, the higher turnover rate could reflect greater willingness among Future Steps participants to leave a job because they had access to job placement information and other support through Future Steps.

- ***Program group members were no more likely than control group members to be working full-time or in jobs with benefits at the time of the 30-month followup.***

Future Steps intended not only to help place participants in jobs, but also to help them improve the quality of their jobs. In addition to being an important measure of economic success in its own right, working in higher-quality jobs, such as those that are full-time or that offer health insurance coverage, has been shown to have a strong association with the longer-term economic success of low-income single mothers (Moore et al. 2007). In both the program and control groups, however, only about 3 in 10 sample members reported working in a full-time job at the end of the 30-month follow-up period (Table 2). Employment in jobs with important benefits such as health insurance, sick leave, or a retirement plan was also uncommon, with program group members being no more likely than control group members to have such jobs. Similarly, at the end of the 30-month followup, only about 1 in 10 sample members in both the program and control groups worked in a job that paid more than \$8 per hour (Table 2).

Figure 3. Impacts on Employment During the 30-Month Followup

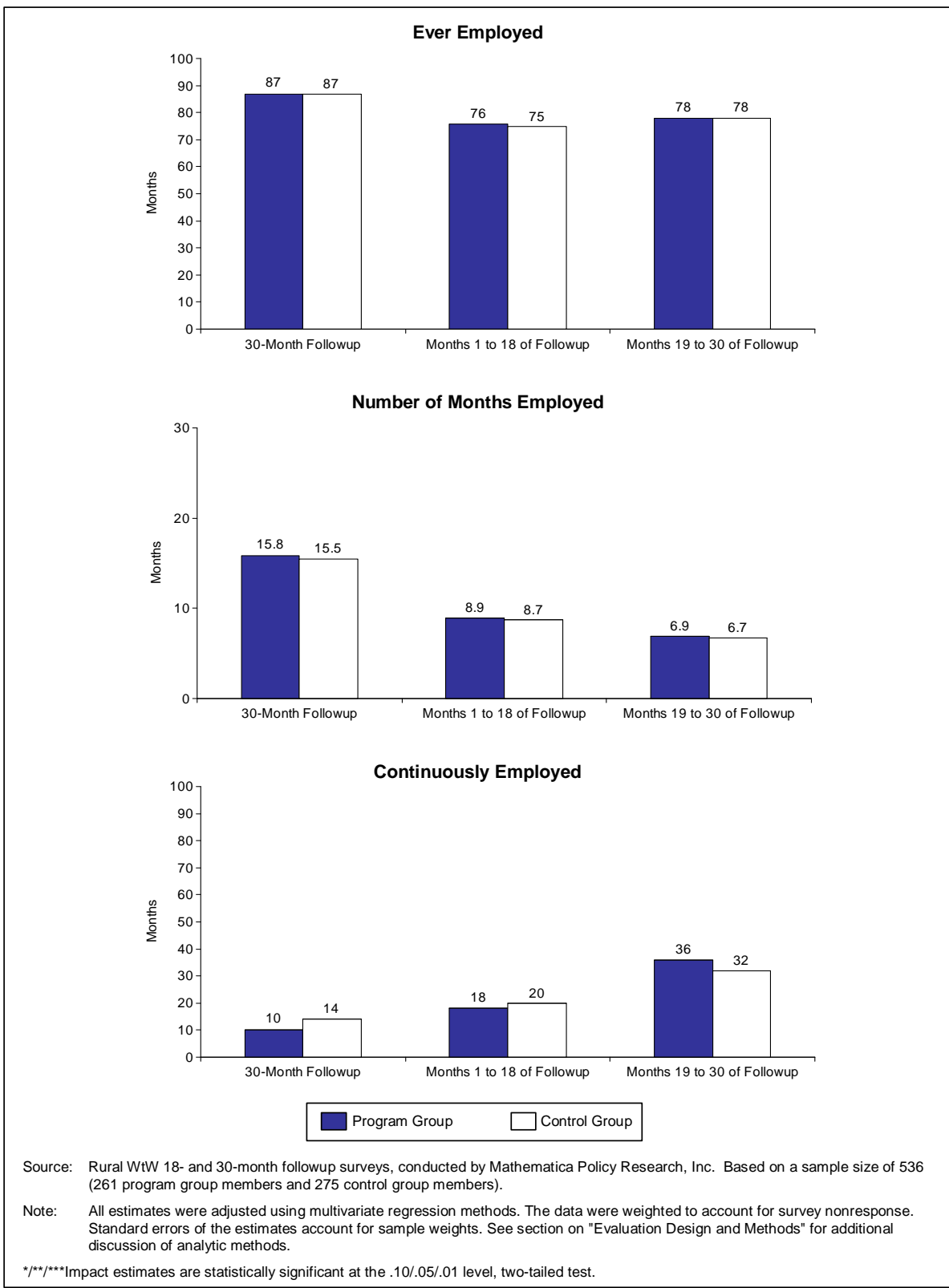


Table 2. Employment in Jobs with Specific Characteristics at the Time of the 30-Month Follow-Up Survey (Percentages)

Outcome ^a	Program Group	Control Group	Impact Estimate
Job Characteristic			
Offers hourly wage greater than \$8	13	12	1.0
Is full-time (more than 35 hours per week)	31	31	0.5
Employed in job at least 6 months	41	35	5.2
Is temporary or seasonal	5	8	-2.3
Is regular daytime shift	35	33	2.1
Job Benefit			
Provides health insurance	21	24	-3.6
Provides sick leave	14	19	-4.8
Provides paid vacation	22	24	-1.9
Provides retirement plan	15	17	-2.7
Sample Size	261	273	

Source: Rural WtW 30-month follow-up survey, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Note: All estimates were adjusted using multivariate regression methods. The data were weighted to account for survey nonresponse. Standard errors of the estimates account for sample weights.

^aThe sample for these job characteristic variables includes both sample members who were working and those who were not. If the sample were limited only to those who were working, program-control group differences might reflect factors other than the effects of the program.

*/**/** Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

- *Employed members of the program and control groups worked in similar, low-paying jobs.*

Descriptive findings show that employed program and control group members differed little in the characteristics of their jobs. Both worked in jobs that offered similarly low wages. It is not possible to assess program impacts on wages using experimental methods, because program participation affected employment, and sample members who were not employed did not have wages. However, among sample members who were employed at some point during the 30-month follow-up period, wages of program and control group members in their current or most recent job were similar, with average hourly wages of slightly less than \$7 for both groups (Table 3). Monthly earnings were also similar for both groups, with average earnings around \$1,000 (Table 3). These average wage levels are relatively low compared to those of low-wage workers nationally. A study of welfare leavers in eight states showed that the average hourly wages for welfare recipients about 12 months after leaving welfare ranged from \$7.95 to \$9.26 (Acs and Loprest 2001).⁸ The relatively low Future Steps wages probably reflect the limited employment opportunities available in rural, southern Illinois, as well as the relatively low cost of living.

⁸ We converted the average hourly wage estimates from Acs and Loprest (2001) into 2003 dollars (from 2000 dollars) using the Consumer Price Index.

Overall, program and control group members who had been employed worked in similar types of occupations. However, a significantly smaller fraction of employed program group members worked in administrative support or clerical positions compared to employed control group members (4 percent versus 10 percent) (Table 3). Other job characteristics of employed program and control groups were comparable. On average, members of each group worked about the same number of hours per week and had similar levels of job tenure (Table 3). Both groups also experienced similar commute times.

Table 3. Characteristics of the Current or Most Recent Job, for Sample Members Who Were Employed During the Follow-Up Period (Percentages, Unless Specified Otherwise)

Outcome ^a	Program Group	Control Group
Hourly Wage Rate (Dollars)	\$6.51	\$6.69
Monthly Earnings (Dollars)	\$1,025	\$1,062
Number of Months on Job (Months)	10	12
Usual Hours Worked per Week (Hours)	36	37
Commute Time to Work (Minutes)	23	25
Occupation		
Administrative support/clerical	4	10**
Sales/retail	13	11
Health services	18	14
Food services	14	12
Cleaning services	4	6
Other services	18	16
Production/trade	15	18
Manager/professional/technical	5	3
Other	9	11
Sample Size	222	235

Source: Rural WtW 30-month follow-up survey of Future Steps sample members, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Note: All estimates were adjusted using multivariate regression methods. The data were weighted to account for survey nonresponse. Standard errors of the estimates account for sample weights.

^aBecause sample members who did not work are not included in the table, program-control group differences may reflect factors other than the effects of the program. Thus, these differences should not be interpreted as program impacts. To highlight this point, we do not show program-control group differences in a separate column, but we do report the significance of differences between workers in the program and control groups.

*/**/**| Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

- ***Future Steps had no impact on sample members' earnings.***

Along with rising employment, sample members experienced increases in their real earnings over the evaluation period (Figure 4; Appendix C, Tables C.3 and C.4). The early and late program impacts on employment did not, however, translate into higher earnings for the program group. Across the 30-month follow-up period, program and control group members had similar earnings; no monthly earnings differences between the groups were statistically significant (Figure 5). On average, control group members earned \$549 per month, slightly more than program group members, who averaged \$534 per month. This finding is consistent with the general lack of impacts on employment and job quality measures. For the period between surveys—that is, months 19 to 30, which roughly corresponds to the period after participants stopped receiving program services—there were no significant program impacts on earnings. The findings were comparable, and also not significant, based on administrative records data (Appendix C, Table C.5).

Figure 4. Average Earnings, by Month After Random Assignment

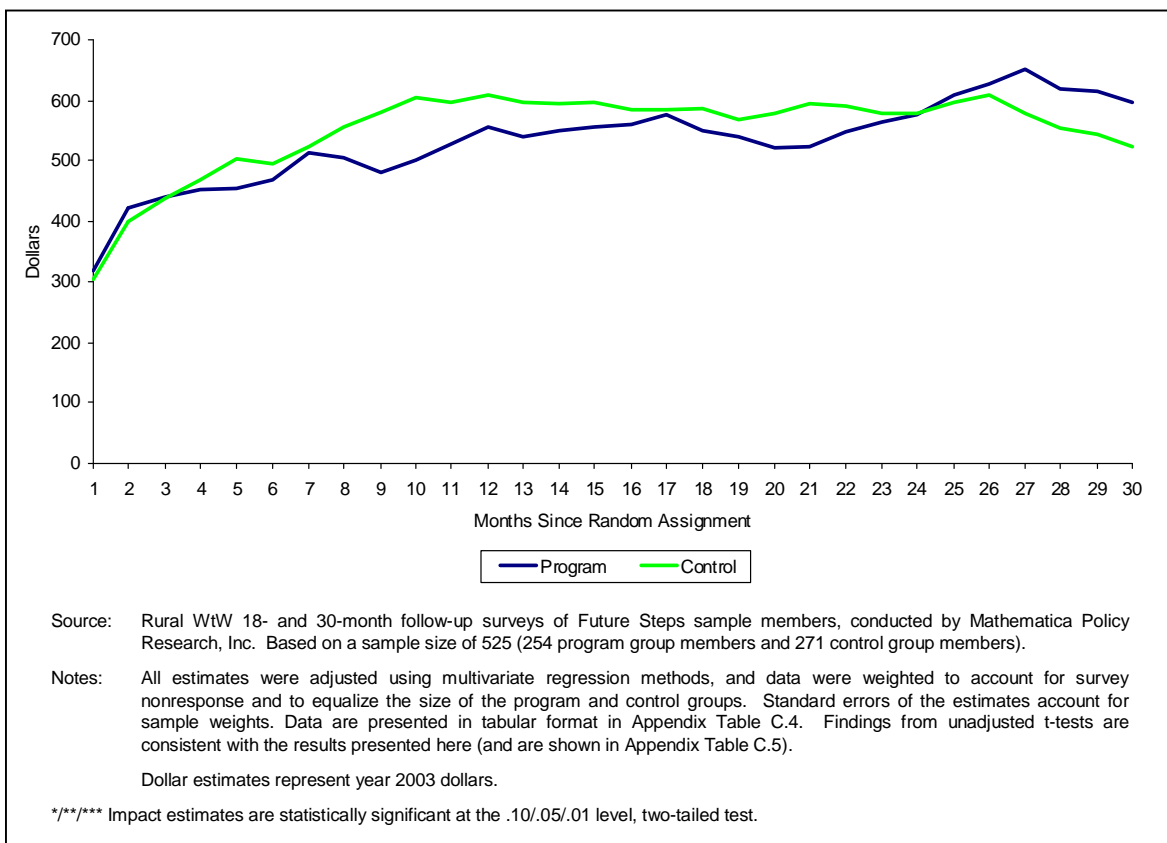
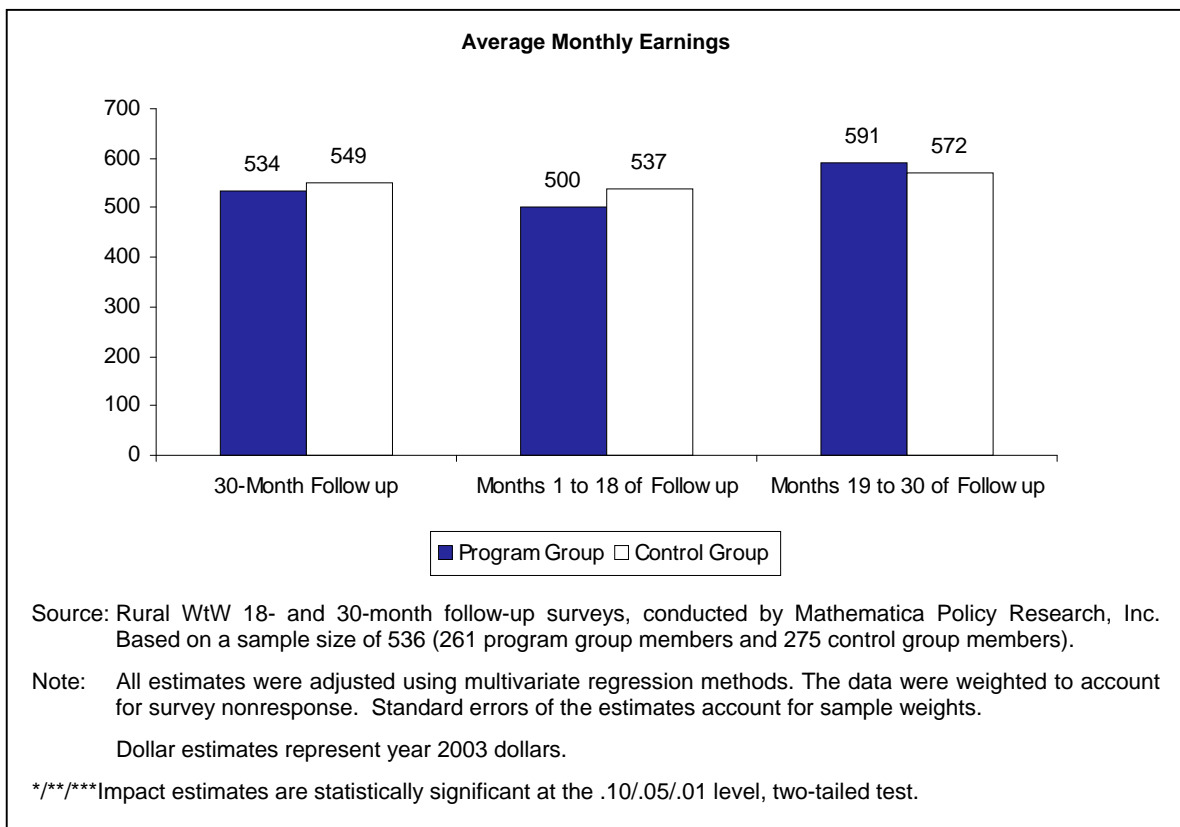


Figure 5. Impacts on Earnings During the 30-Month Followup

CHANGES IN WELFARE DEPENDENCE, SELF-SUFFICIENCY, AND WELL-BEING

It was expected that, by increasing the employment and earnings of its clients, Future Steps would also reduce clients' dependence on welfare and improve their self-sufficiency. Because of the program's lack of impacts on employment and earnings, however, it is not surprising that Future Steps also yielded few effects on clients' receipt of public assistance, household income, poverty status, or the experience of hardships associated with poverty.

- *Program group members were more likely than control group members to receive food stamps, but Future Steps had few impacts on the receipt of other forms of public assistance.*

Nearly three-quarters of program group members received food stamps in the month before the 30-month followup, compared to two-thirds of control group members (Table 4). This may have been because of stronger general connections to services resulting from program participation. Beyond food stamps, program and control group members reported receiving most forms of public assistance at similarly low rates in the month before the 30-month follow-up survey. Receipt of cash assistance, in particular, was rare. Just about 1 in 10 of both the program and control groups reported collecting TANF benefits in the

Table 4. Participation Rates in TANF, Food Stamps, and Other Public Assistance Programs During the Month Before the 30-Month Survey

Outcome (Percentage Received) ^a	Program Group	Control Group	Impact Estimate
Means-Tested Programs			
TANF	11.4	13.0	-1.6
Food Stamps	73.4	67.2	6.2*
Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	25.2	24.3	0.8
Social Insurance Programs			
Supplemental Security Income or Disability Insurance	11.4	14.4	-3.0
Social Security	3.8	5.6	-1.7
Unemployment Insurance	2.0	4.5	-2.5
Other Public Assistance	1.1	1.8	-0.7
Any Public Assistance (Any of the Above) ^b	80.7	79.0	1.6
Sample Size	261	275	

Source: Rural WtW 30-month follow-up survey, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Note: All estimates were adjusted using multivariate regression methods. The data were weighted to account for interview nonresponse. Standard errors of the estimates account for sample weights.

^aThe outcome measures represent the percentage of sample members whose household received the benefit during the month before the 30-month follow-up survey. The month before the survey represented a different number of months after random assignment for different clients. For example, for some clients, the month before the survey represented 30 months after random assignment. For others, it represented from 31 to 35 months after random assignment.

^bReceipt of foster care assistance is also represented in this aggregate category. However, the point estimates for the receipt of foster care assistance were too small to report.

*/**/** Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

month before the survey, an indication of the relative work readiness of the welfare recipients targeted by Future Steps. About a quarter of both groups received WIC, and very small proportions were served by other public assistance programs such as UI and General Assistance.

Administrative records data from the state of Illinois, which extend across the evaluation period and several months beyond it, confirm the general finding that Future Steps did not have a broad impact on receipt of public assistance (Appendix C, Tables C.6, C.7, and C.8). Findings from both data sources reveal little difference in public assistance receipt among the program and control groups.⁹

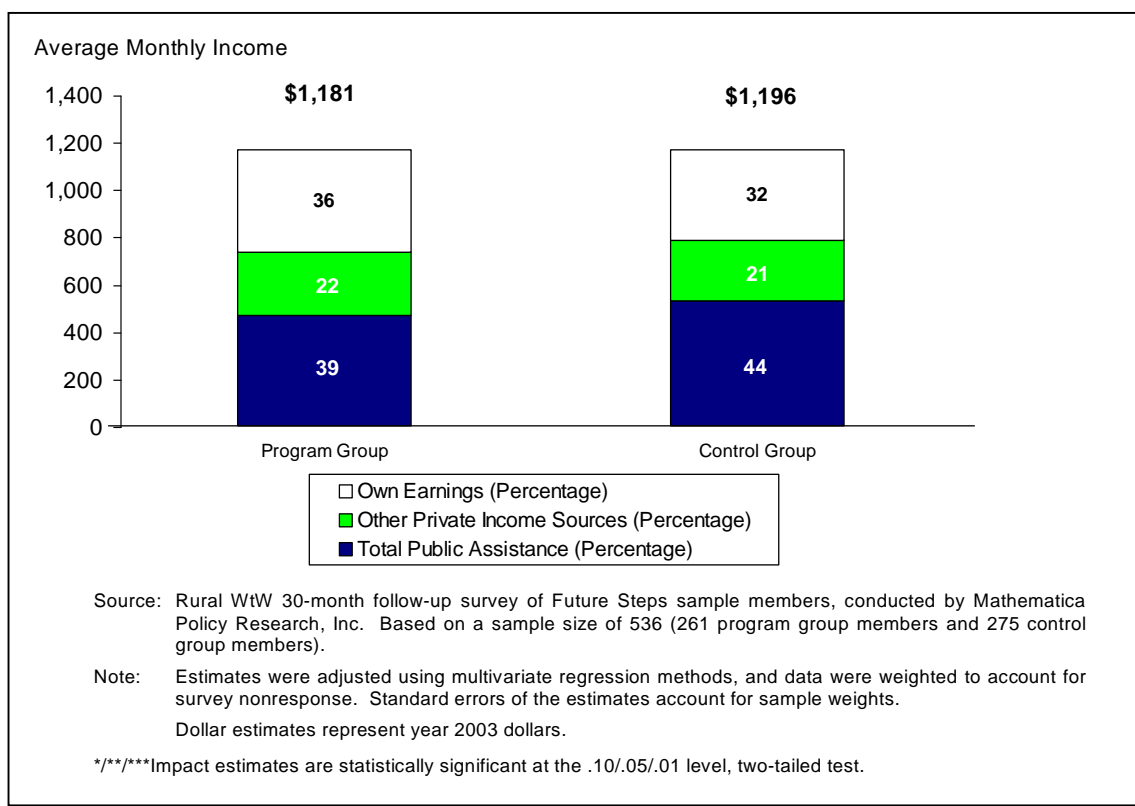
⁹ Rates of TANF and food stamp receipt were somewhat lower for both groups when measured by administrative records, compared to the survey data. This is likely because the survey data (as shown in Table 4) measured receipt of assistance for any member of the respondent's household, whereas administrative records data only measure receipt by the individual.

- ***Future Steps had no effect on household income or poverty. At the 30-month followup, 7 in 10 of both program and control group members lived in households whose monthly income was below the federal poverty level.***

In the month before the final survey, program group members had an average monthly household income of \$1,181, which was not significantly different than the control group average of \$1,196 (Figure 6). These estimates are derived from three sources of income during the month before the survey: (1) the sample member's own earnings from work; (2) other private sources of income, such as earnings from a spouse, partner, or other household member; and (3) public assistance, primarily food stamps and TANF. The percentages of income derived from these sources are similar for the program and control groups. The largest portion of income (about two-fifths for both groups) came from public assistance, while about a third came from own earnings, and the rest from other private sources. For more detailed information on the average dollar amount of income that program and control group members received from various sources, see Appendix C, Table C.9.

Despite increased earnings for both the program and control groups, large proportions of both remained poor at the end of the follow-up period (Figure 7). In the month before

Figure 6. Impacts on Average Monthly Income from Earnings and Other Sources, by Household During the Month Before the 30-Month Survey

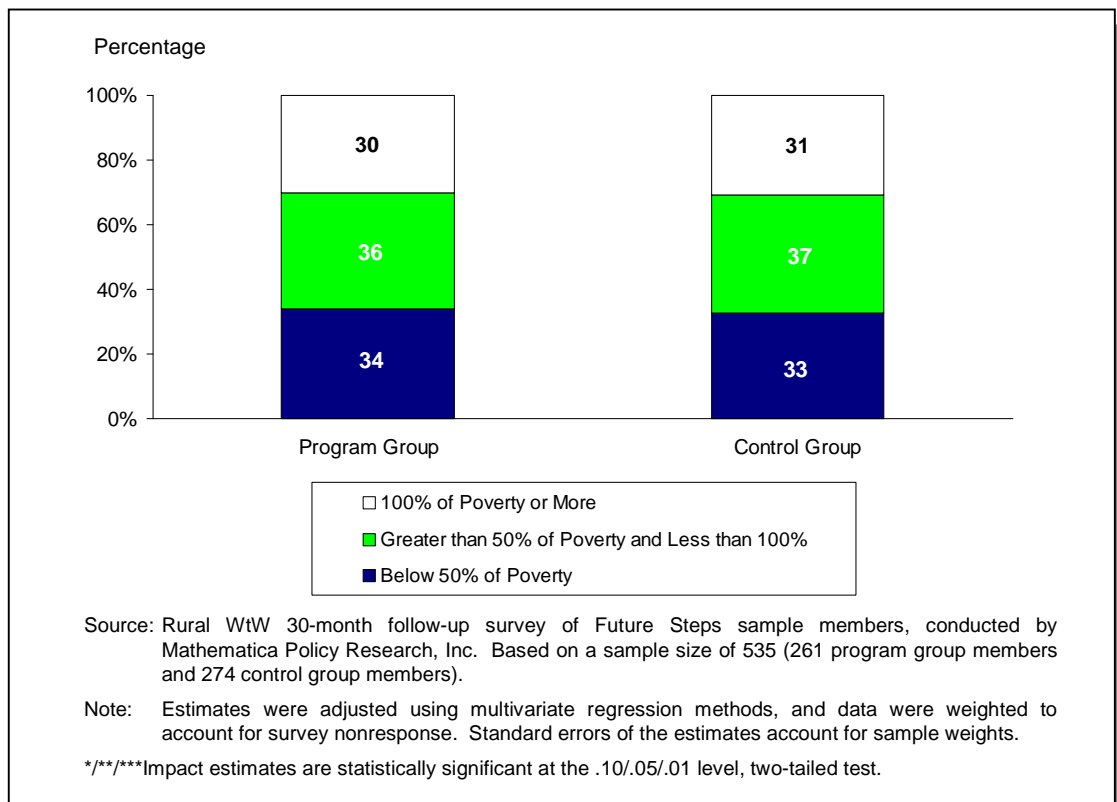


the 30-month survey, 70 percent of both program and control group members reported household incomes below the DHHS poverty guidelines for the size of their household.¹⁰ A little more than 3 in 10 households in both groups were living in extreme poverty—that is, below 50 percent of the federal poverty level. These findings are consistent with the absence of program impacts on earnings and income.

- ***Program and control group members faced similar levels of hardship during the follow-up period.***

Many program and control group members reported experiencing serious hardships during the 30-month follow-up period—hardships that may have impeded their work activities. As at the time of the 18-month follow-up survey, most types of hardships were borne by roughly equal proportions of the program and control groups. About a third of both groups reported their overall health as fair or poor at the time of the 30-month

Figure 7. Households with Income Above and Below Poverty at the 30-Month Followup



¹⁰ The poverty levels we report are based on DHHS federal poverty guidelines for the year 2003. For example, based on these guidelines, a family of three is considered to be in poverty if its monthly income is below \$1,272 (\$15,260 annually), and a family of four is poor if its monthly income is below \$1,533 (\$18,400 annually).

followup, while a quarter reported that their poor health inhibited their work, training, or schooling (Table 5). About half reported that, in the six months before the 30-month survey, transportation problems had gotten in the way of their work activities, while child care posed such an obstacle to about one in six. Nearly half of both groups were unable to pay their rent or mortgage at some point during the 30-month followup, and about a third had had a utility turned off. Notably, program group members were significantly more likely to report having faced a serious housing problem—having a utility shut off, being evicted, or being homeless or living in a shelter—at some time during the 30-month follow-up period. The reason for this difference is unclear, given the absence of differences in income and program group members’ closer connection to a program that was intended to address barriers.

IMPACTS ON SUBGROUPS

Although Future Steps had no overall impact on key economic outcomes for the full sample, we conducted subgroup analyses to enhance our understanding of how Future Steps may have affected key groups differently. Indeed, in the Rural WtW evaluation of the BNF program, we observed large, statistically significant impacts for a more disadvantaged subgroup of sample members. For Future Steps, we focused our subgroup analyses on two key groups, defined by clients’ (1) time of random assignment (or program enrollment), and (2) level of disadvantage.^{11,12}

- ***There is no evidence that Future Steps improved employment, earnings, or self-sufficiency among clients who were randomly assigned in either the first or the second halves of the demonstration.***

Because of the stronger implementation during the program’s first year, we reasoned that a subgroup analysis by the period of enrollment might help isolate the effects of the implementation challenges that occurred during the program’s second year. We expected that outcomes might be better for program group members served during the demonstration’s first year (“early entrants”).¹³ The significant program versus control group differences in service use (described earlier for the full sample) were more pronounced for the early entrants (Meckstroth et al. 2006). Nevertheless, despite stronger program implementation and greater service use during the first half of the demonstration, there is no

¹¹ We also conducted analyses of several other sets of subgroups. We examined impact findings by (1) household type (single parents versus all other household types); and (2) sex (for females only, given the small sample size for males). The key outcomes for these groups were neither significant nor informative.

¹² In the case of each of the subgroups, we compared the experiences of the subgroup’s program group members to those of the subgroup’s control group members. For example, the more disadvantaged program group members were compared to the more disadvantaged control group members.

¹³ We examined impacts separately for sample members randomly assigned during the first half of the 18-month sampling period (July 2001 to March 2002) and for sample members randomly assigned during the second half of the period (April 2002 to December 2002).

Table 5. Differences in the Prevalence of Obstacles and Hardships at the 30-Month Follow-Up Survey (Percentages)

Characteristic	Program Group	Control Group	Impact Estimate
Health Problems or Issues^a			
Overall health is fair or poor	35	34	1.1
Poor health inhibits work, training, or school	26	23	2.2
Physical disability or illness	19	18	1.3
Emotional or mental health problem	9	6	2.9
Other Personal Challenges That Hindered Work^b			
Lack of support or resistance to working from family/friends	17	15	2.2
Physical abuse by spouse or partner	4	3	1.5
Drug or alcohol problems	2	2	0.4
Logistical Obstacles That Hindered Work^b			
Transportation problems	51	47	4.0
Child care problems	17	15	2.2
Lack of Health Insurance Coverage			
Uninsured at Followup	38	38	0.4
Sometimes uninsured during follow-up period	66	64	1.9
Children uninsured at followup	6	8	-1.5
Children sometimes uninsured during follow-up period	18	19	-1.4
Housing Issues^c			
Lived in public or subsidized housing	24	28	-3.9
Could not pay rent or mortgage	50	45	5.4
Evicted from home or apartment	14	11	3.0
Could not pay utility bill	53	49	3.9
Had utility turned off	33	28	5.7
Homeless or lived on the street	11	10	1.1
Any serious housing problem	44	34	9.9**
Food Availability^d			
Food was often or sometimes not available	60	61	-1.1
Sample Size	261	275	

Source: Rural WtW 30-month follow-up survey, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Note: All estimates were adjusted using multivariate regression methods. The data were weighted to account for interview nonresponse. Standard errors of the estimates account for sample weights.

^aThe health measures represent sample members' self-reported health status at the time of the survey or in the six months before the survey. These measures are based on self-reports pertaining to the six months before the survey.

^bThese measures are based on self-reports pertaining to the six months before the survey.

^cHousing measures refer to obstacles experienced any time during the follow-up period. Clients with any serious housing problem had at least one of the following problems during the 30-month follow-up period: evicted from home or apartment, had utility turned off, or had been homeless or lived in a shelter.

^dThe food availability measure refers to an obstacle experienced any time during the follow-up period.

*/**/** Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

evidence that Future Steps improved employment and earnings or reduced welfare dependence and poverty among the early entrants (Appendix C, Tables C.10 and C.11). In addition, and not surprisingly, there is no evidence that Future Steps improved either the employment and earnings of “late entrants” or their overall income and poverty status (Appendix C, Tables C.10 and C.11).

- ***Overall, Future Steps did not improve the employment, earnings, or self-sufficiency of either more or less disadvantaged sample members.***

We believed that separate analyses for clients who were relatively more or less disadvantaged might be useful in understanding how to target any future program services. Because of the employment focus of the program, we hypothesized that impacts on key outcomes might be different for people who, at the time of their enrollment, were relatively less or more prepared for employment (“more disadvantaged” versus “less disadvantaged”). We characterized sample members as *more* disadvantaged if they met at least one of the following three criteria at the time of random assignment: (1) did not have a high school diploma or GED, (2) had a health condition that limited their activity, or (3) had received TANF for one or more years during their lifetime.¹⁴ In contrast, less disadvantaged clients did not meet any of these three criteria. Nearly three-fifths (58 percent) of the Future Steps sample were considered more disadvantaged, while two-fifths (42 percent) were less disadvantaged.

Future Steps appeared to provide services to clients based on their level of need. As detailed in the Future Steps interim report, the significant difference in the fraction of program and control group members who participated in job search and job placement assistance was much more pronounced for the less disadvantaged clients, who were more prepared to move directly into employment (Meckstroth et al. 2006). Likewise, the more disadvantaged Future Steps clients were significantly more likely than the more disadvantaged control group members to receive job readiness training and education and vocational training as a way of building skills and preparing for employment.

Despite such targeting of services, overall, there were no significant improvements in the key outcomes of either the more or less disadvantaged subgroups (Appendix C, Tables C.12 and C.13). The bulk of the findings do not show that employment and earnings were improved during the follow-up period for either the more or less disadvantaged groups. Likewise, at the end of the follow-up period, there was no evidence that Future Steps had improved the income or self-sufficiency of either group.

¹⁴ Clients with a health condition that limited their activity were those who responded at baseline that they currently had a health problem that limited the kind or amount of work, training, or schoolwork that they could do (problems such as a preexisting medical condition, a physical disability, an emotional or mental condition, or drug or alcohol use), or that someone else in their household had a disability or health problem that made it difficult for them (the sample member) to work, attend training, or go to school.

DISCUSSION, ISSUES, AND LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

The results of this evaluation do not provide evidence that Future Steps made a difference in the employment, earnings, and well-being of the people the program targeted. Compared to their control group counterparts, program group members reported no greater earnings and were no more likely to be working full-time or in higher-quality jobs. They were also no less likely to be dependent on public assistance, to experience obstacles to employment or hardships associated with poverty, or to be living below the poverty level.

Potential Factors Accounting for the Lack of Program Success

Two factors may explain why Future Steps had such limited impacts. Both were shortcomings in the implementation of program services that, contrary to Future Steps' original design, resulted in a program that did not move much beyond basic case management. Each factor might have weakened the ability of Future Steps to effect an overall change in clients' employment status and self-sufficiency, although it is not possible to say whether addressing these factors would have led to program impacts on important outcomes. These factors are discussed, in turn, below.

- ***Future Steps was not able to capitalize on the employer connections and job-training resources that its community college partner offered, thus lessening the scope of its job readiness and job placement efforts.***

The infrastructure and expertise of SCC had great potential to benefit the Future Steps program. SCC was a primary provider of education and workforce development services in the region, and local job openings were often listed with the college's placement center, where they could be shared with Future Steps participants. The college also offered skill assessment and career-planning tools, all in a setting free from the stigma clients might have felt as participants in a welfare-to-work program. Program staff reported that both prospective clients and employers were more likely to respond positively to Future Steps when they were told of the program's affiliation with the college.

Despite these many advantages, Future Steps did not effectively capitalize on the employer connections and job-training resources the college offered. Future Steps had intended, building on the college's vocational-training resources and community connections, to work with local employers to implement customized job training. This employer-focused training, as envisioned, would have included work readiness training, life skill building, and job-specific vocational instruction. This component was not implemented, however, in part because Future Steps did not invest enough resources in planning for it and building the employer relationships necessary to support it.

Proper implementation of this program component would have required substantially more resources than Future Steps invested. Specifically, Future Steps had only a part-time program director, who had to spend most of her time dealing with day-to-day program operations. In contrast, a full-time director may have had more time to devote to program

development. Alternatively, the program might have designated another staff person, such as a specialized job developer, to lead the employer-focused training component.

- ***Although many clients received substantial services, some received few or inadequate services. This pattern partly reflects the limited training and support provided to career specialists.***

The basic Future Steps case management model was reasonably well implemented. Gaps existed in the program's coverage of clients, as noted above, and these gaps may have weakened the program's ability to affect client outcomes. For many clients, the Future Steps services may not have gone far enough in connecting clients to jobs or helping them overcome barriers to employment. Service use was particularly low among clients who were never employed during the follow-up period.

Although Future Steps expected a great deal of its career specialists, the implementation study indicates that the program did not prepare, support, and compensate them at a level commensurate with the high expectations. To serve a large geographic area, the career specialists were based in dispersed locations separate from program leaders. As a result, they were required to exercise substantial discretion and autonomy in their daily work. Career specialists independently managed their schedules, prioritized tasks, and acted as representatives of the program in their local community. To work effectively with this level of independence, they had to have a high degree of maturity, professionalism, and internal motivation, as well as broad skills. Although the career specialists were carefully selected, many had limited professional experience, and most did not have a college degree. They also varied in their skills and level of initiative in leveraging their community knowledge and connections to help clients. Although these staff were dedicated, caring, and hard-working professionals who delivered substantial services to many clients, the relatively limited training and ongoing support they received may have resulted in an incomplete level of service to some clients. Moreover, Future Steps typically offered its career specialists only part-time work with few benefits, making it difficult to recruit and retain staff with the ideal combination of skills and experience.

The community college's commitment to Future Steps waned over time. This likely affected the level of support to staff and, in turn, the level of services provided to clients, particularly later in the demonstration. As the demonstration progressed, the community college experienced more budget pressures and resource constraints. In turn, SCC administrators focused most on program efforts central to the college's educational mission, which did not include Future Steps. It is noteworthy that, in its agreement with SCC, IDHS did not incorporate performance-based goals or financial incentives. SCC may have been wary of the inherent risks of participating in a performance-based agreement, especially since Future Steps was not central to its mission or necessary for its revenue base. Indeed, SCC did not use all the available Future Steps resources, particularly those intended for client supportive service payments. Management tools like performance-based contracting might have encouraged SCC's Future Steps staff to focus more intently on maintaining the intensity of services throughout the demonstration and on achieving all the stated goals of the program.

Lessons for the Design and Implementation of Programs in Rural Areas

The evaluation findings demonstrate the complex challenges of helping low-income people make the transition to employment and self-sufficiency. Moreover, in rural labor markets, jobs, services, and other resources are often more limited, more dispersed, and more difficult to access than in urban areas. In addition, the social context of rural communities may pose difficulties for some members, because of their reputation or lack of connections. Any one of these obstacles might be difficult to overcome, and when they coincide—as may be the case in many depressed rural regions—the barriers to success may be particularly unyielding.

The Future Steps evaluation suggests that such conditions should be considered in the design and implementation of programs for rural areas. Although it is not possible to say whether better addressing these conditions would have led to program impacts on important outcomes, the evaluation offers several specific lessons for program operation and service delivery. While these lessons may be relevant for both rural and urban areas, they may have particular importance for rural areas. The lessons, discussed below, are based largely on a synthesis of the qualitative information collected through the evaluation's implementation study site visits. The lessons, and the qualitative information that supports them, are elaborated in greater detail in the Future Steps interim report (Meckstroth et al. 2006).

- ***Careful training, oversight, and ongoing support are essential for staff in dispersed, rural areas.*** Staff in dispersed, rural areas are often expected to exercise substantial independence and discretion in their daily work. To work effectively in this context requires a high level of maturity, professionalism, and self-motivation, as well as broad skills. Training, oversight, and ongoing support are important for guiding the work of staff in dispersed locations. Unfortunately, Future Steps did not provide this support and oversight consistently. While training and support are critical for dispersed staff in general, they are especially important for those with limited education and professional experience, which sometimes characterized the Future Steps case managers.
- ***Local staff connections and initiative appear to be important elements of successful implementation of service delivery in rural areas.*** The most capable case managers in rural areas may be those familiar with their communities and able to identify, and connect clients to opportunities and services. Staff connections and the initiative and resourcefulness to use them can help in making referrals, identifying job openings, vouching for clients to prospective employers, and mediating clients' problems. Encouraging prospective employers to hire clients may have special value in rural communities, where a poor personal or family reputation can negatively affect a person's economic prospects.

- ***To promote staff recruitment, retention, and a high degree of skill and performance, an adequate investment in staff compensation is important.*** The quality of case management service delivery depends greatly on staff capabilities. Program leaders in rural areas may find it challenging to recruit and keep staff who have the necessary combination of skills, familiarity with the community, and professionalism. Offering full-time positions with a full set of employment benefits and a competitive wage may help in recruiting and keeping well-qualified local staff for programs in rural areas. It was difficult for Future Steps to recruit and retain highly qualified case managers, because most of the positions were part-time and did not include a full set of employment benefits.
- ***Building linkages with employers to promote job opportunities may take on added importance in rural areas with few good jobs.*** Involving job developers in program efforts may be important. By working collaboratively with employers, programs can help identify and develop job opportunities for their clients and then help prepare and train them for the jobs. Creating employer linkages requires substantial planning and effort. Employers must perceive benefits in working with a welfare agency and must overcome concerns about prospective employees' work attitudes and dependability. Developing relationships with employers and job opportunities for clients may require that welfare agencies and their programs invest in specialized job development services and/or work closely with intermediaries like community colleges. Collaboration that involves the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) system may help provide access to job leads, employers, and training. Unfortunately, Future Steps was not able to capitalize on the job-training resources and employer connections available through its community college partner, nor was it able to engage the WIA system.
- ***Incorporating performance incentives into agreements with partner organizations may help sustain focus on program goals.*** Performance-based incentives can encourage program staff to meet predetermined objectives, such as those related to program enrollment, job placement, job retention, and the use of supportive service funds. This type of management tool may be particularly useful when programs will not be sustained at the end of a funding period, or when partners with diverse organizational missions are likely to face resource and staffing constraints.

Lessons for Shaping Rural Welfare-to-Work Policy

Overall, the Future Steps experiences and challenges, along with the findings from this evaluation, suggest several possible insights for the continuing development of welfare-to-work policy and program efforts for low-income populations in rural places.

- ***Case management alone is not likely to be an adequate intervention in rural areas.*** This evaluation provided a good test of the effectiveness of

employment-focused case management in a rural setting. The absence of program impacts on key outcomes suggests that case managers are limited in what they can help clients accomplish. Overall, the findings suggest that case management alone is not likely to be an adequate intervention to help low-income people in distressed rural areas address obstacles, find lasting employment, and become self-sufficient. This conclusion supports what other studies have shown about similar program models in urban areas (Rangarajan and Novak 1999). In order to impact employment and self-sufficiency among low-income populations, case management should be coupled with more intensive efforts to address individual and community challenges in a systematic and substantial way.

- ***Economic development may be an important strategy for improving the employment prospects of low-income workers in distressed rural areas.*** Rural areas with few job opportunities may need to look beyond welfare-to-work interventions as a way to help low-income workers find lasting employment that promotes economic independence. For example, policy tools like wage subsidies, tax credits, and low-interest loans to employers are possible incentives that state and other policymakers might consider in rural areas with a weak employment base. These tools may act as incentives for employers to expand their business, create new jobs, hire low- and semiskilled workers, and offer services like on-site child care and van services.
- ***Improvements to infrastructure and logistical services like housing, transportation, and child care may be needed in many rural areas.*** Reliable transportation, housing, and health services, as well as accessible, good-quality child care are logistical supports essential to labor market success, but many rural areas lack some or all of these (Friedman 2003; Rucker 1994; Community Transportation Association of America 1996; Casper 1996; Hofferth et al. 1991). Southern Illinois is no exception. Clients' service use related to child care and transportation did improve because of Future Steps. Still, survey data and focus group comments suggested that logistical barriers remained, and housing problems proved particularly poignant. In areas with a limited social service infrastructure, it may not be enough to link clients with existing services. Rather, systematic improvements that create more or better services may be necessary. Public van services, low-cost car loans, and quality, accessible child care during nonstandard work hours may be vital.
- ***Because of important regional variations, successful policies and programs to alleviate rural poverty should consider the local context and seek to fill the particular gaps in the social safety net.*** Even if Future Steps had been better implemented—with better client coverage and employer linking—clients might still have been unable to improve their employment and earnings and lift themselves out of poverty, given the dearth of good jobs in the area. Underemployment and low wages marked the work experiences of Future Steps program participants, such that a large majority remained in

poverty at the end of the follow-up period. Even the best case management is likely to be inadequate when well paid, full-time jobs are nearly unavailable in a region, and infrastructural supports like transportation and child care are limited. The historically entrenched poverty of areas like the southern tip of Illinois results from a confluence of factors—therefore, policies to improve the well-being of residents must address many issues. Depressed rural communities are apt to lack economic development, human capital formation, and infrastructural supports. At the same time, more nebulous factors like social sanctioning and racial discrimination may complicate the picture. Successful policies will need to recognize and address the complexity, subtlety, and variation in the barriers to employment in distressed rural areas.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY DATA COLLECTION AND WEIGHTING METHODS

This appendix provides a thorough description of the data collection methods used as part of the Rural Welfare-to-Work (WtW) Evaluation’s 18- and 30-month follow-up surveys of the Illinois Future Steps sample. It also describes the procedures used to weight these survey data.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In this section, we describe the methods used to design and conduct both the 18- and 30-month follow-up surveys. In particular, we discuss (1) sample disposition and completion rates for both surveys, (2) the sample selection and enrollment processes, (3) the design and pretest processes for the survey instruments, (4) interviewer training and quality assurance, and (5) data collection and locating procedures.

Sample Disposition and Completion Rates

For the 18-month follow-up survey of Future Steps sample members, we attempted to complete an interview with all 630 sample members 18 months after they were randomly assigned into the study. For the 30-month follow-up survey, we attempted to complete an interview with 629 sample members (one was discovered to be deceased during the first follow-up survey). Both surveys were conducted primarily by interviewers in MPR’s telephone center, assisted by field locators equipped with a cellular telephone that the sample member could use to call in to the MPR telephone center.

18-Month Survey. The overall survey completion rate for the 18-month survey was 83 percent (Table A.1). We completed 520 surveys (out of 630 sample members)—379 originating from MPR’s telephone center and 141 originating from cellular telephones used by field locators. The overall response rate was four percentage points higher for control group members than program group members. Among the 110 sample members who did not complete interviews, 79 were not locatable; 17 refused to do the interview; 7 were located, but we were unable to contact them after many attempts; 6 were incarcerated; and 1 was deceased.

30-Month Survey. The overall survey completion rate for the 30-month survey was 85 percent (Table A.1). We completed 536 surveys (out of 630 sample members)—401 originating from MPR’s telephone center and 135 originating from cellular telephones used by field locators. The overall response rate was three percentage points higher for control group members than program group members. Among the 94 sample members who did not complete interviews, 47 were not locatable; 30 refused to do the interview; 13 were located, but we were unable to contact them after many attempts; 2 were incarcerated; and 2 were deceased.

Table A.1. Final Disposition of Cases for the Rural Welfare-to-Work 18- and 30-Month Follow-Up Survey of Illinois Future Steps Sample Members

Final Status of Cases	Program Group [Number (Percentage)]		Control Group [Number (Percentage)]		Total [Number (Percentage)]	
	18-Month	30-Month	18-Month	30-Month	18-Month	30-Month
Total Completes	252 (80.5)	261 (83.4)	268 (84.5)	275 (86.8)	520 (82.5)	536 (85.1)
Complete (Telephone)	186 (59.4)	200 (63.9)	193 (60.9)	201 (63.4)	379 (60.2)	401 (63.7)
Complete (Field)	66 (21.1)	61 (19.5)	75 (23.7)	74 (23.3)	141 (22.4)	135 (21.4)
Refusal	11 (3.5)	17 (5.4)	6 (1.9)	13 (4.1)	17 (2.6)	30 (4.8)
Incarcerated	5 (1.6)	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)	6 (1.0)	2 (0.3)
Deceased	1 (0.3)	2 (0.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.2)	2 (0.3)
Unable to Locate	40 (12.8)	26 (8.3)	39 (12.3)	21 (6.6)	79 (12.5)	47 (7.5)
Located, but Can’t Contact	4 (1.3)	6 (1.9)	3 (0.9)	7 (2.2)	7 (1.1)	13 (2.1)
Sample Size	313	313	317	317	630	630

Note: The surveys were conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

For both the 18- and the 30-month surveys, there was very little difference between program and control group members in the reasons why surveys were not completed. We discuss patterns of survey nonresponse in greater detail in the section on data-weighting procedures later in this appendix.

Across Both the 18- and 30-Month Surveys. Examining response rates across both rounds of data collection shows that 76 percent of sample members completed both the 18- and 30-month surveys (477 out of 630 sample members). Otherwise, seven percent of sample members completed the 18-month survey only, nine percent completed the 30-month survey only, and eight percent completed neither survey.

Special challenges are associated with interviewing sample members in rural areas. These challenges include issues with telephone coverage, transportation, and geographic

distances that make completing interviews difficult. Planning for the survey incorporated procedures to account for these challenges and maintain an acceptable completion rate. During baseline interviews, extensive contact information was collected from sample members. Before the start of interviewing, preliminary database searches were conducted for all sample cases to identify those that required more locating work. The amount of time cases were worked in the telephone center was limited, to allow more time for field locators to work the cases. Field locators were recruited locally, so that they would be familiar with the local geography and not be intimidating to the sample members. The Future Steps staff also provided us with monthly address updates on active sample members. In addition, a \$20 incentive was offered to all sample members for completing the interview. We discuss these steps in more detail later under “Data Collection and Locating Procedures.”

Sample Selection and Enrollment

The sample consisted of all people referred to the Future Steps program during the 18-month enrollment period who were eligible to receive services. People were randomly assigned to either the program group, whose members were eligible to receive the full range of program services, or to the control group, whose members received only those services available outside of Future Steps.

Our goal was to recruit at least 600 sample members and achieve a survey response rate of 85 percent (510 completes). We randomly assigned 630 sample members in Illinois and completed interviews with 83 percent of them (520 completes) in the 18-month follow-up survey and 85 percent of them (536 completes) in the 30-month follow-up survey.

Our enrollment process consisted of the following steps performed by IDHS staff in each of the five county offices where Future Steps was implemented: (1) completion of enrollment paperwork (including informed consent, baseline information form, and contact information); (2) submission of sample members’ information forms for random assignment processing through the Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS), which was managed and overseen by MPR; (3) notification of sample members about their random assignment outcome; and (4) entry of program group member information into the Future Steps Information System (FSIS). All the hard-copy forms were shipped to MPR for data entry and storage.

IDHS local office staff received extensive training from MPR on how to administer the baseline enrollment forms. These forms included the informed consent form, baseline information form, and contact information form. After all these forms were administered to sample members and checked for quality, the IDHS staff telephoned the IVRS and entered key pieces of information about the applicant. After the IVRS determined that the applicant was not a duplicate and was eligible for the program, that applicant was randomly assigned to either the program or control group. The system instantly reported the outcomes to the IDHS staff person, who recorded them on the forms. This process minimized the amount of extra work IDHS site staff had to complete. It also allowed them to know the outcome of the random assignment process almost immediately.

All forms went through a rigorous quality control process after they were returned to MPR. Missing or incorrect data were retrieved from the sites or, in many cases, the sample members themselves. All forms were data entered with 100 percent verification.

Survey Instrument Design and Pretest

The survey instruments for the 18- and 30-month follow-up surveys were designed to be administered by computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI), with follow-up work by field locators using cellular telephones. The 18-month survey was designed to take 45 minutes, while the 30-month survey was designed to take 30 minutes. A paper-and-pencil version of the instruments was also developed for use in places where telephone administration was impractical (such as prisons or areas not covered by cellular telephones).

The 18-month survey covered a wide range of substantive topic areas, including:

1. Attitudes toward rural places and perceptions of rural challenges
2. Education and training
3. Receipt of services
4. Current housing arrangement, household structure, and children
5. Detailed employment history
6. Unearned income and income from other household members
7. Total household income
8. Child care arrangements
9. Barriers to employment
10. Confidence, control, and attitudes toward parenting
11. Material hardship, support networks, and family well-being
12. Background and contact information

The 30-month survey included a subset of items from these topic areas.

In designing the surveys, we drew heavily from questionnaires and instruments used in previous studies. The instrument used questions from (1) the National Evaluation of the Welfare-to-Work Grants Program, (2) the National Job Corps Study, (3) the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979, (4) the National Survey of America's Families, (5) the Current Population Survey, (6) the Iowa Core Survey of Current and Former TANF Recipients, (7) the Iowa Child Impact Study, (8) the Postemployment Services Demonstration, (9) the 1998 Survey of Former AFDC Recipients in Milwaukee, (10) the

Voices of Rural America National Survey, (11) the Nebraska Welfare Evaluation Client Survey, (12) the Survey of New Parents from the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study, and (13) the World Health Organization's Composite International Diagnostic Interview Short Form (CIDI-SF). In addition, many new items were created specifically for these instruments. We also consulted two outside experts: Bruce Weber from the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at Oregon State University and Greg Duncan from the Joint Center for Poverty Research at Northwestern University. The 18-month survey was drafted between February and April 2002. It was revised based on feedback from ACF and our consultants. The 30-month survey was drafted between August and October 2003. It was also revised based on feedback from ACF.

We conducted survey pretests to identify ways to improve (1) the flow and sequencing of questions, (2) administration procedures, (3) length of the survey, (4) wording of the questions, and (5) instructions for the interviewers. For the 18-month survey, we pretested several versions of the survey during August and September 2002, completing six pretest surveys. For the 30-month survey, we pretested several versions of the survey during September and October 2003, completing eight pretest surveys. The participants in both sets of pretests included people drawn from the Rural WtW programs in Illinois, Nebraska, and Tennessee. The interviews were drawn from all three sites to simulate the likely disposition of the full Rural WtW sample.¹

For both survey pretests, we trained three experienced interviewers familiar with the evaluation to complete the pretest interviews. For the 18-month pretest, the six completed interviews averaged 67 minutes; for the 30-month pretest, the eight completed interviews averaged 37 minutes. We modified the instruments in an iterative fashion, based on information obtained through survey monitoring by MPR researchers and debriefings with interviewers. Because the 18-month interview took longer than expected, we cut many questions from that instrument. We also cut many questions from the 30-month instrument. In addition, for both instruments, we made adjustments to several items based on respondents' ability to understand and answer the questions.

For each follow-up survey, after completing the pretest, we submitted the survey instrument and supporting materials to the Office of Management and Budget for approval. Based on their comments, we made additional revisions to the instruments before the start of data collection. Although CATI applications were used for the actual data collection, the survey pretests were conducted using a paper-and-pencil version of the instruments. Because of the extensive programming that would be required to make the many rounds of CATI revisions during the pretest, it was not practical to program and test CATI versions of the pretest instruments. The CATI applications were developed after we made final revisions to the instruments. The final 18-month instrument, administered by CATI, took

¹ The same survey instruments were used to collect follow-up information from the evaluation's Building Nebraska Families sample. The survey questions were designed to be general enough for use with both the Illinois and Nebraska samples.

an average of 51 minutes to complete. The final 30-month instrument, administered via CATI, took an average of 30 minutes to complete.

Interviewer Training and Quality Assurance

Before the start of data collection, we held trainings at our telephone center for all MPR project staff. MPR's Rural WtW survey director and project director led the trainings, supported by an MPR survey assistant. For both survey rounds, all telephone interviewers and locators were required to attend a 12-hour training designed to give them a thorough understanding of the project goals and the skills necessary to produce good-quality data. All survey supervisors and monitors also received training so they could monitor the quality of the data collection.

Training included a broad range of topics. Trainees received background information on the study, including information about its research goals. The survey instrument was reviewed, item by item, with detailed explanations about the meaning and correct administration of the questions. Trainees also received instruction on sample management, strategies for contacting sample members and explaining the study, and guidelines for appropriate question probing. Before the end of training, each trainee was expected to complete two practice interviews, monitored by project staff.

As part of our regular quality assurance procedures, we conducted ongoing survey monitoring for all active interviewers. Each interviewer was monitored on approximately 10 percent of his or her calls, including introductions and survey refusal conversion attempts. Our professional survey monitoring staff, as well as Rural WtW project staff, monitored interviewers throughout the study.

We hired field locators to work on cases that we could not locate from our telephone center. We hired local residents and trained them in intensive locating techniques. Because the locators' primary responsibility was to find sample members and then encourage them to call the telephone center, only minimal training on the instrument was required. Local staff were familiar with the geography and were better able to plan trips to maximize their coverage. They were also familiar with local customs and could build rapport with sample members more quickly. In addition, they could connect with sample members' friends and relatives to obtain their help locating the sample members.

For interviews initiated through a field locator, we routinely verified 10 percent of the locator's completed cases. Completed cases were randomly selected for either telephone or mail validation, in which the respondent completed a short questionnaire, confirming that he or she had completed the interview and was a member of the research sample.

Data Collection and Locating Procedures

The 18-month survey data were collected during the 18-month period from March 2003 to August 2004, and the 30-month survey data were collected during the 19-month period from March 2004 to September 2005. Before the start of each round of data collection, we

reviewed the sample cases and identified sample members with changed or incomplete contact information. We relied on several national databases, comparing our sample to existing contact information and updating our records with new information. This step was repeated periodically, as new cases were added to the sample.

Because the data collection was time sensitive, cases were released to the telephone center exactly 18 months from the date of random assignment for the 18-month survey, and 30 months from the date of random assignment for the 30-month survey. Because the process was spread over many months, we used hard-copy contact sheets to manage the sample flow. In general, we worked cases in the telephone center for six to eight weeks. For cases not completed at the end of that period, we began field locating and followup.

For both survey rounds, we mailed an advance letter one week before the target date on which we would initially call a sample member for an interview. The letters described the study, explained MPR's role in it, and invited the sample member to call us on our toll-free line and participate in the survey at her or his earliest possible convenience. It offered sample members a \$20 incentive for completing an interview and explained that participation was voluntary and that the identities and responses of all participants would be kept confidential. Through the advance letters, we also identified cases with incorrect contact information. Some of the letters were returned to us because of out-of-date address information, and others were returned with forwarding address information. We remailed the letters with new information to the new addresses and updated our records with the new information. Those letters without new information required additional locating.

The next interviewing step involved calling each sample member on his or her target interview date to attempt to complete an interview. If the interview could not be completed, appointments for future interviews were made when possible. Alternatively, we scheduled routine followup of these cases on varying days and times. If the initial contact attempt identified sample members with incorrect telephone numbers or outdated contact information, these cases were immediately tagged for additional locating.

We used several techniques to locate sample members whose contact information was out-of-date. We contacted family members and friends for updated contact information. Failing that, sample members' identifying information was run through several national databases owned by LexisNexis. New contact information was generated for interviewers by using names, Social Security numbers, dates of birth, and last known addresses and telephone numbers. In addition, to try to identify sample members who might have become incarcerated since enrolling in the program, locators searched Internet databases with federal and state corrections information. Moreover, IDHS staff provided us with monthly address updates for the sample members outstanding on our list.

We mailed letters and postcards to sample members with whom we had not completed interviews. Every few months we changed the format and content of the letters and postcards, as well as the size and appearance of the envelope and the method of mailing (regular first-class mail versus priority mail). We did this to spark sample members' interest in opening the letter and reading it.

A small number of sample members initially refused to participate in the surveys. After their initial refusal, we waited a week, then mailed them a personalized, specially crafted letter designed to change their minds about participating. The letter reiterated the importance of the study and their participation in it. They were invited to call our toll-free number to complete an interview and reminded of the \$20 incentive. We waited until we were confident they had received the letter, and then a specially trained “refusal conversion interviewer” called to attempt to gain the sample member’s cooperation. If this attempt resulted in a second refusal, the case was sent to the field, to be attempted in person. (In-person refusal conversion attempts often are more successful, because there is a personal connection, and the respondent feels important because of the extra effort made.)

Data Validation

We performed a rigorous quality review check of all completed surveys to address potential concerns about the reliability and validity of the survey data. The check examined the consistency and validity of survey responses, focusing on key outcomes such as sample members’ reported employment and earnings. Survey responses were reviewed carefully, and missing or incorrect data were obtained from Future Steps sites or from sample members. In addition, outliers in the data were omitted from the analyses to ensure that a small number of responses did not disproportionately affect the findings.²

Limitation of the CATI System

During the early part of the 30-month data collection, we identified a problem in our CATI system for the 30-month survey. Of the 477 respondents to the 30-month interview who had completed an 18-month interview, 133 (28 percent) were erroneously given the version of the 30-month interview intended for 18-month nonrespondents. This meant that, for some of the 18-month respondents, the 18-month survey and the data collected from it were not used as reference points during the 30-month survey. Here, we identify the two primary areas in which this issue affected the analysis, and we describe the approaches we adopted in response.

Variables That Used the Date of the 18-Month Interview as a Point of Reference.

Most variables created from the 30-month survey used the month before the interview, or the six months before the interview, as their point of reference. The CATI error did not affect these variables. However, on the 30-month survey, the 18-month respondents were to have been asked questions about their personal circumstances and work history since the time of the first follow-up interview. For respondents affected by the CATI error, these

² In particular, we omitted cases from the earnings analyses that had monthly earnings from a single job greater than or equal to \$5,000 in any of the months of the 30-month follow-up period. The \$5,000 cutoff was more than four standard deviations above the mean value for earnings from a single job and was also a natural breaking point in the distribution of the earnings data. Five cases met these criteria and were omitted from the analyses of earnings impacts. For each of these cases, the data for one or more variables used to calculate monthly earnings were not believable.

items instead referred to the period since random assignment. As a result, it was not possible to generate measures of affected cases' status during the period between interviews. Instead, these cases were treated like 18-month nonrespondents, and measures of their status since random assignment were created. If the respondent reported having had the status in the 18-month interview, but never having had the status in the 30-month interview, we assumed that the respondent failed to recall having had the status and replaced the 30-month status with the 18-month status.

Monthly Employment and Earnings Variables. To reduce recall error and smooth the “seam” between the 18- and 30-month employment histories, the 18-month respondents were to have been reminded in the 30-month interview of the employment status they had reported at the time of the 18-month interview. Their employment history from the time of random assignment through the time of the interim interview was derived from the 18-month interview, while employment history from the time of the interim interview through the time of the final interview was derived from the 30-month interview. Respondents affected by the CATI error were asked to report on jobs and earnings since random assignment, but their employment history was constructed in exactly the same way as that of unaffected respondents. That is, employment information that the 30-month instrument collected for the time of random assignment through the time of the interim interview was ignored in favor of information from the 18-month interview covering the same time period. This protocol was based on the assumption that any discrepancies between the 18- and 30-month interviews in the employment history immediately following random assignment were due to higher recall error in the 30-month interview.

To assess whether the CATI error was likely to affect estimates of program effects on employment and earnings, we tested for any indication that the affected and unaffected samples differed from each other or that selection into the affected sample was different for the program and control groups. We did not find evidence of systematic differences in the affected and unaffected samples in general or across program and control groups. Exceptions to the general pattern of nonsignificant differences included statistically significant differences in racial composition, probability of receiving food stamps, and presence of a child under 18 in the household. Importantly, we found no evidence that the affected sample was more or less likely to work. Thus, it seems unlikely that the CATI error could have affected estimates of Future Step's impact on clients' employment and earnings.

DATA-WEIGHTING PROCEDURES

In this section, we describe the evaluation's data-weighting procedures. We created three sets of weights for our analyses of the Future Steps survey data. The first set is for the sample of 18-month survey respondents, the second for the sample of 30-month survey respondents, and the third for the sample of “dual respondents” (those sample members who responded to both surveys). The same methodology was used in the creation of each set of weights. For each follow-up survey, we begin with an analysis of patterns of nonresponse in the data, and we follow with a description of the specific adjustments made in the computation of each set of weights.

18-Month Follow-Up Survey

In this section, we examine the patterns of nonresponse in the 18-month follow-up survey data, and we discuss the steps taken in the computation of the weights for these data.

Nonresponse Patterns. The Future Steps population had 630 eligible cases. All the eligible cases were used in the study, and 520 of them responded to the survey. We compared the characteristics of the survey respondents to those of the nonrespondents to examine differences between them. Our analysis showed that there are not significant statistical differences in the distribution of the respondents and the nonrespondents along key baseline characteristics (Table A.2).

The response rate for the survey was 83 percent (Table A.3). There is a small difference in response rates (4 percentage points) between the program (81 percent) and the control (85 percent) groups. The largest difference of nearly 12 percentage points is between the males (74 percent) and females (85 percent), and the second-largest difference of more than 10 percentage points is between the cases who are not currently working (81 percent) and the cases who are currently working (91 percent).

If the participants in the study are divided into smaller groups (program versus control crossed with male/female, or crossed with male/female and currently working/not currently working), we find still larger differences among the response rates. For example, the response rate for males in the program group is 71 percent (the response rate for the males not working is very close to all the males, because the number of males working is very small and it can not be generalized). The response rate for working females in the program group is 98 percent.

Computation of the Weights. The weights were computed using two components, both of which accounted for survey nonresponse. We developed two separate weighting adjustments: (1) a weighting cell adjustment for nonresponse, and (2) a post-stratification adjustment to mimic the demographic population characteristics under study. Because we have a census, not a sample, of eligible program participants, the base weight for all cases is one. These two adjustments comprise the final weight.

Table A.2. Comparison of 18-Month Survey Respondents to Nonrespondents

Characteristics at Baseline	Respondents		Nonrespondents	
	Counts	Percentage	Counts	Percentage
Treatment Status				
Program	252	48	61	55
Control	268	52	49	45
Gender				
Male	108	21	39	35
Female	412	79	71	65
Race				
Black	273	53	50	45
Nonblack	247	48	60	55
Ethnicity				
Hispanic	17	3	4	4
Non-Hispanic	486	93	104	95
Unknown	17	3	2	2
Age at Enrollment				
Younger than 20	39	8	5	5
20 to 29	240	46	55	50
30 to 39	153	29	35	32
40 or older	88	17	15	14
Education				
No GED or high school diploma	132	25	30	27
GED or high school diploma	230	44	46	42
More than high school diploma or GED	158	30	34	31
Household Composition				
Single adult	379	73	79	72
Multiple adults	132	25	29	26
Unknown	9	2	2	2
Age of Youngest Child				
Less than 3 years old	150	29	32	29
3 to 5	81	16	17	15
6 to 17	137	26	27	25
More than 18	147	28	34	31
Unknown	5	1	0	0
Currently Working for Pay				
Yes	105	20	10	9
No	415	80	100	91
Currently Receiving TANF				
Yes	82	16	13	12
No	431	83	96	87
Unknown	7	1	1	1

Source: Rural WtW baseline information forms, compiled by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., and Rural WtW 18-month follow-up survey, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Note: We conducted chi-squared tests for all of the characteristics to test for differences between respondents and nonrespondents.

*/**/**Significantly different from zero at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test. There were no significant differences between the two groups.

Table A.3. Adjusted Response Rates for the 18-Month Follow-Up Survey, by Key Baseline Characteristics

	Population	Respondents	Response Rate
All	630	520	82.5
Male ^a	147	108	73.5
Female	483	412	85.3
Not currently working for pay ^b	515	415	80.6
Currently working for pay	113	103	91.2
Program			
All	313	252	80.5
Male	76	54	71.1
Female	237	198	83.5
Female not working	180	142	78.9
Female working	56	55	98.2
Control			
All	317	268	84.5
Male	71	54	76.1
Female	246	214	87.0
Female not working	201	175	87.1
Female working	44	38	86.4

Source: Rural WtW baseline information forms, compiled by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., and Rural WtW 18-month follow-up survey, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

^aBecause of the small sample size for males, the numbers of working and nonworking males are not shown in this table.

^bData were missing for sample members' baseline employment status for two cases.

For the first adjustment, we formed weighting cells within the program and control groups using the characteristics that best describe the completion pattern—gender and working status at the time of random assignment—with a minimum of 20 completed cases for each cell. Within each cell, the nonresponse adjusted weight is defined as:

$$Wgt_NR = \frac{\{\text{number of all members}\}}{\{\text{number of respondents}\}}$$

That is, each cell had as a nonresponse adjustment the ratio of the participants in the study to the number of responding participants in the cell. For example, there are 180 nonworking females in the program group, and 142 of them completed the survey. The nonresponse adjustment for the 142 females who responded to the survey is $180/142 = 1.26761$. The nonresponse adjustment was applied to all completed cases to compensate for the noncompleted cases.

The second adjustment was a post-stratification of the completed cases by program or control group and gender and race (considering race as black or nonblack). We used the previously described nonresponse adjustment as the weight for the respondents in each cell. Within the program and control groups in each gender and race group, the post-stratification factor is defined as:

$$Adj_PS = \frac{\{\text{number of all members}\}}{\sum Wgt_NR}$$

That is, each cell had as its post-stratification adjustment the ratio of the population for that gender and race group to the weighted number of responding participants for that gender and race group. For example, there are 117 black females in the program group, 100 of them responded, and the sum of their adjusted weight is 118.269. Then, the post-stratification adjustment for the black females in the program group is $117/118.269 = 0.98927$.

The final weight for each respondent is the post-stratified nonresponse adjustment, defined as:

$$Wgt_NRPS = Wgt_NR \times Adj_PS$$

Overall, the nonresponse adjustments for the program and control groups created a small design effect close to one due to unequal weights. The effective total survey sample size for the program and control groups are 248 and 267, respectively, compared to an actual sample size of 252 and 268, respectively.

30-Month Follow-Up Survey

In this section, we examine the patterns of nonresponse in the 30-month follow-up survey data, and we discuss the nonresponse adjustments made in the computation of the weights for these data.

Nonresponse Patterns. The Future Steps population has 630 sampled cases. Among the 630 cases in the population, 536 responded to the follow-up survey, and 4 were considered respondents to the survey for purposes of calculating the nonresponse adjustment.³ The remaining discussion is based on these 630 sample members and 540 respondents.⁴ We compared the characteristics of the survey respondents to those of the nonrespondents to examine differences between them (Table A.4). We found that there are

³ Four cases were located for the follow-up survey but were not able to complete it because they were either incarcerated (two cases) or deceased (two cases). As with the respondents to the survey, we located each of these sample members. However, given their situations, we were not able to complete an interview. In other cases, sample members who were located did complete an interview. Given this, we assumed that the characteristics of these four cases were likely to be closer to the characteristics of the respondents than the nonrespondents. As such, we felt it was appropriate to treat them as respondents in the calculation of the weights. Of the four such cases, three were in the treatment group and one was in the control group.

⁴ The survey data analysis in the body of the report is based on 536 respondents (261 program group members and 275 control group members).

Table A.4. Comparison of 30-Month Survey Respondents to Nonrespondents

Characteristics at Baseline	Respondents		Nonrespondents	
	Counts	Percentage	Counts	Percentage
Treatment Status				
Program	264	49	49	54
Control	276	51	41	46
Gender***				
Male	112	21	35	39
Female	428	79	55	61
Race***				
White	237	44	54	60
Nonwhite	303	56	36	40
Ethnicity				
Hispanic	19	4	2	2
Non-Hispanic	521	96	88	98
Age at Enrollment				
Younger than 20	42	8	2	2
20 to 29	248	46	47	52
30 to 39	162	30	26	29
40 or older	88	16	15	17
Education				
No GED or high school diploma	140	26	21	23
GED or high school diploma	244	45	38	42
More than high school diploma or GED	156	29	31	34
Living with Partner				
Yes	123	23	23	26
No	417	77	67	74
Age of Youngest Child				
No child under 18	151	28	29	32
Less than 3 years old	157	29	25	28
3 to 5	80	15	18	20
6 to 17	147	27	17	19
Unknown	5	1	1	1
Currently Working for Pay				
Yes	102	19	11	12
No	438	81	79	88
Currently Receiving TANF*				
Yes	87	16	8	9
No	453	84	82	91
Responded to the 18-month followup***				
Yes	484	90	43	48
No	56	10	47	52

Source: Rural WtW baseline information forms, compiled by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., and Rural WtW 30-month follow-up survey, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Note: We conducted chi-squared tests for all of the characteristics to test for differences between respondents and nonrespondents.

*/**/***Significantly different from zero at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

Table A.5. Adjusted Response Rates for the 30-Month Follow-Up Survey, by Key Baseline Characteristics

	Population	Respondents	Response Rate
All	630	540	85.7
Did not respond to 18-month survey	103	56	54.4
Responded to 18-month survey	527	484	91.8
Male responded to 18-month survey	113	99	87.6
Female responded to 18-month survey	414	385	93.0
Program			
All	313	264	84.3
Did not respond to 18-month survey	55	30	54.5
Responded to 18-month survey	258	234	90.7
Male responded to 18-month survey	58	50	86.2
Female responded to 18-month survey	200	184	92.0
Control			
All	317	276	87.1
Did not respond to 18-month survey	48	26	54.2
Responded to 18-month survey	269	250	92.9
Male responded to 18-month survey	55	49	89.1
Female responded to 18-month survey	214	201	93.9

Source: Rural WtW baseline information forms, compiled by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., and Rural WtW 30-month follow-up survey, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

statistically significant differences in the distribution of the respondents and the nonrespondents on the following characteristics: gender, race, current TANF status, and the response status to the 18-month follow-up survey. The differences in other characteristics, such as education level and working status, are not significant.

The overall response rate for the survey, adjusted for nonresponse (as described above), was 86 percent (Table A.5). There is a very slight difference in response rates (3 percentage points) between the program and control groups (84 and 87 percent, respectively). The largest difference of 38 percentage points is between the cases who responded to the 18-month follow-up survey (92 percent) and the cases who did not respond to it (54 percent). The second-largest difference of 13 percentage points is between males and females (76 and 89 percent, respectively) (not shown).

Computation of the Weights. As with the 18-month survey weights, the 30-month weights were computed using two components to account for survey nonresponse. We developed the following two weighting adjustments: (1) a weighting cell adjustment for nonresponse, and (2) a post-stratification adjustment to mimic the demographic population characteristics under study. Because we have a census, not a sample, of eligible program participants, the base weight for all cases is one. The nonresponse adjustment is conducted such that the analyses using the information from respondents is representative of the total sample. The post-stratification is done such that, after post-stratification, the sum of weights

within the particular gender and race groups is again the number of cases in those groups for the program and control groups. These adjustments comprise the final weights.

For the first adjustment, we formed weighting cells within the program and control groups using the characteristics that best describe the completion pattern—gender, response status to the 18-month follow-up survey, and age category of the youngest children at the time of random assignment—with a minimum of 20 completed cases for each cell. Within each cell, the nonresponse adjusted weight is defined as:

$$Wgt_NR = \frac{\{\text{number of all members}\}}{\{\text{number of respondents}\}}$$

Table A.6 gives the creation of weighting cells and the adjustment factor in each cell.

Table A.6. Weighting Cells and Nonresponse Adjustment, by Treatment Status

Treatment Status	Responded to 18-Month Survey	Gender	Age of Youngest Children	Nonresponse Factor
Control	No	Male	All	2.667
	No	Female	All	1.600
	Yes	Male	No child under 18	1.091
	Yes	Male	Other	1.188
	Yes	Female	No child under 18	1.054
	Yes	Female	Less than 3	1.088
	Yes	Female	3 to 5	1.081
	Yes	Female	6 to 17	1.044
	Yes	Female	Unknown	1.000
Program	No	Male	All	2.571
	No	Female	All	1.609
	Yes	Male	No child under 18	1.182
	Yes	Male	Other	1.118
	Yes	Female	No child under 18	1.091
	Yes	Female	Less than 3	1.028
	Yes	Female	3 to 5	1.103
	Yes	Female	6 to 17	1.163
	Yes	Female	Unknown	1.000

The second adjustment was a post-stratification of the completed cases by gender and race within program or control group. For simplicity, we have used two categories for race: white and nonwhite. Within the program and control groups in each gender and race group, the post-stratification factor is defined as:

$$Adj_PS = \frac{\{\text{number of all members}\}}{\sum W_{gt_NR}}$$

and the final weight is defined as:

$$W_{gt_NRPS} = W_{gt_NR} \times Adj_PS$$

Overall, the nonresponse adjustments for the program and control groups created a small design effect due to unequal weights. Table A.7 gives the design effects before and after the nonresponse adjustment, as well as the effective sample sizes.

Table A.7. Design Effects and Effective Sample Sizes for the 30-Month Survey

	Sample	Respondents	DEff Before NR	DEff After NR	Effective N
Program	313	264	1	1.049	252
Control	317	276	1	1.052	262

DEff Before NR = Design effect before the nonresponse adjustment.

DEff After NR = Design effect after the nonresponse adjustment.

Additional Set of Weights for the Sample of Dual Respondents

We also produced another set of weights to conduct impact analyses for the group of sample members who responded to both the 18- and 30-month follow-up surveys (“dual respondents”). Key findings based on the sample of dual respondents are presented in Appendix B, where they are compared to key findings based on the 30-month survey sample. Findings based on the two samples were very consistent.

Among the 630 Future Steps sample members used as the basis for calculating the weights for dual respondents, 484 responded to both surveys (including 477 respondents and 7 who were considered respondents for calculating the nonresponse adjustment because they were either incarcerated or deceased). The overall adjusted “dual respondent” response rate was 76.8 percent.

When we calculated a separate set of weights for the group of dual respondents, we followed the same methods described above for calculating weights for the 18- and 30-month survey samples. In so doing, we developed two separate weighting adjustments. First, for the weighting cell adjustment for nonresponse, we formed weighting cells within the program and control groups. For the program group, the cells were formed by the variables gender, working status, and the age category of the youngest child. For the control group, the cells were formed by gender, race and age category at enrollment. Second, the post-stratification on gender and race was applied after the weighting cell adjustment was done. Overall, as with the other weights, the nonresponse adjustments for the program and control groups created a small design effect due to unequal weighting.

APPENDIX B

COMPARISON OF MAIN FINDINGS TO FINDINGS BASED ON SAMPLE OF 18- AND 30-MONTH RESPONDENTS

The main findings related to Future Step’s effect on the employment, self-sufficiency, and well-being of welfare recipients and other low-income people are based on the 536 sample members who responded to the final follow-up survey administered approximately 30 months after random assignment. Because a full employment history was gathered from the 59 study participants who responded to the 30-month survey but had not responded to the earlier 18-month interview, it was possible to include them in the analysis sample. Doing so increased the power of the study to detect impacts.

While it is likely that the early employment and earnings histories of 30-month-only respondents are more affected by recall error than those of sample members who responded to both the 18- and 30-month surveys (“dual respondents”), there is no reason to believe that this error biases the estimated impacts, because both program and control groups should be affected equally. To make certain that the results did not vary substantively with the choice of sample, we repeated all analyses conducted on the full sample of 30-month respondents with the subset of dual respondents. Findings across the two samples were highly consistent. Here, we detail those findings relating to the key outcomes of earnings and employment.

- ***As with the full sample, evidence from the sample of those who responded to both follow-up surveys indicates that Future Steps did not improve clients’ employment or earnings outcomes.***

Employment and earnings results are very similar to our main findings when clients who responded only to the 30-month survey are excluded from the analysis (Table B.1). Regardless of the sample used, nearly 90 percent of clients in both the program and control groups held a job at some point during the evaluation. Furthermore, in both cases, no program effect was evident on the number of months sample members were employed (15.8 versus 15.5 months for the program and control groups in the sample of all 30-month respondents; 16.0 versus 15.2 months for program and control groups in the sample of dual respondents). Similarly, earnings impacts were not significantly different than zero in either sample. In both samples, program and control group members earned slightly less than \$550 per month during the full 30-month follow-up period (Table B.1). Employment and

earnings impacts were also similar for both samples during the first 18 months of the followup and during the final year of the followup. These findings suggest that including sample members who only participated in the 30-month survey did not introduce bias to our main impact estimates.

Table B.1. Impacts on Employment and Earnings, by Survey Sample

	All 30-Month Respondents			18- and 30-Month Respondents		
	Program Group	Control Group	Impact Estimate	Program Group	Control Group	Impact Estimate
Full 30-Month Follow-Up Period						
Ever employed (percentage)	87.1	86.6	0.5	87.8	86.2	1.6
Months employed	15.8	15.5	0.3	16.0	15.2	0.8
Monthly earnings (average, dollars)	534	549	-15	546	533	13
Months 1 to 18						
Ever employed (percentage)	76.2	74.8	1.4	75.9	74.9	0.9
Months employed	8.9	8.7	0.2	9.0	8.5	0.5
Continuously employed	17.5	19.9	-2.4	9.2	12.7	-3.4
Monthly earnings (average, dollars)	500	537	-38	512	523	-10.5
Months 19 to 30						
Ever employed (percentage)	77.8	77.5	0.3	78.2	76.8	1.4
Months employed	6.9	6.7	0.2	7.0	6.7	0.4
Continuously employed	35.7	31.8	3.9	35.1	31.7	3.5
Monthly earnings (average, dollars)	591	572	19	600	561	40
Sample Size	261	275		228	249	

Source: Rural WtW 18- and 30-month follow-up surveys of Future Steps sample members, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Note: All estimates were adjusted using multivariate regression methods. Data were weighted to account for survey nonresponse. Standard errors of the estimates account for sample weights.

Dollar estimates represent year 2003 dollars.

*/**/**Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

APPENDIX C
SUPPLEMENTAL TABLES

Table C.1. Regression-Adjusted Mean Employment Rates During the 30-Month Followup, by Month (Percentages)

Month After Random Assignment	Program Group	Control Group	Estimated Impact
1	33.7	31.0	2.7
2	43.3	35.0	8.3**
3	46.2	38.0	8.2*
4	47.2	41.9	5.3
5	45.7	44.7	1.0
6	46.2	44.4	1.8
7	49.0	46.2	2.7
8	50.6	48.6	2.1
9	47.9	49.7	-1.8
10	50.0	52.1	-2.2
11	50.9	52.2	-1.3
12	51.3	52.7	-1.4
13	51.8	52.1	-0.4
14	54.7	54.2	0.5
15	54.7	54.6	0.1
16	55.8	55.2	0.6
17	56.6	56.4	0.2
18	56.1	55.1	1.0
19	55.5	58.9	-3.4
20	53.6	57.7	-4.1
21	54.1	57.1	-3.1
22	53.2	58.7	-5.4
23	54.9	54.8	0.1
24	55.8	55.8	-0.0
25	58.4	57.7	0.7
26	59.3	57.1	2.2
27	61.7	55.3	6.4
28	61.6	54.0	7.6*
29	61.1	54.5	6.6
30	61.8	53.2	8.6**
Sample Size	260	273	

Source: Rural WtW 18- and 30-month follow-up surveys of Future Steps sample members, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Note: All estimates were adjusted using multivariate regression methods, and the data were weighted to account for survey nonresponse. Standard errors of the estimates account for sample weights.

*/**/**Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

Table C.2. Unadjusted Mean Employment Rates During the 30-Month Followup, by Month (Percentages)

Month After Random Assignment	Program Group	Control Group	Estimated Impact
1	34.7	30.1	4.6
2	44.0	34.4	9.5**
3	47.4	37.1	10.3**
4	48.2	41.0	7.3
5	46.7	43.8	2.9
6	47.0	43.8	3.2
7	49.8	45.5	4.3
8	51.4	47.8	3.6
9	48.1	49.5	-1.4
10	50.0	52.1	-2.0
11	51.0	52.0	-1.0
12	51.6	52.4	-0.8
13	52.1	51.9	0.2
14	54.6	54.4	0.2
15	54.6	54.7	-0.2
16	55.9	55.1	0.9
17	56.8	56.3	0.5
18	56.4	54.9	1.5
19	56.2	58.2	-2.0
20	54.2	57.1	-2.9
21	54.5	56.7	-2.2
22	53.5	58.3	-4.8
23	55.2	54.5	0.7
24	56.3	55.4	0.9
25	58.7	57.4	1.3
26	59.8	56.7	3.1
27	61.9	55.1	6.8
28	62.0	53.7	8.3*
29	61.5	54.2	7.3*
30	62.1	53.0	9.2**
Sample Size	260	273	

Source: Rural WtW 18- and 30-month follow-up surveys of Future Steps sample members, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Note: The data were weighted to account for survey nonresponse. Standard errors of the estimates account for sample weights.

*/**/** Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

Table C.3. Impacts on Employment and Earnings, Based on Administrative Data

Quarter After Random Assignment	Employment (Percentage)			Earnings (Quarterly Average, Dollars)		
	Program Group	Control Group	Estimated Impact	Program Group	Control Group	Estimated Impact
1	48	39	9.3**	610	503	107
2	46	40	6.8*	784	815	-31
3	46	39	6.6*	844	752	92
4	42	40	1.3	807	885	-78
5	40	37	2.6	841	834	6.9
6	36	36	-0.9	879	886	-7.0
7	38	36	2.0	861	824	37
8	38	35	2.2	830	780	51
9	38	31	6.2*	893	744	149
10	37	32	4.7	961	818	143
11	38	36	1.9	991	833	158
12	38	32	6.3*	931	830	101
13	37	32	4.2	895	821	74
14	35	32	2.8	935	833	102
Sample Size	313	317		313	317	

Source: Administrative records data from the state of Illinois, compiled by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. as part of the Rural WtW Evaluation.

Notes: All estimates were adjusted using multivariate regression methods.

Dollar estimates represent year 2003 dollars.

*/**/****Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

Table C.4. Regression-Adjusted Mean Monthly Earnings During the 30-Month Followup, by Month

Month After Random Assignment	Program Group	Control Group	Estimated Impact
1	318	305	12
2	424	401	23
3	441	439	1
4	454	470	-16
5	455	503	-48
6	468	497	-29
7	515	525	-10
8	506	555	-49
9	481	580	-99
10	502	606	-104
11	528	597	-70
12	556	608	-52
13	539	597	-58
14	551	594	-43
15	555	596	-40
16	561	586	-25
17	577	585	-8
18	552	589	-37
19	541	570	-29
20	521	579	-59
21	525	595	-70
22	548	591	-42
23	564	578	-14
24	576	579	-3
25	608	596	13
26	626	608	18
27	653	578	76
28	619	553	66
29	616	544	72
30	598	525	73
Sample Size	254	271	

Source: Rural WtW 18- and 30-month follow-up surveys of Future Steps sample members, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Notes: All estimates were adjusted using multivariate regression methods, and the data were weighted to account for survey nonresponse. Standard errors of the estimates account for sample weights.

Dollar estimates represent year 2003 dollars.

*/**/** Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

Table C.5. Unadjusted Mean Monthly Earnings During the 30-Month Followup, by Month (Dollars)

Month After Random Assignment	Program Group	Control Group	Estimated Impact
1	332	292	40
2	436	389	46
3	449	431	18
4	462	462	0
5	465	494	-29
6	478	488	-10
7	523	517	6
8	513	547	-34
9	485	577	-91
10	502	606	-104
11	526	599	-72
12	555	609	-54
13	540	597	-57
14	547	597	-50
15	553	598	-45
16	565	583	-18
17	581	581	1
18	558	583	-25
19	546	565	-19
20	527	573	-46
21	527	593	-66
22	551	588	-36
23	566	576	-10
24	581	574	7
25	612	592	20
26	628	606	22
27	651	580	72
28	614	558	55
29	610	550	60
30	593	529	64
Sample Size	254	271	

Source: Rural WtW 18- and 30-month follow-up surveys of Future Steps sample members, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Notes: The data were weighted to account for survey nonresponse. Standard errors of the estimates account for sample weights.

Dollar estimates represent year 2003 dollars.

*/**/** Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

Table C.6. TANF Receipt During the Follow-Up Period, Based on Administrative Data

Month After Random Assignment	Percentage Receiving TANF		
	Program Group	Control Group	Estimated Impact
1	13.3	10.6	2.7
2	15.4	12.9	2.6
3	17.7	16.3	1.4
4	15.6	13.1	2.5
5	12.4	12.1	0.3
6	11.1	14.2	-3.1
7	11.2	13.2	-2.0
8	11.3	12.8	-1.6
9	10.0	11.2	-1.2
10	10.5	8.6	1.9
11	9.7	8.4	1.3
12	9.5	7.0	2.5
13	10.1	8.9	1.1
14	9.6	8.4	1.2
15	9.4	9.1	0.3
16	9.3	9.8	-0.5
17	6.8	9.7	-2.9
18	7.1	8.8	-1.8
19	7.6	10.0	-2.4
20	7.6	9.6	-2.0
21	7.4	9.8	-2.4
22	7.2	10.6	-3.4
23	5.9	11.3	-5.4**
24	5.6	9.7	-4.0**
25	5.8	11.1	-5.3**
26	6.3	9.4	-3.2
27	5.5	9.2	-3.7*
28	5.7	9.0	-3.3*
29	6.3	7.8	-1.5
30	5.6	7.9	-2.3
31	5.5	8.2	-2.8
32	5.7	8.9	-3.2
33	5.4	8.2	-2.8
34	5.4	7.6	-2.1
35	4.8	8.2	-3.4*
36	4.8	7.7	-2.9
Sample Size	313	317	

Source: Administrative records data from the state of Illinois, compiled by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. as part of the Rural WtW Evaluation.

Note: Estimates for months 33 to 35 are from two-tailed t-tests because the logistic regressions associated with these outcomes failed to converge to a stable set of estimates given that the fraction of sample members receiving TANF in these months was so small. All other estimates were adjusted using multivariate regression methods.

*/**/** Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

Table C.7. Food Stamp Receipt During the Follow-Up Period, Based on Administrative Data

Month After Random Assignment	Percentage Receiving Food Stamps		
	Program Group	Control Group	Estimated Impact
1	61.7	61.5	0.2
2	77.4	76.9	0.6
3	76.7	74.8	1.9
4	70.5	75.2	-4.7
5	69.6	73.2	-3.5
6	66.1	69.7	-3.7
7	69.1	66.5	2.6
8	63.2	66.0	-2.9
9	64.8	62.9	1.9
10	61.8	62.0	-0.1
11	61.6	61.8	-0.2
12	61.5	58.3	3.2
13	57.8	60.0	-2.2
14	60.4	58.9	1.5
15	59.1	55.3	3.8
16	60.9	56.3	4.6
17	57.5	55.5	2.1
18	56.2	56.5	-0.2
19	57.5	56.8	0.7
20	56.4	56.6	-0.2
21	57.0	54.5	2.5
22	55.5	57.1	-1.6
23	55.7	57.9	-2.1
24	55.6	57.1	-1.4
25	57.0	59.8	-2.8
26	55.8	57.5	-1.7
27	55.3	53.9	1.4
28	55.6	53.7	1.9
29	53.5	56.0	-2.6
30	55.3	55.8	-0.4
31	56.5	57.5	-1.0
32	54.9	55.9	-1.1
33	56.1	55.7	0.4
34	56.0	54.2	1.8
35	54.7	55.2	-0.5
36	56.8	53.4	3.4
Sample Size	313	317	

Source: Administrative records data from the state of Illinois, compiled by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. as part of the Rural WtW Evaluation.

Note: All estimates were adjusted using multivariate regression methods.

*/**/**Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

Table C.8. Overall TANF and Food Stamp Receipt During the Follow-Up Period, Based on Administrative Data

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Estimated Impact
Whether Received TANF (Percentage)			
Year 1	30.5	26.1	4.4
Year 2	15.5	16.3	-0.8
Year 3	10.7	14.7	-4.0
Years 1, 2, or 3	34.4	32.7	1.7
Percentage of Months Received TANF			
Year 1	12.5	11.5	1.0
Year 2	8.0	9.4	-1.5
Year 3	5.9	8.2	-2.3
Years 1, 2, and 3	8.8	9.7	-0.9
Monthly Amount of TANF Received (Average, Dollars)			
Year 1	33	30	4
Year 2	23	25	-1
Year 3	17	22	-5
Year 1, 2, and 3	25	26	-1
Whether Received Food Stamps (percentage)			
Year 1	95.4	92.2	3.1*
Year 2	77.2	73.0	4.2
Year 3	71.8	69.5	2.2
Year 1, 2, or 3	97.0	94.0	3.0*
Percentage of Months Received Food Stamps			
Year 1	66.9	67.4	-0.5
Year 2	57.5	56.8	0.7
Year 3	55.6	55.7	-0.1
Year 1, 2, and 3	60.0	60.0	0.0
Monthly Amount of Food Stamps Received (Average, Dollars)			
Year 1	185	179	6.7
Year 2	162	153	8.6
Year 3	159	151	7.8
Year 1, 2, and 3	169	161	7.7
Sample Size	313	317	

Source: Administrative records data from the state of Illinois, compiled by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. as part of the Rural WtW Evaluation.

Notes: All estimates were adjusted using multivariate regression methods.

Dollar estimates represent year 2003 dollars.

*/**/****Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

Table C.9. Detailed Impacts on Monthly Income in the Month Before the 30-Month Follow-Up Survey

Outcome	Total Income from Source (Dollars) ^a		
	Program Group	Control Group	Estimated Impact
Own Earnings	498	462	36
Other Private Income Sources	367	380	-12
Spouse or partner's earnings	156	171	-15
Other household members' earnings	170	168	2
Earnings from informal/odd jobs ^b	9	11	-1
Child support	22	22	1
Other private income sources	24	22	2
Total Public Assistance	331	368	-37
TANF	31	37	-6
Food stamps	204	181	23*
WIC	13	15	-2
SSI	53	70	-17
Social Security	17	26	-9
Unemployment Insurance	7	23	-15*
General Assistance	1	4	-2
Foster care	1	3	-2
Other governmental assistance	7	12	-5
Total Income (All Sources)	1,181	1,196	-15
Sample Size	261	275	

Source: Rural Welfare-to-Work 30-month follow-up survey, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Note: All estimates were adjusted using multivariate regression methods. The data were weighted to account for survey nonresponse. Standard errors of the estimates account for sample weights.

SSI=Supplemental Security Income; TANF=Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; WIC=Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

^aBy household, during the month before the 30-month follow-up survey. The month before the survey represented a different number of months after random assignment for different clients. For example, for some clients, the month before the survey represented 18 months after random assignment. For others, it represented from 31 to 35 months after random assignment.

^bEarnings from informal or odd jobs may have been jobs held by either the sample member or another adult household member.

*/**/**Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

Table C.10. Subgroup Impacts on Employment and Earnings, by Time of Random Assignment (Percentages, Unless Otherwise Specified)

Outcome	Early Assignment Period			Late Assignment Period		
	Program Group	Control Group	Impact Estimate	Program Group	Control Group	Impact Estimate
30-Month Follow-Up Period						
Employed at followup	62.5	53.6	8.9	60.3	53.1	7.2
Ever employed	87.1	89.6	-2.5	86.9	82.8	4.0
Continuously employed	11.7	14.1	-2.4	6.8	15.2	-8.4**
Number of months employed	16.4	15.9	0.5	14.7	15.0	-0.3
Monthly earnings (dollars)	554	551	3.0	501	550	-50
Months 1 to 18						
Ever employed	77.6	77.5	0.1	73.4	71.7	1.7
Continuously employed	19.8	19.9	-0.1	13.7	20.5	-6.8
Number of months employed	9.5	9.0	0.5	7.9	8.4	-0.5
Monthly earnings (dollars)	541	528	14	425	563	-138*
Months 19 to 30						
Ever employed	77.5	79.7	-2.3	77.4	75.2	2.2
Continuously employed	36.2	32.0	4.2	34.7	31.7	2.9
Number of months employed	6.9	6.8	0.1	6.8	6.7	0.2
Monthly earnings (dollars)	585	573	12	593	576	17
Sample Size	153	157		108	118	

Source: Rural WtW 18- and 30-month follow-up surveys of Future Steps sample members, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Notes: All estimates were adjusted using multivariate regression methods. The data were weighted to account for survey nonresponse. Standard errors of the estimates account for sample weight

Dollar estimates represent year 2003 dollars.

*/**/***Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

Table C.11. Impacts on Public Assistance, Monthly Income, and Poverty Status in the Month Before the 30-Month Follow-Up Survey, by Time of Random Assignment

	Early Assignment Period			Late Assignment Period		
	Program Group	Control Group	Impact Estimate	Program Group	Control Group	Impact Estimate
Received TANF (percentage)	12.5	10.7	1.7	9.3	16.5	-7.2*
Received food stamps (percentage)	74.8	64.0	10.7**	71.5	72.1	-0.6
Received SSI or SSDI (percentage)	12.1	18.9	-6.8*	10.8	8.2	2.6
Received unemployment insurance (percentage)	2.5	3.2	-0.7	1.0	6.1	5.1*
Received any government assistance (percentage)	82.9	76.9	5.9	78.0	81.9	-3.9
Own earnings (dollars)	489	471	17	511	449	61
Other private income sources (dollars)	413	422	-9	303	319	-16
Total public assistance (dollars)	355	374	-19	286	368	-82*
Total monthly income (dollars)	1,239	1,259	-19	1,085	1,119	-35
Income below poverty (percentage)	70.8	65.9	4.9	69.6	72.1	-2.6
Income below .5 poverty (percentage)	35.0	28.0	7.0	32.8	38.1	-5.3
Sample Size	153	157		108	118	

Source: Rural WtW 30-month follow-up survey of Future Steps sample members, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Notes: All estimates were adjusted using multivariate regression methods. The data were weighted to account for survey nonresponse. Standard errors of the estimates account for sample weights.

Dollar estimates represent year 2003 dollars.

SSI=Supplemental Security Income; SSDI=Social Security Disability Insurance

*/**/** Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

Table C.12. Subgroup Impacts on Employment and Earnings, by Degree of Disadvantage (Percentages, Unless Otherwise Specified)

Outcome	More Disadvantaged			Less Disadvantaged		
	Program Group	Control Group	Impact Estimate	Program Group	Control Group	Impact Estimate
30-Month Follow-Up Period						
Employed at followup	60.0	50.0*	9.9	65.8	60.5	5.3
Ever employed	84.5	85.5	-1.1	90.5	89.8	0.7
Continuously employed	6.0	13.9**	-7.9	15.1	16.5	-1.5
Number of months employed	14.3	15.0	-0.8	17.4	16.8	0.6
Monthly earnings (dollars)	504	497	7	599	630	-31
Months 1 to 18						
Ever employed	73.7	72.6	1.2	76.2	81.2	-5.0
Continuously employed	12.2	20.8	-8.5	23.2	20.8	2.4
Number of months employed	8.0	8.6**	-0.6	9.6	9.4	0.2
Monthly earnings (dollars)	460	485	-25	562	625	-63
Months 19 to 30						
Ever employed	71.6	76.0	-4.4	83.9	82.9	1.0
Continuously employed	31.3	27.8	3.5	40.5	38.3	2.1
Number of months employed	6.3	6.3	-0.0	7.7	7.4	0.3
Monthly earnings (dollars)	563	506	57	662	680	-18
Sample Size	140	168		111	98	

Source: Rural WtW 18- and 30-month follow-up surveys of Future Steps sample members, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Notes: All estimates were adjusted using multivariate regression methods. The data were weighted to account for survey nonresponse. Standard errors of the estimates account for sample weights.

Dollar estimates represent year 2003 dollars.

*/**/** Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.

Table C.13. Impacts on Public Assistance, Monthly Income, and Poverty Status in the Month Before the 30-Month Follow-Up Survey, by Degree of Disadvantage

	More Disadvantaged			Less Disadvantaged		
	Program Group	Control Group	Impact Estimate	Program Group	Control Group	Impact Estimate
Received TANF (percentage)	15.5	15.1	0.4	6.3	7.0	-0.7
Received food stamps (percentage)	76.3	67.3*	9.0	68.3	64.7	3.6
Received SSI or SSDI (percentage)	13.6	16.2	-2.6	9.5	10.8	-1.3
Received unemployment insurance (percentage)	1.3	4.1	-2.9	2.4	6.6	-4.2
Received any government assistance (percentage)	82.2	79.0	3.2	77.3	78.5	-1.2
Own earnings (dollars)	472	414	58	566	531	35
Other private income sources (dollars)	315	364	-49	445	429	15
Total public assistance (dollars)	379	428	-49	261	278	-16
Total monthly income (dollars)	1,157	1,201	-44	1,250	1,214	37
Income below poverty (percentage)	75.4	68.2	7.2	61.4	68.1	-6.6
Income below .5 poverty (percentage)	35.7	31.8	3.9	31.4	31.6	-0.2
Sample Size	140	168		111	98	

Source: Rural WtW 30-month follow-up survey of Future Steps sample members, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Notes: All estimates were adjusted using multivariate regression methods. The data were weighted to account for survey nonresponse. Standard errors of the estimates account for sample weights.

Dollar estimates represent year 2003 dollars.

SSI=Supplemental Security Income; SSDI=Social Security Disability Insurance.

*/**/**Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .10/.05/.01 level, two-tailed test.