

**The Employment Retention
and Advancement Project**

**A Comparison of Two Job Club Strategies
The Effects of Enhanced Versus Traditional Job Clubs
in Los Angeles**

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Overview

Although much is known about how to help welfare applicants and recipients find jobs, little is known about how best to help them keep jobs or advance in the labor market. This report presents interim results from an evaluation in Los Angeles County that is comparing two different strategies for placing such individuals into jobs. One strategy, the Enhanced Job Club (EJC) model, seeks to place individuals in jobs that are in line with their careers of interest, under the theory that this might result in greater job retention and advancement. The other strategy, the Traditional Job Club (TJC) model, seeks to place individuals quickly in any type of job, under the theory that any job provides good training in work skills and may lead to better job opportunities. The evaluation is part of the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project, which was conceived by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The ERA project is being conducted by MDRC under contract to ACF, with additional funding from the U.S. Department of Labor.

From June 2002 through December 2004, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services and the Los Angeles County Office of Education jointly ran these two types of job club workshop models for unemployed Temporary Assistance for Needy Families applicants and recipients who were in the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program. The EJC model focused on career development activities and targeted job searches during a five-week period, while the TJC model focused on quick job entry during a three-week period. Notably, as part of a late-1990s evaluation in Los Angeles, the TJC model had been found to be successful in increasing individuals' employment earnings when compared with providing them with no mandatory welfare-to-work services. The EJC model thus was an attempt to see whether further improvement was possible — specifically, whether a different type of job club could help individuals find jobs that they could retain and use as a basis for advancement.

The study used a random assignment research design: GAIN-mandatory individuals in two regions of the county were assigned, through a lottery-like process, to the EJC group and immediately scheduled for EJC workshops or to the TJC group and immediately scheduled for TJC workshops.

Key Findings

- **EJC and TJC staff conveyed distinctly different messages about the types of jobs individuals should seek, but the overall message later recalled by single parents in both research groups was a similar one: that they should quickly find a job.** A year after entering the study, more than four in ten individuals in both research groups agreed “a lot” that they had received encouragement to “get a job quickly.” It is possible that the more nuanced message of the EJC workshop was lost amid the strong “work-first” message that is pervasive in Los Angeles County’s GAIN program.
- **The EJC model, compared with the TJC model, did not increase employment retention or advancement.** Over an 18-month follow-up period, single parents in the EJC and TJC groups worked about the same amount of time, earned about the same, were not in different types of jobs, and were equally likely to experience employment advancement. As of the end of the follow-up period, about half of the sample members in both groups were employed.

MDRC will continue to track the employment paths of both research groups and will present longer-term results in the future. These interim findings suggest, however, that it is likely that much more than a change in the focus of job clubs may be needed to facilitate greater employment retention and advancement among welfare recipients.

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About the Employment Retention and Advancement Project

The federal welfare overhaul of 1996 ushered in myriad policy changes aimed at getting low-income parents off public assistance and into employment. These changes — especially cash welfare’s transformation from an entitlement into a time-limited benefit contingent on work participation — have intensified the need to help low-income families become economically self-sufficient and remain so in the long term. Although a fair amount is known about how to help welfare recipients prepare for and find jobs in the first place, the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project is the most comprehensive effort thus far to ascertain which approaches help welfare recipients and other low-income people stay steadily employed and advance in their jobs.

Launched in 1999 and slated to end in 2009, the ERA project encompasses more than a dozen demonstration programs and uses a rigorous research design to analyze the programs’ implementation and impacts on research sample members, who were randomly assigned to the study groups. The study was conceived and funded by the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; supplemental support has been provided by the U.S. Department of Labor. The project is being conducted by MDRC. Most of the ERA programs were designed specifically for the purposes of evaluation, in some cases building on prior initiatives. Because the programs’ aims and target populations vary, so do their services:

- **Advancement programs** focus on helping low-income workers move into better jobs by offering such services as career counseling and education and training.
- **Placement and retention programs** seek to help participants find and hold jobs and are aimed mostly at “hard-to-employ” people, such as welfare recipients who have disabilities or substance abuse problems.
- **Mixed-goals programs** focus on job placement, retention, and advancement, in that order, and are targeted primarily to welfare recipients who are searching for jobs.

The ERA project’s evaluation component investigates the following aspects of each program:

- **Implementation.** What services does the program provide? How are those services delivered? Who receives them? How are problems addressed?

- **Impacts.** To what extent does the program improve employment rates, job retention, advancement, and other key outcomes? Looking across programs, which approaches are most effective, and for whom?

A total of 16 ERA models have been implemented in eight states: California, Illinois, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, and Texas. But — given significant differences in implementation in the three sites operating the Texas model — the project ultimately will yield 18 independent estimates of site effectiveness.¹

The evaluation draws on administrative and fiscal records, surveys of participants, and field visits to the sites.

¹Past reports list 15 ERA models. This number was changed, however, to recognize that one of the tests in Riverside, California, actually involved two models, given the two initiatives' different sets of service providers and program rules. Note that "site effectiveness" refers to the effectiveness of different models or to the effectiveness of a model that was implemented very differently in a number of locations.

Acknowledgments

The Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) evaluation would not be possible without the cooperation, commitment, and hard work of a wide range of administrators and staff in all the ERA sites. Notably, findings from all the sites in the evaluation contribute to addressing the study's key questions. All the sites stepped forward to innovate in a challenging and important area of social policy and practice, and as much can be learned from models that so far are not showing economic impacts as from those that are.

The following individuals who were involved in the Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club (EJC) study have been vital to the evaluation and deserve special thanks: Michael Bono, Leticia Cuevas, Deborah Gotts, Robert Lee, Mayindi Mokwala, Lorraine Sinelkoff, and Brenda Williams of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS); and Jim Callaghan, Vivian Cardoza-Brown, Terry Catanese, Clark Lashmett, Angie Magni, and Mary Williams of the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE). They worked closely with MDRC to set up and monitor the random assignment procedures and provided unwavering support throughout the study. Managerial guidance and support were provided by the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) directors at DPSS and LACOE, Eileen Kelly and Dan Miller, respectively.

Program managers and staff in the DPSS and LACOE offices in GAIN Region 3 and Region 4 were involved in implementing and maintaining the program and research designs and in facilitating a range of other research and data collection activities. In addition, program staff in each of the DPSS and LACOE offices not only worked with the EJC study sample members but also willingly discussed their experiences with MDRC researchers on many site visits.

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

The Authors

Executive Summary

This report presents implementation and six-quarter impact results for the Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club (EJC) study, which is examining whether five-week job clubs (facilitated group job search activities) that aim to place single-parent welfare applicants and recipients into jobs more in line with their careers of interest can result in greater job retention and advancement, compared with three-week job clubs that focus on placing individuals quickly into any type of job. The study is part of the national Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project. Conceived and funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and also supported by the U.S. Department of Labor, the ERA project is testing innovative approaches across the country that aim to promote steady work and career advancement for current and former welfare recipients and other low-wage workers. MDRC — a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization — is conducting the ERA project under contract to ACF and is producing a similar interim report for each site in the project.

The Los Angeles Traditional Job Club (TJC) model, which has been in operation since the mid-1990s, focuses on helping welfare recipients find any type of job quickly. A previous MDRC evaluation showed that this model can yield large employment and earnings gains for participants relative to operating no job clubs at all. However, it was found that most people subject to the TJC model did not obtain jobs with high wage rates, substantial benefits, or advancement opportunities and that many participants had trouble retaining jobs.¹ The EJC study examines whether it is possible to improve on the TJC model's results. The study compares the effectiveness of two types of job club workshops for unemployed Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) applicants and recipients who were in the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program — California's mandatory welfare-to-work program — in Los Angeles County. The Enhanced Job Club (EJC) model focuses on career development activities and targeted job search, and it is compared with the TJC model. The EJC study thus provides valuable findings regarding whether there is an optimal way to use job search workshops to help unemployed welfare recipients find jobs that they can retain and use as a springboard for advancement.

The ERA Project

Much is known about how to help welfare recipients find jobs. Notably, several studies have provided evidence that job clubs for welfare applicants and recipients can increase their

¹Stephen Freedman, Jean Tansey Knab, Lisa A. Gennetian, and David Navarro, *The Los Angeles Jobs-First GAIN Evaluation: Final Report on a Work First Program in a Major Urban Center* (New York: MDRC, 2000).

employment and earnings.² However, little is known about how to help welfare applicants and recipients and other low-wage workers keep jobs or advance in the labor market. Previously studied postemployment programs were not found to improve participants' outcomes.³ The ERA project was designed to build on past efforts and to identify and test innovative program models designed to promote employment stability and wage progression among welfare recipients or other low-income groups. From 2000 to 2004, tests of 16 models, including the Los Angeles EJC study, were implemented in eight states.

The evaluation's design is similar in most of the project sites. Individuals who meet the ERA eligibility criteria, which vary by site, are assigned at random to a program group, usually called the "ERA group," or a control group. In this Los Angeles site, GAIN-mandatory individuals were randomly assigned to the EJC group or to the TJC group (and were scheduled to take either an EJC or a TJC workshop). Except for their initial workshop assignment, individuals in both groups were eligible for identical services. In all ERA sites, MDRC is tracking both research groups over time. The random assignment process ensures that there are no systematic differences in sample members' characteristics, measured and unmeasured, between the two research groups. Thus, any differences between them that emerge over time, for example, in employment rates or average earnings, can be attributed to the ERA programs to which they were subject or, in the case of this site, to a different type of job search workshop. Such employment or earnings differences are known as impacts.

Origins of the EJC Model, and Comparison with the TJC Model

Various types of job clubs have been an integral component of welfare-to-work programs since the 1970s. In the early 1990s, the focus of the Los Angeles County GAIN job search workshops was on teaching job-hunting skills, such as how to prepare a résumé and present one's self in a job interview. Finding a job during the workshop, while certainly desirable, was not the primary objective, given GAIN's focus at the time on building clients' educational skills. An MDRC evaluation of six California counties, conducted at this time, found that the Los Angeles GAIN program (which provided a package of services, including job search workshops) did not improve individuals' earnings over a three-year follow-up period, compared with providing individuals with no mandatory welfare-to-work services. As a result, the county retooled the program to have much more emphasis on getting people into jobs. The retooled

²Freedman, Knab, Gennetian, and Navarro (2000); and Gayle Hamilton, Stephen Freedman, Lisa A. Gennetian, Charles Michalopoulos, Johanna Walter, Diana Adams-Ciardullo, Anna Gassman-Pines, Sharon McGroder, Martha Zaslowsky, Jennifer Brooks, and Surjeet Ahluwalia, *National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies: How Effective Are Different Welfare-to-Work Approaches? Five-Year Adult and Child Impacts for Eleven Programs* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

³See Anu Rangarajan and Tim Novak, *The Struggle to Sustain Employment: The Effectiveness of the Postemployment Services Demonstration* (Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 1999).

program — begun in the mid-1990s and renamed as the “Jobs-First GAIN program” — referred all individuals to job club as a first activity, urged individuals to find and take any jobs they could land, and tried to boost the self-esteem of participants so they had more confidence to look for and find jobs.

A late 1990s evaluation by MDRC of the revamped program showed that, compared with providing no services to individuals, the new Jobs-First GAIN program was successful: It moved people into work who otherwise would not have found jobs on their own, and it helped people who would have eventually found work on their own to find a job sooner.⁴ Despite these gains, however, many people who found jobs had problems retaining them. Moreover, most people did not find employment in jobs with high wages or advancement opportunities.

In 2000, the county sought to improve on the Jobs-First GAIN outcomes — specifically, to increase individuals’ employment retention as well as their long-term self-sufficiency. To foster these goals, the county developed an “enhanced” job club model, one that, in addition to imparting job search skills, featured career planning and used a “step-down” approach to connect participants to work. This approach involved participants’ first developing a career plan that identified their occupational field of interest and various levels of jobs within that field; next, individuals attempted to get hired into the highest-paying job in the field that they could access; if this type of job was not obtained within the first two weeks of job search, participants tried to find a job within their career of interest that might lead to a promotion into a higher-paying job; lastly, if participants were still unemployed by the fourth week of job search, they aimed to find a skill-building job (any part-time position) that, combined with enrollment in training or education, could improve their skills. The five-week EJC workshop model, first implemented in 2002, thus attempted to get individuals into jobs in their field of career interest from the outset, with the belief that this approach would enable them to keep their jobs longer, engage in career advancement activities, and ultimately move up a career ladder.

In contrast, the TJC model was the conventional, but proven effective, three-week job club workshop that the county had been running for a number of years. TJC aimed to get clients into jobs quickly. Throughout the TJC workshop, job club facilitators stressed to individuals that they should find and take any job, even a low-wage job. Getting people quickly into jobs, it was reasoned, would enable them to obtain earnings faster, develop a more extensive work history and positive work behavior habits, and master occupational skills, as well as network to learn of better job opportunities.

Los Angeles County’s Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) and its Office of Education (LACOE) — long-standing partners in delivering GAIN services — jointly ran both types of job club workshop models (EJC and TJC) from June 2002 through December 2004 as

⁴Freedman, Knab, Gennetian, and Navarro (2000).

part of the GAIN program, with DPSS managing program operations and LACOE operating the EJC and TJC workshops.

The Evaluation's Design

In order to determine whether the EJC model could improve on the results obtainable through Los Angeles County's long-standing job club model, a rigorous comparison of the EJC and TJC models became one of the tests in the ERA evaluation. The study took place in two of Los Angeles County's seven GAIN regions. As in the other ERA sites, MDRC used a random assignment research design to assess the effectiveness of the EJC workshop model compared with the TJC workshop model. The GAIN program's management information system was used to identify unemployed welfare applicants or recipients who were mandated to participate in GAIN and who were living in GAIN Regions 3 and 4. Half of these individuals were randomly assigned to the EJC group and were immediately scheduled for EJC workshops, and half were randomly assigned to the TJC group and were immediately scheduled for TJC workshops.

MDRC is tracking the employment rates, earnings, and levels of welfare and food stamp receipt for both groups over time. The comparison of these outcomes will indicate whether the "enhanced" model is capable of producing greater employment, earnings, and employment stability than the "traditional" model — a model that already has been shown by rigorous research to be capable of increasing welfare recipients' employment and earnings, compared with providing no mandatory services at all.

This report covers the 1,183 single-parent sample members who were randomly assigned into the study from June through September 2004 (598 in the EJC group and 585 in the TJC group). MDRC is tracking both groups using data that show each individual's quarterly earnings in jobs covered by the California unemployment insurance (UI) program and their monthly welfare and food stamp benefits. Six quarters of follow-up data for each sample member are available for this report. In addition, a survey was administered to a subset of EJC and TJC group members about one year after they had entered the study.

Key Findings on Program Implementation and Participation

The report's findings on how the EJC and TJC workshop models were designed, implemented, and operated — and on the extent to which EJC and TJC group members participated in the workshops and other related services — are based on interviews with LACOE and DPSS staff, observations of EJC and TJC workshop sessions and staff-participant interactions, reviews of case files, and client survey data. The key findings on program implementation and participation are presented below.

- **LACOE and DPSS staff implemented and operated the EJC workshop model as designed.**

In their first week, the Enhanced Job Clubs featured a career planning and preparation seminar to guide individuals' job search, culminating in the development of a career plan that identified a career field, a "quality-of-life" job goal in this field, and a list of "targeted" and "promotable" jobs in the field. A *quality-of-life job goal* was the individual's ultimate career objective, which usually required experience and credentials that the person would have to acquire in the future. A *targeted job* was the highest-paying job in one's career field that could be found given the person's current education level and work history. A *promotable job* was a position within the person's career field that could lead to a targeted job. In addition to these career development activities, EJC participants also learned how to complete an application, how to prepare a résumé, and how to interview for a job.

During the second week, EJC participants attended morning classroom sessions, which focused on refining their career development plans and discussing the results of their job search efforts. They then spent the afternoons looking for their targeted jobs. If they remained unemployed in the third week, they expanded, or "stepped-down," their job search to include promotable jobs in addition to targeted jobs. Participants looked for work full time, checking in each day for about an hour with their job club facilitator to review the results of their job search efforts. If clients still had not found either their targeted or promotable jobs by the fourth week, they then were told to find a "skill-building" job, which was any part-time job. If clients found a skill-building job, they were told that they were also to enroll in education and training activities related to their career field, in the hopes that combining work and these activities would result in more promising career pathways.

The fifth week of EJC consisted of individualized job search assistance with participants who volunteered to receive additional help to find work. Facilitators continued to review and give feedback on individuals' job search efforts. Staff also provided job leads and identified and addressed barriers to employment as they emerged.

Notably, if they were unable to find a desirable full-time job, some EJC participants had quicker access to education and training than their TJC counterparts. EJC participants in Region 4 could undergo a vocational assessment during the fourth week of the workshop, if they were still unemployed, while EJC participants in Region 3 (and TJC participants in both regions) had to wait until the end of the workshop to undergo a vocational assessment. Since individuals could be referred to education or training only after the completion of a vocational assessment, this situation resulted in a small group of EJC participants (those in one region who were still unemployed in the fourth week) who were eligible for education and training more quickly than other study participants. In addition, EJC participants were strongly encouraged by DPSS and

LACOE staff to blend part-time work with their participation in education or training, as stipulated in their assessment plan, to encourage fulfillment of the GAIN program's 32-hour weekly participation mandate.

- **Staff implemented different activities in the EJC and TJC workshops, and they seemed to convey distinctly different messages about the types of jobs to seek.**

In EJC workshop observations, facilitators clearly and repeatedly emphasized to participants that all the activities they did worked toward developing a long-term career development plan and, as part of this plan, a concrete strategy for finding and obtaining targeted or promotable jobs in their occupational fields of interest. In field research interviews, the EJC workshop facilitators maintained that EJC participants understood the concept of targeted job search. In particular, staff felt that workshop participants were able to articulate their career goal, the skills and experience they needed to reach their goal, and how their targeted or promotable jobs would help them gain necessary skills and experience.

In contrast, the TJC workshops aimed at quickly getting participants into jobs. During the first week, similar to the situation in the EJC workshops, TJC participants attended morning sessions that focused on learning job search skills, such as how to complete an application, how to prepare a résumé, and how to conduct an interview with a prospective employer. In the afternoons, however, TJC participants used this information to help them look for work. (Job search thus started a week earlier in the TJC workshops than in the EJC workshops.) In the second and third weeks, TJC participants continued their job search full time, checking in daily with their job club facilitator. Throughout the TJC workshop, job club facilitators stressed to participants that they should find and take any job, even a low-wage job.

Several additional types of staff also helped deliver EJC workshop services. Job coaches were available to EJC sample members to help them research potential career fields. In addition, job developers interacted individually with EJC sample members, to help them prepare résumés and use career development software, among other activities. It is important to note that staff did not provide TJC clients with these particular types of services.

- **EJC and TJC sample members attended job clubs at similar rates but, surprisingly, also attended job clubs for similar lengths of time.**

EJC and TJC sample members were expected to engage in job search activity at similar rates. Interviews with job club staff suggested that similar proportions of those individuals who were scheduled for EJC or TJC workshops — about 40 percent to 42 percent — attended their initially assigned session. Eventually, however, according to client survey data, about 71 percent of both EJC and TJC sample members participated in some type of job search activity dur-

ing the year following random assignment. Surprisingly — given the different durations of the two job clubs and the fact that EJC employment searches were supposed to be more targeted — EJC and TJC sample members reported similar lengths of stay in job club: approximately 2.5 weeks. It appears that EJC sample members found jobs as quickly as TJC sample members.

- **Despite the efforts of EJC program staff, the overall message recalled by the majority of EJC survey respondents a year after they entered the study was that they should quickly find a job.**

While EJC sample members and TJC sample members were expected to — and did — attend job clubs at similar rates, the messages that they received in the job clubs were supposed to differ. According to 12-month survey data, EJC and TJC sample members generally did not remember receiving different messages. Furthermore, the overriding message remembered by individuals in both research groups was one urging them to “get a job quickly” — a message that is pervasive in Los Angeles County’s GAIN program.

Table ES.1 shows the impacts on messages received and remembered by survey respondents in the EJC and TJC groups. Differences in outcomes between the two groups that are marked with asterisks are statistically significant, meaning that it is very likely that the EJC model led to these differences. As shown in the top rows, EJC and TJC sample members were equally likely to report that job club staff strongly encouraged them to hold out for a good job while they were searching for jobs. The two groups of individuals were also equally likely to recall that job club staff encouraged them to get a job as quickly as possible. In both groups, over four in ten clients “agreed a lot” that they received this type of encouragement from job club staff.

In regards to messages received from any program staff member (including job club staff), some differences between EJC and TJC were found. EJC survey respondents were more likely than their TJC counterparts to “agree a lot” that program staff encouraged them to hold out for a good job (although only 13 percent of all EJC respondents reported this) and to “agree a lot” that program staff encouraged them to go to school or training (with 23 percent of all EJC respondents reporting this; these results are not shown in the table).

While the lack of more stark differences between the two research groups is somewhat surprising, it may be due to the fact that the chief difference in the messages delivered in the two types of job clubs pertained to getting a job in one’s field of interest — a concept that might not be directly analogous to a “good” job (specifically, one that pays a high wage).

- **The EJC model, compared with the TJC model, did not increase take-up of education and training.**

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Table ES.1

Impacts on Messages Relating to Job Search

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome (%)	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
<u>Messages received from job club staff</u>				
Job club staff encouraged clients to hold out for a good job, such as one that paid a high wage	22.1	18.9	3.2	0.340
Job club staff encouraged clients to get a job as quickly as possible	41.7	44.9	-3.3	0.430
Job club staff focused on how clients could hold a job once one was obtained	33.6	37.6	-4.0	0.317
Sample size (total = 608)	311	297		

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

NOTES: See Appendix C in the complete report.

Responses are shown only for those who responded "agree a lot" to the statement.

Given that EJC participants in one of the study's two regions could undergo a vocational assessment earlier than TJC participants, and given that this assessment was a necessary precursor to referrals to education and training activities, it was expected that EJC sample members would be more likely than TJC sample members to eventually participate in an educational or training activity. However, no statistically significant difference in the likelihood of participating in education or training was found between the two research groups during the year following random assignment: 36 percent of the EJC group and 41 percent of the TJC group participated in education or training activities (not shown in the table). Furthermore, comparing EJC and TJC sample members in just the one region where the assessment timing difference would have been greatest, no difference was found as well in the take-up of education or training.

As expected, the same proportion of EJC and TJC group members responded in the survey that they had received help with support services, basic needs, public benefits, job preparation, and job retention and advancement in the year following random assignment. This is not surprising, since the evaluation measured the incremental effects of assigning welfare applicants and recipients to different types of job clubs within Los Angeles County's GAIN program, and sample members who were assigned to either type of job club had access to the same services normally offered as part of GAIN.

Key Findings on Program Impacts

- **The EJC model, compared with the TJC model, did not increase employment retention or advancement over the follow-up period.**

The upper panel of Table ES.2 shows the effects on employment, earnings, welfare receipt, and income for single parents who were subject to the EJC model, compared with those who were subject to the TJC model, over the year and a half following random assignment. The lower panel shows the effects of the EJC model during the last quarter of the follow-up period (Quarter 7). The table shows that EJC group members and TJC group members worked about the same amount of time and earned about the same during the follow-up period. The employment rate in UI-covered jobs over the follow-up period was about 73 percent for both research groups. Within a year and a half after random assignment, the EJC group members earned \$9,103 in UI-covered jobs, and the TJC group members earned \$8,730. The small difference of \$373 dollars is not statistically significant. The EJC model did lead to a modest increase in employment in the quarter after random assignment (not shown in the table), but this difference did not persist throughout the remaining quarters.

While many sample members in both research groups found jobs, many did not stay employed. As of the end of the follow-up period, only half of the sample members in each research group were employed. It is also notable that, on average, most people were employed for fewer than three quarters during the follow-up period.

Table ES.2 shows that EJC and TJC group members were also equally unlikely to experience employment advancement, as measured by earning \$15,000 or more in UI-covered employment during the follow-up period.

The EJC model also did not improve the characteristics or quality of sample members' jobs (not shown in the table). For instance, about the same proportion of sample members in both research groups — less than one in six — obtained jobs that offered a health care plan or medical insurance. Survey and administrative data show that, despite the efforts of EJC program staff to encourage people to hold out for a job in their field of interest, this did not lead to an increase in holding “better” jobs, compared with what normally happened as a result of the TJC workshops.

- **The EJC model, compared with the TJC model, did not affect public assistance receipt or income levels over the follow-up period.**

Table ES.2 also presents the outcomes of the EJC model on TANF and food stamp receipt, compared with the outcomes of the TJC model. During the year and half of follow-up, EJC and TJC group members had similar rates of TANF receipt: Individuals in both groups received TANF for an average of 13 of the 18 months in the follow-up period. In addition, both

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Table ES.2

**Impacts on UI-Covered Employment,
Public Assistance, and Measured Income**

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
<u>Quarters 2-7</u>				
Ever employed (%)	72.6	73.0	-0.4	0.883
Average quarterly employment rate (%)	47.4	45.8	1.6	0.440
Number of quarters employed	2.8	2.7	0.1	0.441
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	37.2	33.1	4.1	0.128
Earnings (\$)	9,103	8,730	373	0.552
Earned \$15,000 or more (%)	25.8	23.5	2.3	0.347
Number of months received TANF	13.3	13.3	0	0.838
Amount of TANF received (\$)	7,596	7,434	162	0.448
Number of months received food stamps	13.9	13.5	0.3	0.265
Amount of food stamps received (\$)	3,918	3,849	68	0.505
Total measured income ^a (\$)	20,617	20,014	603	0.299
<u>Quarter 7</u>				
Ever employed (%)	50.6	49.5	1.1	0.690
Earnings (\$)	1,834	1,873	-39	0.788
Earned \$2,500 or more (%)	31.7	32.5	-0.8	0.770
Ever received TANF (%)	63.9	63.6	0.3	0.920
Amount of TANF received (\$)	983	892	90 *	0.071
Ever received food stamps (%)	66.1	64.4	1.6	0.540
Amount of food stamps received (\$)	533	511	22	0.404
Total measured income ^a (\$)	3,350	3,277	73	0.604
Sample size (total = 1,183)	598	585		

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from UI, TANF, and food stamp administrative records from the State of California.

NOTES: See Appendix B in the complete report.

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

^aThis measure represents the sum of UI earnings, TANF, and food stamps.

research groups left welfare at the same rate. As of the end of the follow-up period, one-third of both research groups had stopped receiving welfare and food stamps.

As would follow from the above results, the EJC model did not increase income — as measured by the sum of UI earnings, TANF, and food stamps — over the TJC model. Both EJC and TJC group members' total measured income during the full follow-up period was about \$20,000.

- **Overall, the effects of the EJC model compared with the TJC model did not vary across subgroups.**

Effects were examined separately for groups of people who may have had different responses to the EJC model. For example, EJC group members without recent prior employment experience may have benefited from the additional classroom activities and additional time for finding a job. Those with recent employment histories may have benefited from the EJC model's career planning process and messages of encouragement about holding out for a better job.

Among sample members who were not employed in UI-covered jobs during the quarter prior to random assignment, the EJC model increased the percentage of sample members who worked for four consecutive quarters during the follow-up period — by 6.0 percentage points above the TJC average of 25.7 percent (not shown in tables). This effect, however, was short-lived. In addition, despite the increase in employment stability, the EJC model did not increase the average quarterly employment rate or total earnings for this subgroup.

Subgroup impacts were also found for those with a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. A larger percentage of the EJC group members in this subgroup were employed for four consecutive quarters in UI-covered jobs, compared with the TJC group members in this subgroup. Similar to the no-recent-employment subgroup, the positive effects were limited to employment stability outcomes; the EJC model did not have other positive effects for this subgroup. Furthermore, by the end of the follow-up period, similar percentages of EJC and TJC group members were employed.

Differences for other subgroups were examined as well, including subgroups defined by region and race/ethnicity. These results suggest that there are no or few consistent and statistically significant differences in the effects of the EJC model relative to those of the TJC model for these subgroups of sample members.

Policy Implications

Past research has suggested that the Traditional Job Club (TJC) model is effective in increasing employment and earnings for welfare applicants and recipients, compared with not

requiring participation in job clubs, but that the model has not been found to be effective in helping people retain jobs. In developing the Enhanced Job Club (EJC) model, Los Angeles County was interested in exploring new strategies that might promote employment stability and career advancement for welfare recipients. The EJC study thus tested a variation of the usual quick-job-entry job club model, one that sought to increase employment retention and advancement beyond the levels that most job clubs have been able to achieve. This report's findings suggest that a radical change in the TJC model — more substantial than the changes embedded in the EJC model — or other policy changes may be needed to improve on the TJC model's employment retention and advancement outcomes.

Despite the good efforts of the EJC program staff, the main message that EJC group members recalled, when surveyed a year after their study entry, was that they were to find a job quickly. This reflects the fact that exposing clients to a message that is more nuanced than immediate "Work First" is difficult within a welfare agency that has a strong focus in this regard. Furthermore, it may have been difficult for clients to find and obtain targeted or promotable jobs in their fields of interest. And even for clients who did find such jobs, the jobs may not have paid well or have been "good" jobs. It also should be noted that staff's performance goals for the EJC and TJC workshop facilitators in this study were the same: Staff leading both types of job clubs were expected to place 30 percent of their workshop participants in jobs (of any type) by the end of the job club session. It is possible that directly linking staff's performance goals to the expected goals of the EJC model — perhaps by placing specific percentages of EJC clients in their targeted jobs by the end of Week 2 and in targeted or promotable jobs by the end of Week 3 — might improve upon the EJC results. Finally, the intervention tested here extended only to the job club component of GAIN. For example, the focus on one's area of career interest for EJC clients did not extend into the later phases of the GAIN program, such as education or training courses.

The early results presented here show that the EJC model did not improve on — or, as also could have happened, did not erode — the employment outcomes that sample members were able to achieve through the TJC model. But the EJC model is likely to have been more costly to implement than the TJC model, since the EJC model lasted two weeks longer than the TJC model and involved additional staff. While the EJC model may have other advantages over the TJC model, the particular benefits of the EJC model considered in this report do not justify its additional costs.

The EJC model is only one of many types of program models being tested in the ERA evaluation that attempt to find new approaches to help welfare recipients stay steadily employed and advance in their jobs. The results so far suggest that other approaches might be more likely to produce economic impacts for the working poor. For example, the ERA model in Texas provided a monthly financial incentive to individuals for maintaining full-time work and has pro-

duced employment and earnings impacts.⁵ In the ERA model in Chicago (another model with economic impacts), working TANF recipients received services from an employer intermediary, which tried to place the low-wage workers into jobs in industries with higher wages.⁶ In addition, the Riverside, California, PASS model (another ERA model with economic impacts that served the working poor) provided services by utilizing different institutional arrangements — in this case, community based organizations.⁷ Over the next two years, the ERA evaluation will seek to systematically identify the characteristics of these programs that may have contributed to their economic impacts, track their longer-term economic effects, and compare the costs of these programs with their benefits.

The results in this report, however, are not the final word on the EJC model. MDRC will continue to track sample members in this study using administrative records and will make longer-term results public when they are available.

⁵Karin Martinson and Richard Hendra, *The Employment Retention and Advancement Project: Results from the Texas ERA Site* (New York: MDRC, 2006).

⁶Dan Bloom, Richard Hendra, and Jocelyn Page, *The Employment Retention and Advancement Project: Results from the Chicago ERA Site* (New York: MDRC, 2006).

⁷David Navarro, Mark van Dok, and Richard Hendra, *The Employment Retention and Advancement Project: Results from the Post-Assistance Self-Sufficiency (PASS) Program in Riverside, California* (New York: MDRC, 2007).

Introduction

Overview of the National ERA Project

For over a decade, policymakers and program operators have struggled to learn what kinds of services, supports, and incentives are best able to help low-income working parents retain steady employment and move up to better jobs. This issue has assumed even greater urgency in the wake of the 1990s welfare reforms, which made long-term welfare receipt much less feasible for families. Despite many efforts, scant evidence exists about effective strategies to promote employment retention and advancement. Previously evaluated programs that were aimed at improving retention or advancement — notably, the Post-Employment Services Demonstration (PESD), a four-site program that tested programs that provided follow-up case management to welfare recipients who found jobs — generally failed to improve employment outcomes.¹

The Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project was designed to improve on past efforts in this area by identifying and testing innovative models designed to promote employment stability and wage progression among welfare recipients and other low-income groups. The project began in 1998, when the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued planning grants to 13 states to develop new programs. The following year, HHS selected MDRC to conduct an evaluation of the ERA models.² From 2000 to 2003, MDRC and its subcontractor, The Lewin Group, worked closely with the states that had received planning grants, and with several other states, to mount tests of the ERA programs. MDRC, Lewin, and Cygnet Associates also provided extensive technical assistance to some of the states and program operators, since most were starting programs from scratch, with no proven models on which to build.

Ultimately, a total of 16 ERA models (two of which were studied in Los Angeles County) were implemented in eight states. Almost all the programs targeted current or former recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) — the cash welfare program that mainly serves single mothers and their children — but the program models are very diverse. One group of programs targets low-wage workers and focuses on advancement. Another group targets individuals who are considered “hard to employ” and primarily aims to place them in stable jobs. Finally, a third group of models has mixed goals and targets a diverse set of populations, including former TANF recipients, TANF applicants, and low-wage workers in particular

¹Rangarajan and Novak (1999).

²The U.S. Department of Labor has also provided funding to support the ERA project.

firms. Some of these programs initiate services before individuals go to work, while others begin services after employment. Each model is described in Appendix Table A.1.

The evaluation design is similar in most of the sites. Individuals who met ERA eligibility criteria (which varied from site to site) were assigned, at random, to the program group (in the case of this particular test in Los Angeles, to a new type of job search club) or to a control group (in this case, to a “traditional” type of job club). Because of random assignment, any differences between the program and control groups during the follow-up period can be attributed to the innovative programs being tested, rather than to differences in the characteristics of the people in the two groups.

The Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club study examined the effects of two types of job club workshops on job finding, retention, and advancement for clients of the county’s Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program, the mandatory welfare-to-work program for unemployed TANF recipients. Los Angeles County’s Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) and its Office of Education (LACOE) jointly ran the Enhanced Job Club and the Traditional Job Club workshops as part of the GAIN program. DPSS oversaw program operations and provided overall management, while LACOE, under contract to DPSS, operated the Enhanced Job Club and the Traditional Job Club workshop sessions.

The Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club (EJC) Model

Background and Evaluation Findings for Other Job Club Models

“Job club” is a group job search activity, usually lasting three weeks, designed to help unemployed people find jobs. The first week consists of classroom activities that teach participants about the mechanics of looking for work, such as likely sources of jobs, how to prepare a résumé, and how to answer questions from prospective employers during interviews. In the second and third weeks, individuals search for jobs using the skills that they learned during the first week. Job club workshop staff help participants master these skills by conducting mock employer interviews, by providing job leads, and by reviewing and offering guidance on participants’ job search efforts. In addition, participants use resources at the job club site, such as computers to create résumés and phone banks to contact prospective employers. The goal of job club is help participants find work quickly, usually in any type of job.

Job club services have been an integral component of welfare-to-work programs since the 1970s. Past evaluations of welfare-to-work programs that prominently utilized mandatory job club services revealed that these services were effective in increasing the employment rates and earnings of individuals, especially in programs where job club services emphasized getting individuals into jobs as soon as possible. One of the more strikingly effective interventions was the Los An-

geles Jobs-First GAIN program, which featured a mandatory job club that emphasized getting people into jobs as rapidly as possible (and is discussed in detail in the following section). Findings from the study of this GAIN program, conducted in the middle to late 1990s, revealed that program group members — many of whom participated in the mandatory job club services — increased their employment rate by 10 percentage points and their earnings by \$1,627 over a two-year period, compared with control group members in the study who did not receive any program services (including job club) and who were not required to find a job on their own.³

During the early to middle 1990s, a somewhat different type of job club model was implemented in Portland, Oregon, as part of the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (NEWWS). This job club — while featuring the usual array of classroom exercises in its first week — encouraged participants not to take the first job that they were offered but, instead, to hold out for “better” jobs: jobs that paid more than the minimum hourly wage, had fringe benefits, possessed career advancement opportunities, or were in an occupational field that clients found interesting. The goal of this job club approach was to get people employed in more promising jobs, with the hopes that they would stay in these positions longer, earn more money, and move up the career ladder. Findings from the Portland study indicated that program group members — many who participated in the job club services offered by the Portland program — increased their employment rate by 4 percentage points and earned \$5,100 more over a five-year follow-up period, compared with control group members in this study who did not receive any program services.⁴ Notably, the earnings gains continued into the third, fourth, and fifth years of follow-up. Moreover, program group members stayed employed 1.6 quarters longer than the control group members during the follow-up period, which suggests that the Portland program achieved some success toward its job retention objectives. Because program group members in the Portland study participated in other types of program activities, these results cannot be attributed solely to the program’s job club services. However, the Portland findings encouraged policymakers to consider whether the *message* delivered in job clubs could play a role in their effectiveness.⁵

Origins and Goals of the EJC Model

LACOE had been providing job club services for DPSS clients who were in GAIN in Los Angeles County since 1989. From then until 1995, the focus of job club was to teach job-hunting skills, such as preparing résumés and conducting job interviews. Finding work in job club, while certainly desirable, was not the primary objective during these years, given GAIN’s overall focus on building educational skills among its clients. Many DPSS and LACOE staff

³Freedman, Knab, Gennetian, and Navarro (2000, p. ES-3).

⁴Hamilton et al. (2001, pp. 86-87).

⁵Hamilton (2002, p. 18).

viewed job club as an exercise in career exploration and as an informational experience for people; these staff expected that the job-seeking skills that people learned would be useful to them after they participated in education and training services, making them more competitive in the labor market. Moreover, only individuals who were deemed not to be in need of basic education at program intake (by virtue of having a high school diploma or a General Educational Development [GED] certificate, as well as by scoring above a certain level on an educational diagnostic test) were referred to job club. An evaluation of the GAIN program that was conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990s revealed that only 26 percent of the program group members in this study participated in job club during a three-year follow-up period; moreover, job club was not necessarily emphasized for the group classified as not in need of basic education at program intake.⁶ More important, the evaluation showed that the Los Angeles GAIN program failed to produce impacts on earnings for program group sample members over a three-year follow-up period.⁷

In response, LACOE and DPSS retooled the county's GAIN program in 1995 to give it much more emphasis on getting people into jobs. First, nearly all GAIN clients in Los Angeles were referred to job club as their first program activity, regardless of their educational level. Second, the message and goal of job club changed significantly: Individuals were expected to find and take any jobs that they could land. Aside from the immediate earnings benefits, it was thought that working would lead to better opportunities for people. Further, LACOE staff ran the job clubs in an upbeat, highly motivational style, designed to boost the self-esteem of participants so they would be more likely to believe that they had the ability to look for and find jobs. To reflect this new philosophy, LACOE adapted the motto "a job, a better job, a career" and referred to its job club workshop as the "Work First" job club. To underscore these changes, DPSS renamed its program as "the Jobs-First GAIN program" and sponsored an evaluation of the revamped program to assess its effectiveness on increasing employment rates and earnings.

While findings from the Jobs-First GAIN evaluation showed that the Work First-focused job club model increased the employment rates and earnings of program group members in the study, as described above, both DPSS and LACOE were looking for ways to improve on these outcomes even more. The impetus for shifting to a different job club approach also stemmed from the creation of the Long Term Family Self-Sufficiency plan by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in 1999, which attempted to help TANF recipients become economically self-sufficient — that is, to find work at jobs that pay well enough for them to leave welfare permanently. This goal was particularly crucial in the wake of the 1996 passage of the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA),

⁶Hamilton (2002, pp. 35-37).

⁷Riccio, Friedlander, and Freedman (1994, Table ES.1, p. xxviii).

which transformed the Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program — the nation’s primary welfare program — from an open-ended entitlement to the time-limited TANF program. In California, adult TANF clients were limited to no more than 24 months of continuous receipt and a lifetime limit of 60 months. California’s liberal earnings disregards, however, allowed more TANF recipients to combine work and welfare payments, relative to the situation in other states, inadvertently resulting in clients’ using up much of their limited TANF eligibility time. Because of all these factors, DPSS and LACOE felt that job club needed to be restructured so that TANF clients could find and hold jobs that would make them self-sufficient.

With this objective in mind, DPSS looked toward the Portland job club model as a possible approach to achieving the self-sufficiency goal set forth in the Long Term Family Self-Sufficiency plan. DPSS administrators visited Portland in 2000 to observe job club workshop sessions, and they came away impressed with the concept of selective job search. Portland’s approach led DPSS to incorporate a similar job search design into its restructured job club model.

Objectives and Description of the EJC Study

Previous research showed that programs that possessed strongly Work First-focused job clubs produced impacts of 5 percent to 18 percent on the employment rates and earnings outcomes of program group members eligible to participate in these services, compared with those outcomes for control group members not eligible to participate in job club.⁸ In short, the research revealed that the Work First job club model worked. However, employment retention rates remained low. The goals of the EJC study, therefore, were twofold: (1) to determine whether a new job club model, which focused on initially getting clients into better jobs, could improve on the employment and earnings impacts generated by the Work First job club model and (2) to determine whether the new job club model could help people keep their jobs longer, as a result of connecting participants to better jobs. The EJC model thus attempted to get participants into better jobs from the outset, with the hopes that these individuals would keep their jobs longer, engage in career advancement activities, and ultimately move up the career ladder. The EJC model was tested against the existing Work First job club model, called the “Traditional Job Club (TJC) model” in this study.

It is important to note that the EJC workshops, as well as the TJC workshops to which they were compared, made up just one type of activity within the Los Angeles Jobs-First GAIN program. The EJC study, therefore, is a test of the effectiveness of different versions of the same component *within the same program*, rather than a study of separate, pervasive programs.

⁸Freedman, Knab, Gennetian, and Navarro (2000); Scrivener et al. (1998); Riccio, Friedlander, and Freedman (1994).

Two areas of Los Angeles County were involved in the EJC study. The effects of the two job club workshop models for GAIN-mandatory TANF recipients were compared in GAIN Regions 3 (San Gabriel Valley) and 4 (downtown Los Angeles and the northern part of South Central Los Angeles).

As described below, the two workshop models that are contrasted in the study used different approaches to job search, lasted a different number of weeks, and required different numbers of hours of classroom participation each week.

Enhanced Job Club (EJC)

EJC was a five-week job club that used a “step-down” approach toward job search goals. The first week featured a career planning and preparation seminar, consisting of five 8-hour sessions, to guide individuals’ job search, culminating in the development of a career plan that identified a career field, a “quality-of-life” job goal in this field, and a list of “targeted” and “promotable” jobs in the field. (A *quality-of-life job goal* was the individual’s ultimate career objective, which usually required experience and credentials that the person would have to acquire in the future. A *targeted job* was the highest-paying job in one’s career field that could be found given the person’s current education level and work history. A *promotable job* was a position within the person’s career field that could lead to a targeted job.) In addition to these career development activities, clients also learned job search skills, such as how to complete an application, how to prepare a résumé, and how to interview for a job.

During the second week, EJC participants attended morning sessions, lasting four hours each day, that focused on refining their career development plans and discussing the results of their job search. Individuals then spent the afternoons looking for their targeted jobs.

EJC participants who remained unemployed in the third week then expanded, or “stepped-down,” their job search to include promotable jobs. They looked for work full time, checking in each day for about an hour with their job club facilitator to review the results of their job search efforts.

If EJC participants still hadn’t found either their targeted or their promotable job by the fourth week, then they were told to find a “skill-building” job, which was any part-time job. As in Week 3, participants searched for jobs full time during Week 4, with hour-long check-in meetings with their facilitator each day. If participants found a skill-building job, they were told that they would be enrolled in education and training activities related to their career field, in the hopes that combining work and these activities would result in more promising career pathways.

Week 5 of EJC consisted of individualized job search assistance with participants who volunteered to receive additional help to find work. Staff performed a variety of activities, in-

cluding reviewing the results of individuals' job search efforts and providing feedback as needed, passing along job leads, ensuring that individuals followed through on employer contacts already submitted, and identifying and addressing barriers to employment as they emerged. (Note: Participation in Week 5 activities was voluntary.)

Traditional Job Club (TJC)

TJC was the conventional three-week Work First job club workshop operated by LACOE since 1995 — a type of job club similar to many others operated across the United States. As noted above, TJC aimed at quickly getting people into jobs.

During the first week, TJC participants attended morning sessions that focused on learning job search skills, such as how to complete an application, how to prepare a résumé, and how to conduct an interview with a prospective employer. In the afternoons, participants then used this information to help them look for work.

In the second and third weeks, TJC participants continued their job search full time, checking in daily with their job club facilitator. Throughout the TJC workshop, job club facilitators stressed to participants that they should find and take any job, even a low-wage job. Being employed, it was reasoned, would enable people to master occupational skills and positive work behavior habits, as well as to learn about other job opportunities.

Features of Both EJC and TJC Workshops

The two types of job club workshops differed somewhat by region. In Region 4, the EJC workshops had another feature, which essentially shortened the gap between the end of the workshops and assessment for education and training referrals from several weeks to only one or two weeks. In this region, DPSS and LACOE integrated vocational assessment during Week 4 of the EJC workshops. In contrast, in the EJC workshops in Region 3 and in the TJC workshops in both Regions 3 and 4, individuals who completed job club workshops without finding employment went through numerous meetings with the vocational assessor and their case managers in order to be referred to an education and training program. This entire process could take months to complete, and, at any point in time, the case manager could lose contact with the individual. With the integrated approach used in Region 4, EJC participants who had not found jobs by the middle of Week 3 were scheduled for vocational assessment at the end of that week. By the end of Week 4, the vocational assessor came to the LACOE job club center to complete an assessment of each participant and to develop for each an employment plan (which stipulated the education and training programs that the individual would enroll in). The integrated vocational assessment thus shortened the gap between the end of job club and postassessment education and training to just a week or two. In addition, EJC participants were strongly encouraged by DPSS and LACOE staff to blend part-time work with their participation in the education or

training program stipulated in their employment plan, to enable clients to fulfill their 32-hour weekly participation mandate, as required by the GAIN program.

Whether they were in the EJC or the TJC group, individuals had to fulfill the state-mandated 32-hour weekly participation requirement through work, participation in GAIN activities (such as job search), or some combination of the two. In addition, sample members in both research groups received GAIN supportive service payments — transportation assistance and child care — if clients needed these payments in order to participate in job club workshops and other program activities. Further, sample members in both groups also retained full eligibility for TANF, food stamps, Medicaid, transitional child care, and Medicaid benefits, in accordance with the rules of those programs.

LACOE started operating the EJC workshop model in July 2002. It phased out the TJC model at that time, except in Regions 3 and 4, where it continued to run the TJC workshops through December 2004 solely for the purposes of the evaluation. After December 2004, LACOE stopped operating the TJC workshops in Regions 3 and 4; all GAIN clients were subsequently referred to EJC workshops.

The External Environment

Los Angeles County is the most populous county in the nation. It is home to over 25 percent of California's population.⁹ The city of Los Angeles has the county's largest population and accounts for almost 40 percent of its population.¹⁰ The county's population increased steadily throughout the study, growing from 10,107,451 in 2004 to 10,245,572 in 2006.¹¹

Los Angeles County has a very diverse economy. In 2005, the leading industries were international trade, tourism, motion-picture productions, technology, and business and professional services.¹² Los Angeles is the largest manufacturing center in the United States. The leading industries vary by region. GAIN Region 3, which encompasses the suburban San Gabriel Valley, is located on the eastern side of Los Angeles County. It is bounded by the city of Pasadena to the west and extends eastward to the city of Pomona. In 2004, the region's largest employment sectors were education and health services, professional and business services,¹³ manufacturing, and retail trade.¹⁴ In 2005, the largest regional gains in employment were seen in

⁹California Employment Development Department (2006a).

¹⁰Los Angeles County (2006).

¹¹California Employment Development Department (2006b).

¹²These numbers are based on the concept of "export" of goods and services using 2005 average employment as a measure (Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, 2006).

¹³This sector includes professional, scientific, and technical services (law, accounting, advertising, and architecture).

¹⁴Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (2006).

professional and business services and retail. GAIN Region 4 is located in the central area of Los Angeles County. It includes downtown Los Angeles and extends southward through the Florence neighborhood of South Central Los Angeles. In 2002, the largest employment sectors in South Los Angeles were apparel manufacturing, health care, food services, and administrative and support services.¹⁵ In 2003, downtown Los Angeles had the largest concentration of government workers in the county. Other significant regional employment sectors are professional and business services and education and health services.¹⁶

The countywide unemployment rate decreased significantly during the study period, declining from 6.7 percent in June 2004 to 4.6 percent in June 2006.¹⁷ In Region 3, the unemployment rate was slightly less than the countywide average, ranging from 4 percent to 6 percent during the follow-up period. Conversely, in Region 4, the unemployment rate was somewhat higher than the countywide average, ranging from 7 percent to 10 percent during this time.¹⁸

TANF caseloads in Los Angeles County also declined considerably during the study period, dropping from 65,991 in June 2004 to 53,950 in June 2006.¹⁹ California TANF grant levels averaged about \$723 a month for a family of three from mid-2004 to mid-2006.²⁰ Because of California's relatively high TANF grant levels and generous earnings disregards, TANF recipients can earn a significant amount of money before becoming ineligible for this assistance. For example, in 2004, a family of three — which is the typical family size of the study's sample members — could earn up to \$1,671 per month before losing their TANF eligibility. In other words, clients could work full time (40 hours per week) at \$9.65 per hour before reaching this threshold. Moreover, at this level of earnings, the net monthly earned income of \$1,560 (after taxes) was more than the 2004 federal poverty guideline of \$1,306.²¹ Not surprisingly, approximately a third of all TANF single-parent case heads in Los Angeles County were employed during the study period.²²

¹⁵Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (2006).

¹⁶Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (2006).

¹⁷California Employment Development Department (2006c).

¹⁸California Employment Development Department (2006d). Regional averages were estimated across annual unemployment rates from 2004 to 2006.

¹⁹California Department of Social Services (2006a).

²⁰California Department of Social Services (2006b).

²¹California Department of Social Services (2006c, 2006d).

²²California Department of Social Services (2006e).

About the ERA Evaluation of the EJC Model in Los Angeles

Research Questions

The ERA evaluation of the Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club (EJC) includes three major components: (1) an implementation analysis, which studies the way that the EJC and the TJC workshops operated; (2) a participation analysis, which examines the extent to which EJC and TJC group members engaged in job club workshops and other services; and (3) an impact analysis, which assesses the EJC group's employment, earnings, and benefits receipt in comparison with those of the TJC group.

This report focuses on the following questions:

- **Implementation.** How did LACOE and DPSS design, launch, and operate the EJC workshop model? Did this implementation vary across Regions 3 and 4? How did the EJC and TJC workshop models differ from each other? How were they similar?
- **Participation.** Did LACOE succeed in engaging a substantial proportion of individuals in job search program services? What other types of services and financial supports did people receive? How did the participation levels of EJC sample members compare with the levels of TJC sample members? Did differences in participation levels vary for subgroups of sample members?
- **Impacts.** Within the follow-up period, did the EJC group, relative to the TJC group, experience increases in employment retention and earnings and reductions in public assistance receipt? Did these results vary for subgroups of sample members?

The Research Design and Random Assignment Process

To randomly assign those TANF recipients who were required to participate in the GAIN program to either the EJC or the TJC workshop, Los Angeles DPSS staff used an automated module, developed in-house (with MDRC input) and installed on the GAIN Employment Activity and Reporting System (GEARS). DPSS eligibility workers assessed the GAIN program status of TANF clients at either of two points: when a TANF applicant was approved to receive aid and when an ongoing TANF recipient had an annual eligibility redetermination meeting.²³ Once TANF clients were determined to be GAIN-mandatory, DPSS scheduled them

²³About 23 percent of all adult TANF clients in Los Angeles County — either recently approved applicants or ongoing recipients — were exempted from the GAIN program mandate, usually because they had a
(continued)

for a GAIN group orientation appointment, as depicted at the top of Figure 1. Random assignment occurred when these individuals showed up for their orientation.

In addition to being unemployed, GAIN clients were required to meet the following criteria to be eligible for random assignment into the study:

- Be from either single- or two-parent cases
- Speak either English or Spanish as their primary language
- Not be a sample member in the Los Angeles Reach for Success study (the other ERA evaluation in the county)²⁴
- Live in the Region 3 or Region 4 catchment area

If clients did not meet all these criteria, the random assignment module would identify them as such and exclude them from random assignment into the study. These individuals would then be referred to an EJC workshop, which was the standard job club service for GAIN clients, as previously mentioned. Among those who *were* randomly assigned, 50 percent were placed in the EJC group, and 50 percent were placed in the TJC group.

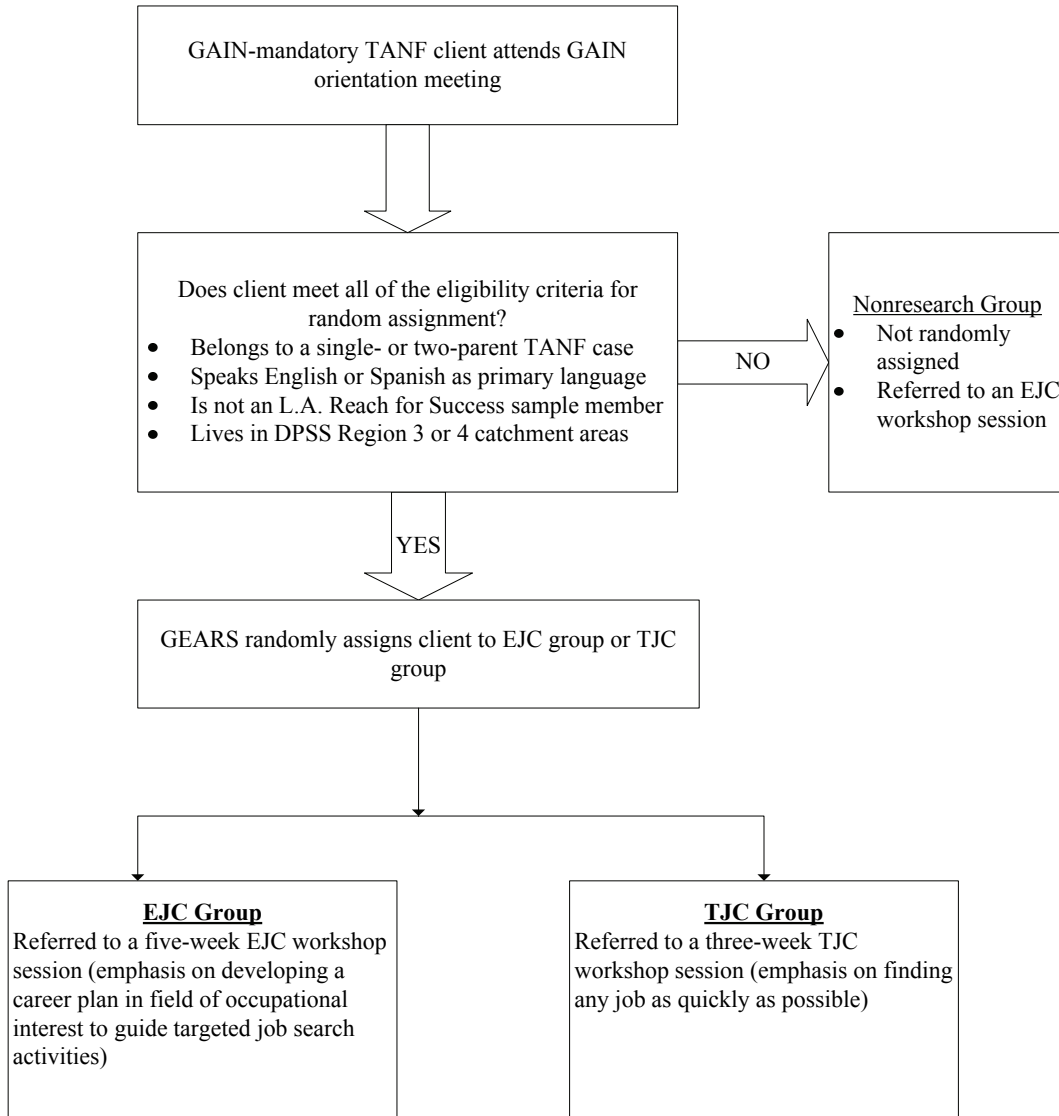
Random assignment started on June 23, 2003, and ended on September 30, 2004. During this period, a total of 5,504 individuals in Regions 3 and 4 were randomly assigned to the EJC study: 2,752 to the EJC group and 2,752 to the TJC group. In May 2004, however, MDRC discovered that approximately one-fifth of the TJC sample members who had been randomly assigned into the study thus far had been erroneously referred to an EJC workshop session. About half of these TJC sample members actually attended an EJC workshop. In addition, a small number of EJC sample members had been referred to a TJC workshop. This development

child under age 1 or were the primary caretaker for an incapacitated spouse or partner (California Department of Social Services, 2006f).

²⁴The Los Angeles Reach for Success (RFS) program was designed to help clients who were working full time stay employed and ultimately secure better jobs. RFS was studied as part of the ERA evaluation. Clients who were randomly assigned to the program group in the RFS study were referred to the RFS program, which provided enhanced case management and other services, while clients who were assigned to the control group were referred to the standard postemployment services program, which provided limited case management services. To ensure that the RFS program would not confound the analysis of the EJC study, the random assignment module identified EJC and TJC sample members, excluded them from random assignment into the RFS study, and referred them to the standard postemployment services program.

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Figure 1
Research Design of the Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club (EJC) Study



meant that about one-tenth of the sample were exposed to the incorrect type of job club model, which weakened the research design.²⁵

MDRC and DPSS took steps to ensure that all sample members who were randomly assigned into the study from June 2004 to the end of the sample buildup period were referred to the job club workshop that was appropriate to their research group assignment. Because of this “crossover problem,” this report focuses on the implementation, participation, and impact findings of the “clean” sample cohort of 1,183 single-parent sample members who were randomly assigned into the study from June 1 through September 30, 2004. While this cohort has somewhat less statistical power to detect impacts than the full sample of randomly assigned individuals, it is of sufficient size to estimate the impacts of the EJC model, compared with the TJC model, on employment rates, earnings, and TANF and food stamp receipt. The sample for the ERA 12-Month Survey (described below) was drawn from this cohort as well. Henceforth, the cohort of sample members who were randomly assigned from June to September 2004 will be referred to as the “report sample.” Findings for the “early sample” (the cohort that was randomly assigned before June 2004) are presented in Appendix D of this report.

Characteristics of the Research Sample

Table 1 presents selected characteristics of the report sample members at “baseline,” the time that they were randomly assigned into the study.²⁶ (For a breakout of these characteristics, by research group, see Appendix Table A.2.) As expected, almost all the participants (91 percent) are women. The average age of sample members at random assignment was 30 years old, and 75 percent had one or two children. About 56 percent of the sample are Hispanic, and 35 percent are black. Most spoke English as their primary language, although a significant minority (15 percent) spoke Spanish. Slightly more than half of the sample members did not have a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. Region 4 generated about 57 percent of the sample, compared with 43 percent from Region 3. Half the sample members were employed at some time in the year prior to entering the study. Nearly 80 percent had received TANF at some point during the prior year.

²⁵It is assumed that random assignment to the EJC or TJC research group in and of itself — that is, without actually attending one of the two types of workshops — likely had no effect on sample members’ subsequent behavior.

²⁶In this report, the term “sample member” is used to refer to those who were randomly assigned as part of the study. The term “participant” is used to refer to individuals who participated at all in EJC or TJC workshops. The term “survey respondent” is used to refer to sample members who responded to questions asked in the ERA 12-Month Survey.

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Table 1

Selected Characteristics of Single-Parent Families at Baseline

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Characteristic	Total
Gender (%)	
Female	91.0
Limited English ability (%)	12.6
Primary language (%)	
English	85.5
Spanish	14.5
Race/ethnicity (%)	
Hispanic	56.4
Black/non-Hispanic	34.6
Other	9.0
Age (%)	
20 years or younger	12.1
21-30	48.1
31-40	24.0
Older than 40	15.8
Average age (years)	30.0
Education (%)	
California High School Proficiency Exam / GED	5.6
High school diploma	37.4
Technical/associate's degree / 2 or more years of college	5.2
None of the above	51.8
Number of children (%)	
0	0.1
1	45.1
2	29.5
3 or more	25.3
Age of youngest child (%)	
2 or younger	47.8
3-5	20.5
6 or older	31.8

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Characteristic	Total
Location	
Region 3	42.8
Region 4	57.2
Employed in the quarter prior to random assignment	26.0
Employed in the prior year	50.0
Received TANF in the quarter prior to random assignment	76.9
Received TANF in the prior year	78.9
Sample size	1,183

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from UI and TANF administrative records from the State of California the Los Angeles County GAIN Employment Activity and Reporting System (GEARS).

NOTES: Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in the calculation of sums and differences. Unless otherwise stated, results are for sample members randomly assigned from June to September 2004.

Sample Sizes and Data Sources

As noted above, this report covers 1,183 single-parent sample members who were randomly assigned into the study from June through September 2004 (598 in the EJC group and 585 in the TJC group).²⁷ Most of the report's findings cover a six-quarter follow-up period. The data sources examined for each type of analysis in the report are described below.²⁸

- **Baseline Data.** For each sample member, demographic characteristics — such as gender, race/ethnicity, educational background, and welfare history —

²⁷In addition, 1,099 sample members in two-parent TANF cases — randomly assigned throughout the entire buildup period (June 2003 to September 2004) — are not analyzed in this report. Results for two-parent families will be presented in a later document.

²⁸MDRC undertook a time study of ERA case managers in all the ERA evaluation sites except this one because, unlike the other sites, Los Angeles EJC was not a test of distinct, pervasive programs but, rather, of different types of job club workshops. Moreover, the caseloads of caseworkers in this test — DPSS GAIN service workers — included individuals assigned to the EJC group and individuals assigned to the TJC group. Thus, it would have been difficult for staff to disentangle efforts on behalf of those people assigned to EJC versus efforts for those assigned to TJC.

were collected from GEARS at the time that sample members were randomly assigned into the study.

- **Unemployment Insurance, TANF, and Food Stamp Records Data.** Employment, earnings, and public assistance impacts were estimated using automated state unemployment insurance (UI) wage files and county TANF and food stamp eligibility and payment records. Six quarters of follow-up data for TANF, food stamp, and UI wage records were available for all sample members.
- **ERA 12-Month Survey Data.** MDRC conducted a client survey among a random subset of report sample members from the two research groups 12 months after their random assignment date; 809 sample members (68 percent of the report sample) were randomly selected, of whom 608 (75 percent) completed the survey. The survey explored clients' participation in employment activities, employment and job characteristics, household composition and income, child care use, and other experiences.
- **Field Research Data.** Starting in 2002 and running through late 2004, MDRC staff periodically interviewed LACOE and DPSS program staff and administrators and observed workshop sessions to learn about the goals, structure, and operations of the EJC and TJC workshop models. In addition, MDRC staff gauged the operational fidelity of the EJC and TJC workshops to their programmatic models.

Roadmap of the Report

This report focuses on program implementation and early impact findings. The next section (“Implementation of the EJC Model”) provides more detail on the design, implementation, and operation of the EJC and TJC workshops.

“Impacts on Service Receipt, Job Search Messages, and Client-Staff Contacts” then describes the frequency, type, and subjects of sample member-staff interactions and presents EJC’s impacts on participation outcomes, relative to the outcomes of the TJC model.

“Impacts on Employment Retention and Advancement, Public Assistance, and Income” concludes the report by presenting early information about EJC’s impacts on employment rates, earnings, and other outcomes, relative to the outcomes produced by the TJC model.

Implementation of the Enhanced Job Club Model

This section draws from field research interviews and observations to describe how Los Angeles County's Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) and its Office of Education (LACOE) designed, implemented, and operated the Enhanced Job Club (EJC) and Traditional Job Club (TJC) workshops in Regions 3 and 4 of the county. These job clubs were part of the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program, California's mandatory welfare-to-work program for unemployed recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The report's Introduction fully describes the two Los Angeles program models. The relative effectiveness of these two models is being studied as part of the national Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project.

Putting EJC into Place

As noted in the report's Introduction, LACOE had been providing the Work First-focused job clubs for GAIN clients since 1995. (For the purposes of this study, DPSS, LACOE, and MDRC designated the Work First-focused job club model as the TJC workshop model.) TJC workshops emphasized getting people into jobs as quickly as possible, regardless of the jobs' wage rates or presence of fringe benefits or promotional opportunities. DPSS and LACOE decided in 2000 to design and implement a five-week "enhanced" job club model that would combine career development activities and "step down" targeted job search activities, with the goal of improving the already impressive employment and earnings impacts achieved by the Work First job club approach.

DPSS put out a Request for Proposals for implementing the EJC program model in May 2001. After reviewing various bids, DPSS awarded the contract to LACOE in all seven GAIN regions in Los Angeles County. LACOE launched EJC workshop operations in July 2002. At the same time, it concluded TJC workshop operations in all regions except Region 3 (San Gabriel Valley) and Region 4 (downtown Los Angeles and the northern part of South Central Los Angeles). LACOE continued to operate TJC workshops in these two regions through the end of December 2004, to ensure that sample members who were assigned to the TJC group in September 2004 — the last month of random assignment — had several chances to be re-scheduled to a workshop if they did not show up for their initial workshop referral.

The EJC and TJC Workshop Approaches

The EJC and TJC workshops had distinctive goals, messages, and curricula. For a simplified display of these differences and a description of the weekly activities of both workshop models, see Table 2 and Figure 2.

Goals and Messages

EJC had three related goals for each workshop participant: the identification of a career field of interest, the formation of a career development plan within this field, and targeted job search and placement within the field. The overall objective was to connect job-seekers with positions in a career field of their choosing rather than instructing them to take the first job that they were offered. With this approach, it was theorized that individuals would be more likely to stay in their jobs, thus building their work histories. Moreover, it was hoped that individuals would understand how their jobs fit within their career development plans and how to advance from these initial positions. Taken as a whole, the EJC approach aimed to foster not only job placement but also job retention and advancement.

TJC focused on helping people find and secure any job, as soon as possible. This message was pervasive through all three weeks of the workshop. It was reasoned not only that getting people quickly into jobs would lead to earlier (and therefore greater) earnings, more extensive work histories, and a heightened sense of self-esteem but also that people would learn about promotional opportunities by networking with other employees and supervisors.

The EJC Workshop Curriculum

Activities during the first week of EJC focused on assessing participants' vocational goals, interests, skills, and workplace values in order for each participant to identify a career field of interest; individuals were not required to look for work. As part of this process, individuals used O*Net Online (a computer-based skills and interest assessment system), labor market inventory profilers, and the Internet to research prospective fields, including the types and availability of jobs within the fields, the duties and salaries of these positions, and the education and experience requirements needed to access these jobs. In addition, the inventory profilers helped individuals identify conditions of the workplace environment that they valued (for example, working with other people versus working alone).

Concurrent with these career exploration activities, LACOE job club facilitators worked with EJC participants to help them complete a master application and to create a résumé. In particular, staff helped participants identify transferable skills that they possessed, which was crucial to the development of both the application and the résumé.

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Table 2

**Comparison of Job Club Workshop Features,
Strategies, and Requirements, as Implemented**

Los Angeles Enhanced Versus Traditional Job Club

	EJC Group	TJC Group
Subject to 32-hour weekly participation mandate	Yes	Yes
Job search goal	"Step-down" job search Week 2: Find a targeted job in the field of interest; Week 3: Find a promotable (or targeted) job in the field of interest; Week 4: Find a skill-building job in any field	Find and take any job offer, regardless of wage rate, fringe benefits, and promotional opportunities
Number of employer contacts	Week 2: Minimum of 3 face-to-face contacts with prospective employers; Weeks 3 and 4: Minimum of 5 face-to-face employer contacts	Week 1: Minimum of 3 face-to-face contacts with prospective employers Weeks 2 and 3: Minimum of 5 face-to-face employer contacts
Retention strategy	Retention strategy incorporated in the "step-down" job search approach; help clients find work in their fields of interest in order to maintain their commitment to the jobs	No retention strategy
Advancement strategy	Development of career advancement plan in clients' occupational fields of interest during Week 1	No advancement strategy
Type of assistance from LACOE job coach	Assisted clients in preparing résumés, using O-Net and other software; developed E&T slots; attempted to maintain contact with employed clients	Did not work with TJC clients
Type of assistance from DPSS job developer	Made presentations on job leads and social service resources during Week 1; assisted clients in preparing résumés, using O-Net and other career development software; conducted mock job interviews; matched clients to job openings; referred clients to job fairs	Made presentations on job leads and social service resources during Week 1; rarely interacted with TJC clients aside from these presentations
Type of assistance from on-site GAIN service worker (Region 4 only)	Acted as liaison between clients' GAIN case worker and LACOE staff; resolved barriers to workshop participation; assisted in the integrated vocational assessment component	Rarely worked with TJC clients; occasionally assisted clients in resolving barriers to workshop participation
Eligibility for supportive service payments	Eligible for child care, transportation, and ancillary payments needed to participate in job club workshop sessions and other GAIN program activities	
Eligibility for public assistance programs	Eligible for TANF, food stamps, and Medi-Cal in accordance with the rules of these programs	

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Figure 2

Comparison of Weekly Workshop Activities: Los Angeles Enhanced Versus Traditional Job Club Models

Enhanced Job Club (EJC)

Week 1

Classroom Activities

- Career exploration
- Selection of field of interest
- Create career development plan, including list of targeted and promotable jobs in field of interest
- Create résumé and master application

Week 2

Classroom Activities (AM)

- Review and refine career development plan, especially list of targeted and promotable jobs
- Feedback on job search efforts

Targeted Job Search (PM)

- Find either a targeted or a promotable job in field of interest

Week 3

- Check-in meeting with EJC facilitator (1-hour in AM)
- Feedback on job search efforts
- Refine career development plan as appropriate

Targeted Job Search (all day)

- Find either a targeted or a promotable job in field of interest

Vocational Assessment (Region 4 only)

- For clients with satisfactory participation but haven't found jobs

Week 4

Targeted Job Search (all day)

- Find either a targeted or a promotable job in field of interest, or any job, which does not have to be in field of interest.

Vocational Assessment (Region 4 only)

Week 5 (Voluntary)

- Individualized job search (assisted by LACOE and DPSS staff) to find any job

Traditional Job Club (TJC)

Week 1

Classroom Activities (AM)

- Create résumé and master job application

Job Search (PM)

- Find any job

Week 2

- Check-in meeting with TJC facilitator (1-hour in AM)

Job Search (all day)

- Find any job

Week 3

- Check-in meeting with TJC facilitator (1-hour in AM)

Job Search (all day)

- Find any job

Once individuals selected their career fields, they and staff worked together to identify their quality-of-life jobs, the educational and work experience requirements needed to access their quality-of-life jobs, and a list of the targeted, promotable, and skill-building jobs needed to build up to the quality-of-life jobs. As part of this process, workshop participants specifically looked for jobs that were in demand in the local labor market by using O*Net and the labor market inventory applications, along with such other sources as job listings and want ads. EJC workshop facilitators assisted participants in this research.

The identification of individuals' occupational fields of interests and development of targeted and promotable jobs proceeded as follows. EJC participants would first think about their interests, aptitudes, and preferences regarding the work site environment. To guide them in this process, they used the labor market inventory profilers and also assessed their current education level and work history. Next, using O*Net, they would research occupational fields to find the ones that fit their interests and aptitudes. As part of this step, they determined whether their fields of interest included jobs that were in demand in the local labor market. Participants would then learn what the educational and experience requirements were for these jobs, especially for their quality-of-life jobs. In learning about these requirements, they discovered the series of intermediary jobs that, coupled with additional education, would lead to the career job. This work represented the first steps in defining the targeted and promotable jobs in people's fields of interest. Similar to what they did with their career jobs, EJC workshop participants would then check to see whether the types of targeted and promotable jobs were available in the local labor market, and then they created a list of these types of jobs. As noted above, facilitators would guide participants through this process. In addition to working individually with participants, facilitators would reinforce the definition of these types of jobs in group exercises by having individuals state their career field, their quality-of-life job, and their lists of targeted, promotable, and skill-building jobs. Other workshop participants as well as the facilitator would then provide feedback on each person's job search plans.

For example, if a single mother in EJC were interested in a career in the medical field, she would assess her current education and work history. Next, she would determine what her career job should be, given the demand in the local labor market. A job as a licensed vocational nurse would be an example of a quality-of-life job. The participant would then learn about the education and work experience prerequisites for licensed vocational nurses, relative to her own education and work histories. In addition, this would reveal the intermediary jobs that she would need to obtain on the pathway to her quality-of-life job, as well as the education and work experience required to access these jobs. If the participant already possessed a certificate and work experience as a certified nurse's aide, then this position would be her targeted job. Examples of a promotable job would be as an in-home health care aide or as a cafeteria worker in a hospital. In these jobs, the participant could conceivably learn about promotion opportunities at her work site, or the jobs themselves could be designed to feed into higher positions. In addition, the par-

participant would develop a list of skill-building jobs that she could then pair with attending an education and training program related to her career field. An example of such a skill-building position would be working in a fast-food restaurant located close to the participant's home or to a child care provider, which would enable her to blend work and education and training more easily.²⁹

All this information was recorded on a career job search plan for participants to use during their targeted job search over the next three weeks. In addition, the plan also functioned as a blueprint for career development activities long after clients left EJC.

EJC participants then spent the next three weeks refining their career development plans and conducting the step-down targeted job search activities. During Week 2, EJC participants devoted their mornings to working on their career plans, conducting mock interviews, and discussing the results of the previous day's job search with staff and the other job-seekers. In the afternoons, they searched for their targeted jobs. On each of these afternoons, individuals had to make a minimum of three face-to-face contacts with employers who were hiring. In Weeks 3 and 4, participants attended one-hour workshop meetings in the morning, again to talk about their ongoing job search. During these weeks, they were required to make five face-to-face employer contacts daily. Most important, if they did not find a targeted job in Week 2, they expanded their job search to include both targeted and promotable positions during Week 3. If participants could not find either targeted or promotable jobs in Week 3, they expanded the scope of their job search to include targeted, promotable, and skill-building jobs in Week 4. This job search approach was vividly and effectively described to workshop participants as aiming at a bull's-eye. If they couldn't hit their original target, they could simply increase the size of the bull's-eye by including the next concentric ring, making the target easier to hit.

If an EJC workshop participant had not yet found work by Week 4, LACOE and DPSS staff worked more intensively with this individual to locate a skill-building job.

Week 5 of EJC was voluntary and consisted of individualized job search assistance for participants who wanted additional help finding work. Staff performed a variety of activities, such as reviewing the results of individuals' job search efforts and providing feedback as needed, passing along job leads, ensuring that individuals followed through on employer contacts already submitted, and identifying and addressing barriers to employment as they emerged.

Finally, if EJC participants in Region 3 did not find a job during the five-week workshop, they were referred back to their GAIN service worker to undergo a vocational assessment that

²⁹Note that systematic data are not available on the types of career fields of interest that individuals identified during this stage of EJC.

identified possible education and training programs in their field of interest. EJC participants in Region 4 — if still unemployed by the middle of Week 3 — were referred to the integrated vocational assessment, which occurred concurrently with workshop activities during Weeks 3 and 4.³⁰ As noted in this report's Introduction, the assessment evaluated the participants' educational aptitude, vocational interests, and work history, in order to determine their primary and secondary career goals and to define pathways to achieving these goals (through a combination of education and training courses and additional work experience connected to the person's field of interest).

The TJC Workshop Curriculum

TJC covered a range of topics, all geared toward reinforcing the Work First message, during the morning classroom session of the first week of the workshop: (1) conveying workshop expectations; (2) completing job applications, including the creation of a master application; (3) preparing and refining résumés; (4) exploring and modifying job-seeker attitudes; and (5) conducting and practicing mock job interviews. TJC did not have a formal process for identifying employment barriers or assessing career interests. Part of the first day was spent on career goals, but this activity consisted mainly of workshop participants' articulating their goals, and there was little review of the feasibility of these objectives. During the afternoons of Week 1, TJC participants looked for work. Each day during Week 1, they were expected to make a minimum of three face-to-face contacts with employers who were hiring (the same requirement as in Week 2 of the EJC workshop).

In Weeks 2 and 3, TJC participants looked for jobs on a full-time basis. They attended a brief check-in meeting with their workshop facilitator each morning. The facilitator reviewed and provided feedback on individuals' job search efforts from the prior day. In addition, participants used resources at the LACOE job center, such as computers, to update résumés, and phone banks, to contact prospective employers. During these weeks, participants had to contact at least five employers daily (the same requirement as in Weeks 3 and 4 of the EJC workshop).

EJC and TJC Job Retention Activities

EJC stressed the importance of helping people find work in their field of interest as a key strategy for increasing job retention rates. In addition, EJC addressed retention issues in indirect ways, such as encouraging participants to learn and meet employers' expectations regarding work site behavior (especially interpersonal relationships between supervisors and employees) and ensuring that people made sufficiently solid arrangements for their child care and

³⁰EJC participants in Region 4 who did find work (either part time or full time) by the middle of Week 3 were also eligible to participate in the integrated vocational assessment activities. According to LACOE and DPSS staff who were interviewed during field research, however, employed EJC participants rarely went through this assessment process.

transportation needs in preparation for employment. In Region 4, the LACOE job coach attempted to stay in contact with EJC participants who found jobs, to identify and resolve any barriers to maintaining employment that might arise.

Aside from covering workplace behavioral issues and anticipating supportive service needs (such as child care and transportation), the TJC curriculum was not designed to help working individuals retain their jobs. In particular, there were no efforts by either DPSS or LACOE staff to stay in contact with employed TJC participants.

EJC and TJC Career Advancement Activities

Central to the EJC workshop design were the career development activities in Week 1, especially the formulation of the career plan, and the lists of targeted and promotable jobs that participants then attempted to find. The career plan, in particular, acted as a repository of all the steps that individuals needed to undertake in order to achieve their quality-of-life jobs.

TJC did not offer career advancement services and was not designed to discuss advancement in a concrete manner. Specifically, TJC did not emphasize education and training as a pathway to advancement. TJC participants could be referred to education and training once they went through vocational assessment, but they did not receive the career development guidance that EJC participants received during Week 1. TJC participants could use O*Net and the other career exploration software applications on their own time, but the TJC facilitator did not actively help them use these resources. (Each LACOE job center did have other staff who assisted individuals with the computers, including the use of O*Net, and with the other office equipment if they needed the help.)

The Workshop Framework: Structure, Staffing, and Management

Organizational Structure and Staffing

The following sections describe the LACOE and DPSS staffing configurations for EJC and TJC workshop operations across GAIN Regions 3 and 4.

- **EJC Workshops.** Each region held four to five EJC workshops per month, on average, and scheduled approximately 60 to 90 individuals for each workshop. One of these workshops was a Spanish-language session, while the remaining workshops were in English. (As discussed below, fewer than half of the scheduled individuals typically showed up for their scheduled workshop.) To run these workshops, each region had approximately four to seven LACOE EJC facilitators housed across two LACOE job centers. These faci-

litators were expected to place 30 percent of the individuals who participated in the EJC workshop into jobs. In addition to the job club facilitators, LACOE and DPSS had a number of other staff (colocated at the LACOE job centers) who worked with EJC participants in specific ways.

- **LACOE Job Coaches.** Job coaches acted as a resource for both workshop participants and other staff. They helped people use the computers to create or revise résumés and to research potential career fields with O*Net and the company/industry survey software. Job coaches developed education and training slots, especially those with free or paid tuition. Education and training slots needed to be matched to individuals' career development plans. Job coaches coordinated resource development activities with the DPSS job developer, and they helped the job developer screen participants for job fairs. Further, the Region 4 job coach set up a database of workshop participants, providers, and employers to match participants to appropriate jobs and components. Job coaches in both regions attempted to keep in contact with assessed individuals after they had found jobs or completed job club, although the coaches were not required to do so.
- **DPSS Job Developers.** Job developers provided a wide range of services for workshop participants. They matched individuals to specific job slots. They sponsored job fairs and hosted weekly employer recruitments. Like the job coaches, job developers worked with individuals during the workshop sessions to create a résumé, especially for those people who never had one. They conducted mock interviews with workshop participants and gave feedback, especially on how to handle difficult questions that employers may ask. They helped individuals use the job search and job development tools (O*Net, Internet, labor market interest inventories, and so on). At times, the job developers worked with individuals on career development, especially with people who had barriers to the career they wanted to enter. They made short presentations at both EJC and TJC workshops regarding job leads and social services resources and referrals, such as programs and providers to address domestic violence, substance abuse, mental health, and housing issues. (Aside from these presentations, job developers seldom worked with TJC workshop participants.)
- **On-Site GAIN Service Workers (GSWs).** In Region 4 only, on-site GSWs functioned as a liaison among clients, LACOE, and the case-carrying GSWs who were based in the two regional DPSS offices. Aside from resolving DPSS-related barriers to participation (examples include problems with child

care, transportation, and TANF checks), on-site GSWs encouraged people to stay engaged in workshop exercises, arranged supportive services for those who volunteered to participate in Week 5 activities, and provided the initial explanation on the vocational assessment process to unemployed EJC participants during Week 3, covering the following topics: (1) overview of assessment process and its benefits, (2) postassessment education and training activities, (3) reminders about TANF time limits, and (4) reminders about GAIN supportive services and other available social services. During this meeting, on-site GSWs also gave out job leads tailored to the person's targeted job search plan (including skill-building positions compatible with the potential school schedule) and stressed the benefits of employment: (1) income disregards, (2) postemployment services, and (3) the benefits of over-the-table jobs (unemployment insurance, workers compensation, Social Security, and so on). DPSS did not have on-site GSWs in LACOE offices in Region 3 because the larger LACOE and DPSS offices in the region were located side by side.

- **Other Agency Staff.** Each region had a representative from the local school district who assisted facilitators and job coaches by helping participants work on their résumés and use O*Net during Week 1 and giving them advice about finding jobs or getting a GED certificate.
- **GSW Case Managers.** In addition, GSWs in each of the four DPSS regional offices provided overall GAIN program case management for both types of workshop participants. GSWs carried both EJC and TJC sample members; DPSS did not designate specific GSWs as case managers for solely one type of sample member. The average caseload size ranged from 80 to 110 individuals, of whom about 10 to 20 were in job club and about 15 to 50 were in postassessment activities.
- **TJC Workshops.** Each region held four TJC workshops per month, on average, and scheduled approximately 60 to 90 individuals for each workshop. As with the EJC workshops, LACOE offered one TJC workshop in Spanish, while the remaining sessions were in English. To run these workshops, LACOE designated one or two facilitators as the TJC facilitators, who operated most but not all of the TJC workshops from July 2002 through the end of

2004.³¹ Like their EJC counterparts, TJC facilitators were expected to place 30 percent of their workshop participants into jobs. (LACOE retrained these TJC facilitators to become EJC facilitators in early 2005.) EJC facilitators would occasionally run TJC sessions, for two reasons: to conduct a Spanish-language TJC session if there were no bilingual TJC facilitator available and, to a much lesser degree, to fill in for a sick (or otherwise indisposed) TJC facilitator.

The other LACOE and DPSS personnel who assisted the EJC facilitators in the delivery of job club services rarely worked with TJC participants. Job developers had few dealings with TJC participants, especially in Region 3. While the on-site GSWs in Region 4 sometimes worked with TJC participants, these interactions were focused solely on removing barriers to workshop participation, such as child care, transportation, or social service issues. (If an individual had social services needs, then the on-site GSWs notified the person's facilitator, who then informed the client's GSW case manager.)

Program Management and Organizational Relationships

DPSS provided management and oversight of LACOE's job search activities through three administrators: a program liaison, a program manager, and an overall administrator. In addition, each GAIN region had a regional administrator, office managers, and first-line supervisors who managed the GSW case managers, the job developers, and, in Region 4, the on-site GSWs.

As the organization that provided job club services to GAIN clients, LACOE had a somewhat more complex management structure. Each LACOE job center had a site supervisor who managed the activities of the center's job club facilitators and job coaches. These site supervisors reported to a regional area manager, who, in turn, reported to a regional administrator. The two regional administrators were managed by the LACOE division chief for GAIN operations.

LACOE and DPSS were long-standing partners in delivering group orientations and job search to GAIN program participants. Although the two agencies possessed very different management structures and organizational cultures, they had an unusually close and cooperative relationship. They perceived themselves as equals in serving GAIN clients. Most important, they agreed on the goals and objectives of EJC, as well as on the curricular strategies to try to achieve these goals for the clients.

³¹LACOE did not need as many TJC facilitators as EJC facilitators, for two reasons. First, the TJC workshops were two weeks shorter and had only one-third as much classroom time as the EJC workshops. Second, all the GAIN clients who were not in the research sample were referred to EJC workshops.

Region 4 partnered with two organizations, Fosters and Career Options, to conduct the integrated vocational assessments for its EJC participants. In addition, Region 4 staff developed a service delivery network of education and training providers, child care resource and referral agencies, and social service providers. While none of these organizations had a formal contractual relationship with LACOE, they had worked with LACOE and its staff for years.

Funding

LACOE had a \$10 million fixed-rate contract with DPSS to provide GAIN group orientations, EJC and TJC workshops, and other job search services to GAIN clients. (The chief funding source for the GAIN program was the TANF grant that the county receives from the state.) According to LACOE and DPSS administrators, this level of funding was adequate to serve the client flow into both the EJC and the TJC workshops.

Program Flow and Operational Experiences

Intake and Referral

All unemployed TANF recipients who were mandated to participate in the GAIN program attended a group orientation session, where they completed an appraisal interview with a GSW. The vast majority of TANF clients were then randomly assigned by the GAIN Employment Activity and Reporting System (GEARS) into either the EJC or the TJC group. GSWs then contacted the local LACOE office and requested that the clients be scheduled to the appropriate type of job club (EJC or TJC) as their first program activity in GAIN.

Given that EJC and TJC functioned as part of GAIN — the mandatory welfare-to-work program — DPSS and LACOE staff did not have to recruit individuals into the job club workshops, as they would have needed to do in a voluntary postemployment program (as in most of the ERA sites). Neither DPSS nor LACOE staff attempted to engage sample members prior to the scheduled start date of their job club session. For example, neither type of staff called individuals to remind them of their upcoming job club workshop. If people did not show up for their workshop, then LACOE and DPSS staff rescheduled them for another session, typically one that started two to four weeks later. If people missed the second session, they were placed in noncompliance status. If they continued not to comply with the GAIN program, they were sanctioned; that is, they had their financial needs subtracted from their case's monthly TANF grant. If individuals started their workshop but did not complete it or find a job, LACOE staff would inform their GSWs, who would then refer them to a subsequent workshop session.

Regardless of research group assignment, individuals who completed their job club workshop without finding employment were then referred to vocational assessment as the next

step in the GAIN program. As noted above in this section, vocational assessment was integrated within the EJC workshop activities in Region 4. In Region 3, LACOE and DPSS utilized a sequential approach to referring EJC participants to assessment.³² TJC participants, however, were still referred to assessment using the sequential method.

Job Club Participation and Completion Outcomes

This section presents participation and completion rates in job club workshops for EJC and TJC sample members. It is important to note that the following participation percentages are derived not from either GEARS — the automated program tracking system for GAIN — or from the ERA 12-Month Survey of clients. These rates are based on information supplied by LACOE and DPSS line staff and supervisors during implementation research interviews in 2004.

- **EJC Workshops.** According to the LACOE job club facilitators, of the 60 to 90 individuals typically scheduled per workshop session, approximately 40 percent to 42 percent showed up for their session. This rate means that each EJC workshop had about 24 to 38 participants, on average. Among individuals who started an EJC workshop, completion rates — defined as the percentage of people who satisfactorily participated in all required weeks of their workshop session — ranged from 45 percent to 55 percent per session. The remaining individuals either found jobs while participating in job club or stopped attending without having found employment.

Throughout the EJC workshop observations, facilitators clearly and repeatedly emphasized to participants that all the activities they did worked toward developing a long-term career development plan and, as part of this plan, a concrete strategy for finding and obtaining targeted or promotable jobs in their occupational fields of interest. In the field research interviews, the EJC workshop facilitators maintained that EJC participants understood the targeted job search concept. In particular, they were able to articulate their career goal, the skills and experience that they needed to reach their goal, and how their targeted or promotable jobs would help them gain necessary skills and experience. However, according to the 12-month survey data, EJC as well as TJC respondents recalled that getting any job was the primary message in their workshop sessions. (“Impacts on Service Receipt, Job Search Messages, and Sample Member-Staff Contacts” are reported in the next major section.) This finding might suggest that the overall Work First orientation of the GAIN program — which stressed that clients needed to get

³²Late in 2004, LACOE and DPSS implemented the integrated approach in all of the GAIN regions.

a job — drowned out EJC’s more nuanced message that people should find a job in their field of interest.

Moreover, during the workshop observations in Week 2, EJC participants seemed to struggle to find a sufficient number of contacts for their targeted job in order to meet their daily quota of employer contacts. EJC facilitators — at times assisted by the DPSS job developers — attempted to help participants by comparing the lists of targeted and promotable jobs on their career development plans to positions that participants found in job listings, want ads, and other sources. Nonetheless, some individuals met their daily requirement by applying for any job, but primarily those types of jobs that would be considered skill-building positions. When asked about this issue, facilitators gave a range of responses. Many facilitators said that they preferred that participants make the appropriate type of employer contacts, even if they made fewer of them. Other facilitators indicated that although participants were permitted to make fewer appropriate contacts, they would still need to “make up” the missing contacts in later weeks of the workshop. Still other facilitators stated that participants needed to meet their daily quota of contacts, regardless of the type of job sought. Taken together, the range of these job search practices seem to undercut the program model’s goal of a step-down targeted job search.

- **TJC Workshops.** “Show-up” rates for the TJC workshops are similar to the rates for the EJC workshops: Of the 60 to 90 individuals typically scheduled per TJC workshop session, approximately 40 percent to 42 percent showed up for their session. This means that each TJC workshop — as was the case for each EJC workshop — had about 24 to 38 participants. Among those who started a TJC job club workshop, about 55 percent completed the three-week sessions. The remaining individuals either found jobs while participating in job club or stopped attending without having found employment.

Post-Job Club Program Flow

EJC participants who completed their vocational assessments met with their GSW at the conclusion of their workshop session. The GSW then referred them to the activities set forth in their assessment plans, which usually were education and training and remedial education programs but could also include additional job search or work experience positions, and the GSW arranged the supportive service payments that individuals needed in order to participate.

TJC participants who completed their workshop sessions met with their GSW, who then referred them to vocational assessment. Individuals who showed up for this referral went

through assessment activities that culminated in the development of a career development plan. As with the assessment plans of EJC participants, these plans could stipulate a range of activities but generally centered on referrals to education and training and remedial education services. Once their plans were formulated, TJC participants met again with their GSWs, who referred them to their postassessment activities and arranged the supportive service payments that they needed in order to participate.

Finding work ended the job club workshop for both EJC and TJC participants. If participants in either group found full-time jobs (32 hours or more per week), they were eligible for postemployment services and were referred to such a program.³³ If participants started a part-time job, they needed to increase their participation to 32 hours per week, usually by enrolling in education and training activities.

³³As noted in the report's Introduction, the Los Angeles Reach for Success (RFS) program was studied as part of the ERA evaluation. To ensure that the RFS program would not confound the analysis of the present study in Los Angeles, EJC and TJC sample members were referred to the standard postemployment services program if they entered full-time employment.

Impacts on Service Receipt, Job Search Messages, and Sample Member-Staff Contacts

This section uses results from the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) 12-Month Survey of clients to present findings on the receipt of services in Los Angeles County’s Enhanced Job Club (EJC) and Traditional Job Club (TJC) workshops, which were part of the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program — California’s mandatory welfare-to-work program for unemployed recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The report’s first two sections fully describe the two program models. The relative effectiveness of these two models is being studied as part of the national Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project.

Besides the findings on services received — such as job search, education, or training — this section assesses the types of messages that sample members remember receiving from program staff while engaging in job search. In addition, it describes the frequency, type, and subjects of interactions between sample members and staff from Los Angeles County’s Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) and its Office of Education (LACOE). Importantly, these measures are contrasted for sample members who were randomly assigned to the EJC and the TJC groups. Differences (or a lack of differences) between the groups on these measures are crucial to interpreting the impacts on employment retention and advancement that are presented in the report’s concluding section.

Box 1 explains how to interpret the impact tables presented in the remainder of the report, and Box 2 gives information about the participation measures used in the ERA evaluation.

Impacts on Participation in Job Search, Education, and Training

As is evident from the first two sections of the report, EJC sample members were not expected to be more likely than TJC sample members to participate in job search; individuals were randomly assigned to the two research groups just prior to their assignment to either an EJC workshop or a TJC workshop. As shown in Table 3, this expectation was borne out. The job search participation rate did not differ between the two groups: About 71 percent of both EJC and TJC survey respondents reported that they eventually participated in some type of job search activity (job club or individual job search) during the year following random assignment. (While interviews with staff — reported in the preceding section — suggest that many participants did not attend their initially assigned job club, the 12-month survey data suggest that the majority of respondents eventually did attend.)

Box 1

How to Read the Impact Tables in the ERA Evaluation

Most tables in this report use a similar format, illustrated below. The top rows show participation in job club for the EJC model and the TJC model: About 62 (62.1) percent of the EJC sample members and about 61 (61.2) percent of the TJC sample members participated in job club.

Because individuals were assigned randomly either to the EJC model or to the TJC model, the effects of the EJC model over and above those of the TJC model can be estimated by the difference in outcomes between the two groups. The “Difference” column in the table shows the differences between the two research groups’ participation rates — that is, the EJC model’s *impacts* on participation over the TJC model. For example, the impact on participating in a job club for four weeks or more can be calculated by subtracting 22.4 from 32.0, yielding 9.6.

Differences marked with asterisks are “statistically significant,” meaning that it is quite unlikely that the differences arose by chance. The number of asterisks indicates whether the impact is statistically significant at the 1 percent, 5 percent, or 10 percent level (the lower the level, the less likely that the impact is due to chance). For example, as shown below, the EJC model had a statistically significant impact of 9.6 percentage points at the 1 percent level on participating in a job club for four weeks or more. (One asterisk corresponds to the 10 percent level; two asterisks, the 5 percent level; and three asterisks, the 1 percent level.) The p-value shows the exact levels of significance.

The bottom rows show participation outcomes among those who participated in each type of activity in the two research groups. Measures shown in italics are considered “nonexperimental” because they include only a subset of the full report sample. Because EJC participants in education, for example, may have different characteristics than TJC participants in education, differences in these outcomes may not be attributable to EJC-TJC model differences. Statistical significance tests are not conducted for nonexperimental measures.

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

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever participated in job club (%)	62.1	61.2	0.9	0.832
For 1 week	10.2	10.5	-0.3	0.918
For 2 weeks	10.9	11.2	-0.3	0.903
For 3 weeks	9.0	17.2	-8.1	*** 0.003
For 4 weeks or more	32.0	22.4	9.6	*** 0.009
<i>Among those who participated in each type of activity:</i>				
<i>Average number of weeks participating in</i>				
<i>Job search activities</i>	7.6	9.0	-1.4	
<i>Education/training activities</i>	20.4	18.9	1.5	
<i>Unpaid work</i>	11.3	23.2	-11.9	

Box 2

Measuring Participation in ERA

In order to interpret the results of a random assignment evaluation, it is critical to understand the “dose” of services that each research group receives. In many studies, this is relatively straightforward, because the “treatment” is easy to measure (for example, the number of hours of training or the dollar value of incentive payments). In contrast, in many of the ERA programs — including the EJC-TJC test — services are delivered mostly through interactions, during which staff advise, coach, or counsel participants. This type of service is inherently difficult to measure. In addition, to accurately measure a program’s impact on service receipt, it is important to collect data in the same way for all research groups in a site. In practice, this means that survey questions cannot refer to the EJC or TJC models in particular but, instead, must ask in general about the kinds of services provided or messages received.

For the EJC-TJC test, MDRC sought to measure service and message receipt in four main ways, using the ERA 12-Month Survey. Each approach has both strengths and limitations, and each contributes to the overall analysis:

- First, the survey asked whether respondents participated in “traditional” employment-related services, such as job search workshops and training classes, and how many weeks they participated. These services are relatively easy to measure. (See Box 1.)
- Second, the survey asked about messages that clients received from program staff, regarding, for example, whether to hold out for a good job during job search. These types of questions help to determine whether the EJC and TJC workshops actually delivered different messages to clients, but they provide only crude measures of the extent to which these messages were conveyed.
- Third, the survey asked how frequently respondents had had contact with staff members from employment or social service agencies and where those contacts took place. These questions are more central to the ERA programs, but it is difficult to determine which types of staff the respondents were referring to. For example, contact with a worker who determines food stamp eligibility is likely to be quite different from contact with a job coach. Moreover, it may be difficult for respondents to recall the number of such contacts over a one-year period.
- Fourth, the survey asked whether respondents received assistance in a variety of specific areas, some of which — such as “finding a better job while working” — are central to ERA. These questions are fairly straightforward, but they do not provide any information about the amount of service that was received in each area.

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Table 3

Impacts on Participation in Job Search, Education, Training, and Other Activities
Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever participated in any activity ^a (%)	77.3	76.6	0.7	0.840
Participated in any employment-related activity ^b (%)	71.4	70.3	1.1	0.772
Participated in a job search activity	70.8	69.9	0.9	0.812
Ever participated in job club (%)	62.1	61.2	0.9	0.832
For 1 week	10.2	10.5	-0.3	0.918
For 2 weeks	10.9	11.2	-0.3	0.903
For 3 weeks	9.0	17.2	-8.1 ***	0.003
For 4 weeks or more	32.0	22.4	9.6 ***	0.009
Average number of weeks participating in job club	2.5	2.2	0.3	0.287
Ever participated in individual job search (%)	48.2	48.9	-0.7	0.875
For 1 week	5.8	4.4	1.4	0.455
For 2 weeks	10.5	11.2	-0.7	0.795
For 3 weeks	6.5	10.4	-3.9 *	0.097
For 4 weeks or more	25.4	22.9	2.5	0.473
Average number of weeks participating in individual job search	2.9	4.1	-1.2 *	0.077
Participated in an education/training activity (%)	36.3	41.4	-5.1	0.203
ABE/GED	11.2	12.9	-1.7	0.518
ESL	6.7	4.8	1.8	0.319
College courses	13.5	17.5	-4.0	0.166
Vocational training	14.8	13.8	0.9	0.745
Ever participated in unpaid work (%)	3.8	2.1	1.6	0.246
Ever participated in an employment or education activity while working (%)	19.5	19.3	0.2	0.959
Average number of weeks participating in:				
Job search activities	5.4	6.3	-0.9	0.225
Education/training activities	7.4	7.8	-0.4	0.735
Unpaid work	0.4	0.5	-0.1	0.837
<i>Among those who participated in each type of activity:</i>				
<i>Average number of weeks participating in</i>				
Job search activities	7.6	9.0	-1.4	
Education/training activities	20.4	18.9	1.5	
Unpaid work	11.3	23.2	-11.9	
Sample size (total = 608)	311	297		

(continued)

Table 3 (continued)

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

NOTES: See Appendix C.

^a"Any activity" includes employment-related activities, education/training activities, life skills, and other types of activities.

^bEmployment-related activities include job search activities, unpaid jobs, and on-the-job training.

Given that the EJC workshops could last as long as five weeks for those assigned to them and that the TJC workshops could last only three weeks, it is surprising that both types of survey respondents reported similar lengths of stay in job club: EJC sample members participated in job club for an average of 2.5 weeks, while TJC sample members participated in job club for an average of 2.2 weeks. Some differences in length of stay are apparent, however, in the distribution of weeks of job club attended: EJC sample members were less likely than TJC sample members to attend three weeks of job club, while EJC sample members were more likely than TJC sample members to attend four weeks or more. Note that the fifth week of EJC was voluntary and consisted of individualized job search assistance for participants who wanted additional help finding work. It should be kept in mind as well that sample members would stop attending job club if they found a full-time job, although some may have dropped out for other reasons. (Table 2 and Figure 2 compare the main features and activities of the two job clubs.)

Some differences in length of stay were also found for individual job search: EJC sample members reported participating for 1.2 weeks less than TJC sample members. It is likely that survey respondents interpreted "individual job search" to consist of the time that they spent during the workshops when they *independently* looked for jobs. This would have started in Week 2 of the five-week EJC workshops and in Week 1 of the three-week TJC workshops. Notably, however, the total number of hours that participants were required to search independently for jobs during the workshops was roughly the same for EJC and TJC sample members.

The most likely explanation for the reported differences in job search participation (in the weeks of job club attendance or in the weeks of individual job search participation) is that, as discussed in the concluding section, EJC sample members tended to find jobs following random assignment somewhat more quickly than did TJC sample members. Thus, for some EJC sample members, their initial spells in job club (and the individual job search that was part of it) might have ended earlier than the initial spells of their TJC counterparts. For other EJC sample members who did not find jobs, their job club spells lasted longer than those of their TJC counterparts, reflecting the five-week duration of EJC.

EJC sample members were expected to be more likely than TJC sample members to participate in an education or training activity. This is because there are two GAIN regions in

the study — Region 3 (San Gabriel Valley) and Region 4 (downtown Los Angeles and the northern part of South Central Los Angeles) — and Region 4 implemented a vocational assessment in Week 4 of the EJC workshop. This assessment was designed to facilitate individuals’ involvement in vocational training and college activities. (EJC participants in Region 3, as well as TJC participants in both regions, needed to wait until after they had finished their job club without finding a job to have a vocational assessment and to be referred to education or training.) As shown in Table 3, however, there is no statistically significant difference between the two research groups in individuals’ likelihood of participating in education or training during the year following random assignment: 36 percent of the EJC survey respondents participated in education or training activities, compared with 41 percent of the TJC respondents. It should be kept in mind, however, that very few EJC sample members were eligible for the vocational assessments, since they occurred only in Region 4 and only for those who had not obtained a job by the end of Week 3. Overall, survey data suggest that only 31 percent of the EJC sample members in Region 4 — about 15 percent of all EJC sample members — participated in more than three weeks of job search in the year following random assignment and, thus, would have been eligible for a Week 4 “integrated” vocational assessment. (Notably, the education and training participation that was captured by the 12-month survey includes education and training programs in which individuals might have enrolled on their own, as well as programs to which DPSS staff might have referred clients as a result of a vocational assessment.)

Equal proportions of EJC and TJC sample members — about 19 percent — also reported that they had ever participated in an employment-related activity (including education) while they were working. As mentioned in the report’s Introduction, GAIN clients were strongly encouraged by DPSS and LACOE staff to blend part-time work with participation in education or training, to enable clients to fulfill their GAIN 32-hour weekly participation mandate.

Impacts on the Job Search Messages Received

While EJC sample members and TJC sample members were expected to attend job clubs at similar rates, the “messages” that they received in the job clubs were supposed to differ. According to the 12-month survey data, EJC sample members, compared with their TJC counterparts, did remember slightly different messages, in some respects, but not in many respects. And the overriding message remembered by respondents in both research groups was one urging them to “get a job quickly” — a message that is pervasive in Los Angeles County’s Jobs-First GAIN program.

The 12-month survey investigated the messages that individuals received from two types of DPSS staff: from job club staff and from any type of program staff. In addition, the survey questions distinguished between messages received while respondents were looking or preparing for employment and those received while respondents were working.

As shown in the first panel of Table 4, EJC and TJC sample members were equally likely to report that job club staff encouraged them to hold out for a good job while they were searching for jobs. The two groups of individuals were also equally likely to recall that job club staff encouraged them to get a job as quickly as possible. Notably, in both groups, over four in ten sample members recalled that they received this type of encouragement “a lot” from job club staff. While these results are somewhat surprising, it could be that the chief difference in the messages delivered in the two types of job clubs pertained to getting a job in one’s field of interest or field of fascination — a concept that might not be directly measured by a survey question asking about “good” jobs (specifically, jobs that paid a high wage). Nevertheless, this survey result is puzzling, particularly given that EJC workshop staff reported, in interviews, that EJC participants appeared to have clearly grasped the concept of targeted job search.

Questions on the 12-month survey inquiring about messages that clients received from any program staff member (including job club staff) while they were looking for a job or preparing for employment were worded slightly differently and were aimed at measuring whether clients were encouraged to do certain things, as opposed to the extent to which they received encouragement to do something. For many of these questions (see the second panel of Table 4), the two groups reported no differences. EJC survey respondents, however, were more likely than TJC survey respondents to agree “a lot” that program staff encouraged them to hold out for a good job (although only 13 percent of the EJC respondents reported this) and to agree “a lot” that program staff encouraged them to go to school or training (23 percent of the EJC respondents reported this).

Finally, as shown in the last panel of Table 4, no EJC-TJC differences were found in the proportion of survey respondents who recalled receiving “a lot” of encouragement in various areas from program staff while they were working. This is not surprising, since only the LACOE job coach in Region 4 attempted to stay in contact with EJC participants who had found jobs, to facilitate job retention.

Interactions Between Sample Members and Staff

Frequency and Intensity of Contacts

Compared with TJC sample members, EJC sample members were not expected to have more contact with case managers or staff from employment programs. The nature of the two groups’ job club experiences was expected to differ, but the overall frequency and intensity of their contacts with staff were not.

Nonetheless, Table 5 shows a difference between the two research groups in the frequency of contacts between sample members and any case manager or staff member of an em-

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Table 4

Impacts on Messages Relating to Job Search

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome (%)	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
<u>Messages received from job club staff</u>				
Job club staff encouraged clients to hold out for a good job, such as one that paid a high wage				
A lot	22.1	18.9	3.2	0.340
A little	22.3	23.1	-0.8	0.824
A lot or a little	44.5	42.0	2.4	0.547
Job club staff encouraged clients to get a job as quickly as possible				
A lot	41.7	44.9	-3.3	0.430
A little	13.1	12.9	0.1	0.958
A lot or a little	54.7	57.8	-3.1	0.455
Job club staff focused on how clients could hold a job once one was obtained				
A lot	33.6	37.6	-4.0	0.317
A little	17.1	15.5	1.6	0.593
A lot or a little	50.7	53.0	-2.3	0.574
<u>Messages received from any program staff while clients were looking for a job or preparing for employment</u>				
Staff encouraged clients to hold out for a good job, such as one that pays a high wage				
A lot	12.7	7.6	5.1 **	0.044
A little	8.1	8.4	-0.3	0.907
A lot or a little	20.8	16.0	4.8	0.132
Staff encouraged client to take the first job that came along				
Agree a lot	16.1	14.1	2.1	0.488
Agree a little	9.1	7.0	2.1	0.358
Agree a lot or a little	25.2	21.1	4.1	0.238
Staff encouraged clients to focus on long-term career goals				
A lot	20.9	15.9	5.0	0.119
A little	6.1	7.8	-1.7	0.424
A lot or a little	27.0	23.6	3.3	0.353

(continued)

Table 4 (continued)

Outcome (%)	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Staff encouraged clients to go to school or to get training				
A lot	22.7	15.3	7.4 **	0.024
A little	4.0	7.6	-3.7 *	0.057
A lot or a little	26.7	22.9	3.7	0.304
<u>Messages received from any program staff while clients were working^a</u>				
Staff encouraged clients to go to school or to get training	4.5	3.1	1.4	0.369
Staff encouraged client to get a better job	5.5	3.4	2.1	0.215
Staff encouraged clients to focus on long-term career goals	5.8	4.0	1.8	0.305
Staff talked to clients about different ways to find a better job within their field	6.0	3.5	2.4	0.170
Staff provided clients with specific job leads	3.6	3.6	0.0	0.976
Sample size (total = 608)	311	297		

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

NOTES: See Appendix C.

^aResponses are shown only for those who responded "agree a lot" to the statement.

ployment program, as reported on the survey: Approximately 42 percent of the EJC survey respondents reported any contacts since random assignment, compared with 54 percent of the TJC survey respondents.³⁴ This difference of 12 percentage points is statistically significant. It is unclear why this difference occurred. As is discussed in the next section of the report, the two groups did not differ in the amount of time that they received TANF in the year following random assignment, and thus their opportunities for having contact should have been the same. The difference could possibly reflect quicker job-finding among the EJC group, compared with the TJC group, immediately following random assignment (this is also discussed in the concluding section). In addition, EJC group members, who, as described above, spent less time in job club than TJC group members, may have had such limited contact with program staff that they were less likely to remember and report their contact.

³⁴These statistics are undoubtedly underestimates of contact with staff, as higher percentages of sample members participated in job clubs and other GAIN program activities.

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Table 5

Impacts on Contacts with Program Staff

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Any contacts with case manager/employment program since random assignment (%)	42.1	53.9	-11.9 ***	0.003
Average number of contacts with staff/case manager	7.3	7.8	-0.5	0.745
In person	3.1	3.1	0.0	0.958
By telephone	4.2	4.7	-0.4	0.656
Talked with staff/case manager in past 4 weeks (%)	16.1	20.1	-4.0	0.212
Ever met with staff/case manager (%)	44.2	47.0	-2.7	0.499
At home	3.9	1.7	2.2	0.108
At workplace	3.8	2.1	1.7	0.216
At staff/case manager's office	42.4	45.5	-3.0	0.449
At school/training program	14.2	14.8	-0.6	0.827
At other places	1.2	1.8	-0.6	0.563
Staff/case manager talked with respondent's employer (%)				
Never	91.7	93.3	-1.6	0.467
Once or twice	4.8	3.7	1.1	0.517
More than twice	2.3	2.0	0.3	0.785
Don't know if the case manager talked with an employer	1.2	1.1	0.2	0.845
<i>Among those employed since random assignment:^a</i>				
<i>Staff/case manager talked with respondent's employer (%)</i>				
<i>Never</i>	<i>88.4</i>	<i>90.1</i>	<i>-1.8</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>Once or twice</i>	<i>8.4</i>	<i>5.0</i>	<i>3.5</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>More than twice</i>	<i>1.8</i>	<i>3.6</i>	<i>-1.9</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>Don't know</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>0.2</i>	<i>NA</i>
Sample size (total = 608)	311	297		

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

NOTES: See Appendix C.

^aEmployment is calculated using the ERA 12-Month Survey and includes those who reported employment since random assignment. It includes formal employment and "odd jobs."

There were no EJC-TJC differences on other measures of contact with program staff: Survey respondents in both research groups averaged seven to eight contacts with case managers or program staff during the one-year follow-up period, and EJC and TJC survey respondents did not differ in terms of whether their case manager/staff contacts occurred in person or by telephone or where the contacts took place. Finally — as would be expected, since the Los Angeles Jobs-First GAIN program did not include this program feature — few survey respondents

in either research group reported that LACOE or DPSS program staff had had contact with their employers since random assignment.³⁵

Types of Help Received

The EJC and TJC survey respondents also reported similar likelihoods of receiving help with support services, basic needs, public benefits, job preparation, and job retention and advancement issues in the year following random assignment. As shown in Table 6, there are no statistically significant differences on almost all the detailed “help” measures in the survey. Overall, individuals in both research groups were most likely to report that they received help with public benefits (most likely from TANF eligibility workers) and least likely to report that they received help with retention and advancement. It should be kept in mind, however, that, by and large, the LACOE and DPSS staff who were associated with both research groups in the year following random assignment did not focus on providing services to people while they were in jobs.

Subgroup Findings

The descriptions of the EJC and TJC workshops in the second section of the report (see Table 2 and Figure 2) suggest that the two models might have operated differently for individuals who had different characteristics. Using survey data, this section examines whether there were any differences in participation in job club or education and training, contacts with staff, and job search messages received for people with different characteristics.

The step-down job search approach might have resonated more with those participants who did not have recent work history, as suggested by the following findings. Among those who were not employed in the quarter prior to random assignment, many EJC-TJC participation differences were the same as those found for the full sample, but some were not. As was the case with the full sample, EJC sample members in this subgroup, compared with their TJC counterparts, participated in job clubs for about the same number of weeks, were less likely to report contacts with a case manager or staff member, were similarly likely to participate in education or training, and were equally likely to report receiving help with support services, basic needs, public benefits, job preparation, and job retention and advancement issues. But, to a degree greater than in the full sample, EJC sample members who did not have recent prior employment were more likely than their TJC counterparts to agree “a lot” that program staff encouraged them to hold out for good job and to go to school or get training (see Figure 3). Thus,

³⁵The ERA test in this particular site compared the effectiveness of two different approaches to operating job clubs and, in line with this, examined whether job retention was greater for those subject to one job club approach versus the other (as detailed in the concluding section of the report). No special data collection efforts were undertaken to examine why individuals did not retain the jobs they obtained while in the job clubs — if, in fact, they left these jobs during the follow-up period.

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Table 6

Impacts on Areas in Which Respondents Received Help

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome (%)	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Received help with support services	46.4	48.4	-2.0	0.630
Finding or paying for child care	33.8	35.6	-1.8	0.636
Finding or paying for transportation	37.4	40.7	-3.3	0.409
Received help with basic needs	42.1	45.1	-3.0	0.464
Housing problems	6.4	10.2	-3.8 *	0.089
Access to medical treatment	36.2	40.2	-4.1	0.313
Financial emergency	6.7	7.4	-0.7	0.747
Received help with public benefits	59.7	63.1	-3.4	0.405
Getting Medicaid	55.7	58.2	-2.5	0.538
Getting food stamps	49.6	54.1	-4.5	0.273
Received help with job preparation	47.4	46.0	1.4	0.735
Enrolling in job readiness or training	31.1	27.4	3.8	0.308
Looking for a job	36.1	30.5	5.6	0.154
Finding clothes, tools, or supplies for work	30.5	26.6	3.9	0.293
Received help with retention/advancement	21.9	18.8	3.1	0.355
Finding a better job while working	4.6	6.6	-2.0	0.296
Other activities while working ^a	5.6	3.6	2.0	0.247
Career assessment	15.9	12.0	3.9	0.175
Dealing with problems on the job	5.4	5.2	0.2	0.919
Addressing a personal problem that makes it hard to keep a job	6.9	4.9	2.0	0.303
<i>Among those employed since random assignment:^b</i>				
<i>Received help with retention/advancement</i>	<i>38.0</i>	<i>34.6</i>	<i>3.5</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i> Finding a better job while working</i>	<i>9.6</i>	<i>11.0</i>	<i>-1.4</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i> Other activities while working^a</i>	<i>11.5</i>	<i>6.4</i>	<i>5.1</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i> Career assessment</i>	<i>26.8</i>	<i>24.3</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i> Dealing with problems on the job</i>	<i>8.7</i>	<i>10.2</i>	<i>-1.5</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i> Addressing a personal problem that makes it hard to keep a job</i>	<i>12.5</i>	<i>10.8</i>	<i>1.8</i>	<i>NA</i>
Sample size (total = 608)	311	297		

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

NOTES: See Appendix C.

^a This measure includes other activities such as life skills and child development classes.

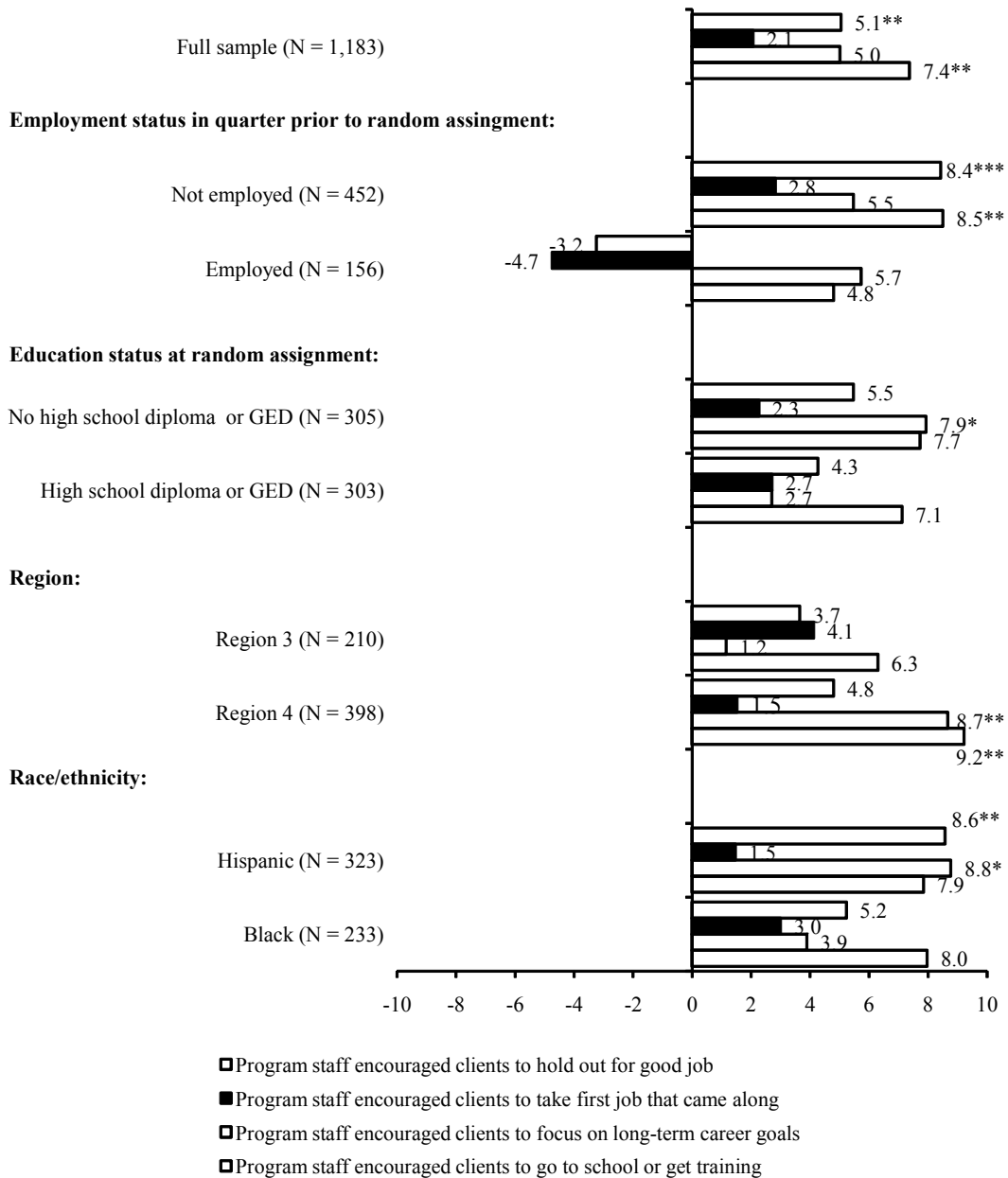
^b Employment is calculated using the ERA 12-Month Survey and includes those who reported employment since random assignment. It includes formal employment and "odd jobs."

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Figure 3

Impacts on Messages Relating to Job Search,
for Selected Subgroups of Single Parents

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club



(continued)

Figure 3 (continued)

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

NOTES: See Appendix C.

Responses are shown only for those who responded "agree a lot" to the statement.

it appears that that the EJC workshop's intended message of the importance of holding out for a job in one's field of interest may have been heard more clearly by those without recent work history.

EJC-TJC differences in reported "encouragement" were also found among those without a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) certificate, among those living in GAIN Region 4, and among Hispanics: For sample members in all three of these subgroups, a larger percentage of the EJC group, compared with the TJC group, recalled being encouraged to focus on long-term career goals. Not surprisingly, for those living in Region 4, a larger percentage of EJC sample members than TJC sample members also reported that program staff strongly encouraged them to go to school or get training. Lastly, among Hispanics, EJC sample members also were more likely than TJC sample members to recall that program staff encouraged them to hold out for good jobs.

Impacts on Employment Retention and Advancement, Public Assistance, and Income

The Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project is examining two job club models used in the Los Angeles Jobs-First Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program — California’s mandatory welfare-to-work program for unemployed recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). GAIN Regions 3 (San Gabriel Valley) and 4 (downtown Los Angeles and the northern part of South Central Los Angeles) are included in the study. The report’s first two sections describe the two job club models. The third section presents findings based on the ERA 12-Month Survey of clients regarding service receipt, job search messages, and contacts between program staff and the study’s sample members, it makes comparisons between those who were randomly assigned to the Enhanced Job Club (EJC) or to the Traditional Job Club (TJC).

This section of the report analyzes whether the EJC model produced improved employment and earnings outcomes compared with the TJC model. It also examines the effects that the EJC model had on receipt of TANF and food stamps and on combined income from earnings and public assistance, relative to the TJC model. The analysis uses statewide unemployment insurance (UI) wage data and automated TANF and food stamp payment data to compare the outcomes for the EJC and the TJC group members for a year and half, or six quarters, following each sample member’s date of random assignment. Using data from the ERA 12-Month Survey, this section also examines whether the EJC model — when compared with the TJC model — had a higher percentage of sample members who found desirable jobs, that is, jobs with full-time hours, higher wages, or better benefits.

Background: The Expected Impacts

The goal of the EJC model was to improve on the TJC model, which focused on helping welfare recipients find a job — any type of job — quickly. As noted in the report’s Introduction, findings from the Los Angeles Jobs-First GAIN evaluation show that the job clubs that previously operated in Los Angeles were successful in moving people to work who otherwise would not have found jobs on their own, and the job clubs also helped people who would have eventually found work on their own to find a job sooner.³⁶ However, despite the employment increases, many people did not find employment in jobs with desirable hours, high wages, or advancement opportunities. Furthermore, many people who found jobs had problems retaining them.

³⁶Freedman, Knab, Gennetian, and Navarro (2000).

The EJC model was designed to improve on the TJC model by assisting people to find a career-track job by following a “step-down” approach. In its first phase, participants were encouraged to find “targeted jobs” (the highest-paying jobs that they could find in their field of interest); that, in turn, was expected to increase job stability. If participants were unable to find targeted jobs, they were then encouraged to find “promotable jobs” (jobs in their field of interest that offered the potential of career advancement). The expectation was that this type of job search approach would lead to long-term increases in EJC group members’ earnings — above the levels of the TJC group members’ earnings. If EJC group members were unable to attain either targeted or promotable jobs after three weeks in the job club program, they were encouraged to expand their job search to include “skill-building’ jobs” or any part-time job.

During Week 3, participants were also referred to vocational assessment activities. (The second section of the report describes the structure and weekly activities of the two job clubs; see Table 2 and Figure 2.) Note that, in Region 3, if participants opted to stay in the EJC program during Week 3, they were not referred to vocational assessment until after Week 5. In both Region 3 and 4, if sample members found part-time employment, they were then encouraged to find a suitable balance between education or training and work. This was expected to help participants enhance their job opportunities.

Although the EJC model might be expected to produce better effects than the TJC model, a number of factors may influence the EJC model’s effects on employment retention and advancement. As reported in the preceding section, the TJC group members received many of the same services that the EJC group members received. For example, the same proportions of TJC and EJC group members received assistance with employment retention and advancement activities. The EJC model may still result in improved employment retention and advancement impacts, compared with the TJC model, if a large number of EJC group members obtained jobs either in their career of choice or with higher earnings or career advancement potential. In the 12-month survey, however, as discussed in the preceding section, EJC and TJC group members reported overwhelmingly that the main message that they received from staff in both job club models was to “get a job as quickly as possible.”

Labor market conditions may also play a role in the level of gains that the EJC model is able to achieve relative to the TJC model. People whose skill levels are low are likely to obtain low-wage jobs in which work hours are very unstable. Desirable jobs — which are those with higher earnings, benefits, or career advancement opportunities — may not have been accessible to many EJC participants. Furthermore, four weeks of job search may not have been enough time to find these types of jobs.

The Estimated Impacts on Economic Measures

Outcomes for the TJC Group

Assessing the outcomes of the TJC model allows one to understand the level of outcomes on which the EJC model was trying to improve. This study targeted unemployed TANF recipients in Los Angeles County who were mandated to participate in the GAIN program. Theoretically, then, the TJC group outcomes should resemble those found for the program group in the Los Angeles Jobs-First GAIN evaluation, a study that targeted a similar group. As noted in the report's Introduction, results from the GAIN evaluation that was conducted by MDRC — which measured the effects of a program mandating job search compared with a situation where individuals were not under such a mandate — found large employment effects for the program group, whose members also increased their earnings as a result of the increase in employment. Over a two-year period, their employment rate increased by 10 percentage points, and their earnings rose by \$1,627.³⁷ After the initial boost in employment, however, the employment impacts decreased as some people lost their jobs. Yet employment remained steady for the program group in Year 2 of the follow-up period, as some people remained employed, and others found new jobs. Because California pays relatively high TANF benefits and uses generous rules for disregarding earnings when calculating monthly grants, 62 percent were still receiving welfare at the end of the two-year follow-up period.

The overall outcome patterns for the TJC group in this study are consistent with the outcomes for the program group in the Jobs-First GAIN evaluation. As expected, those sample members who were subject to the TJC model had a large increase in employment after random assignment. About a quarter of them were employed in a job that was covered by California's unemployment insurance (UI) system during the quarter of random assignment; 40 percent were employed in the first follow-up quarter; and half were employed by the end of the follow-up period (see Appendix Table E.2).³⁸ Overall, a relatively high percentage (73 percent) of TJC group members were employed throughout the follow-up period. However, employment stability was a problem, as only 33 percent were employed for four consecutive quarters during the follow-up period (see Table 7). Earnings for TJC group members were low — on average, only about \$5,000 during the first year after the study entry (Appendix Table E.1). (This average includes zeros for those who did not work at all during this period.) Average earnings for those who worked in the last quarter of follow-up were \$3,784, or about \$15,000 per year (not shown).

³⁷Freedman, Knab, Gennetian, and Navarro (2000).

³⁸Note that this does not include employment outside California or in jobs not covered by the UI system (for example, self-employment, "off-the-books" jobs, some agricultural jobs, and federal government jobs).

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Table 7

**Impacts on UI-Covered Employment,
Public Assistance, and Measured Income
Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club**

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
<u>Quarters 2-7</u>				
Ever employed (%)	72.6	73.0	-0.4	0.883
Average quarterly employment rate (%)	47.4	45.8	1.6	0.440
Number of quarters employed	2.8	2.7	0.1	0.441
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	37.2	33.1	4.1	0.128
Earnings (\$)	9,103	8,730	373	0.552
Earned \$15,000 or more (%)	25.8	23.5	2.3	0.347
Number of months received TANF	13.3	13.3	0	0.838
Amount of TANF received (\$)	7,596	7,434	162	0.448
Number of months received food stamps	13.9	13.5	0.3	0.265
Amount of food stamps received (\$)	3,918	3,849	68	0.505
Total measured income ^a (\$)	20,617	20,014	603	0.299
<u>Quarter 7</u>				
Ever employed (%)	50.6	49.5	1.1	0.690
Earnings (\$)	1,834	1,873	-39	0.788
Earned \$2,500 or more (%)	31.7	32.5	-0.8	0.770
Ever received TANF (%)	63.9	63.6	0.3	0.920
Amount of TANF received (\$)	983	892	90 *	0.071
Ever received food stamps (%)	66.1	64.4	1.6	0.540
Amount of food stamps received (\$)	533	511	22	0.404
Total measured income ^a (\$)	3,350	3,277	73	0.604
Sample size (total = 1,183)	598	585		

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from UI, TANF, and food stamp administrative records from the State of California.

NOTES: See Appendix B.

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

^aThis measure represents the sum of UI earnings, TANF, and food stamps.

As described in the report's second section (Figure 2), TJC lasted for a maximum of three weeks. During this time, TJC group members were assisted in finding employment as quickly as possible. According to the survey data, over half of those who became employed found jobs three weeks after study entry. Among those who worked at any time during the 12-month follow-up period covered by the survey, 27 percent found their first job within the first month; 38 percent found a job within two to four months; and 35 percent found a job five months or later after random assignment (not shown). Their first job after random assignment had an average hourly wage of \$8.50 and an average work week of 32 hours (not shown). TJC group members who were working at the time of the 12-month survey interview earned, on average, \$9.70 per hour and typically worked full time (Table 8), indicating that some people advanced in the labor market.

As expected, all TJC group members were receiving TANF at the time of random assignment (Appendix Table E.3). By the end of the 18-month follow-up period, a large percentage of the TJC group members were still receiving TANF (64 percent). Furthermore, the same proportion of TJC group members were also receiving food stamps — down from 90 percent during the quarter of random assignment (Appendix Table E.4).

Impacts on Employment Retention and Advancement

- **The EJC model did not achieve greater overall employment and earnings gains, compared with the TJC model, during the follow-up period.**

Figure 4 shows the outcomes on UI-covered employment and earnings for the EJC model and the TJC model over time. The EJC model significantly increased employment, compared with the TJC model, during the quarter after individuals entered the study (also see Appendix Table E.5). In addition, the program decreased the time between study entry and the quarter of first employment, which indicates that, contrary to the program design, the EJC group members found a job more quickly than did TJC group members (not shown). Although it is unclear why this occurred, two of the possible explanations are: (1) The systematic approach of EJC to job search may have assisted sample members find a job more quickly; (2) EJC group members, who had to attend more hours of job club each week than TJC group members, may have found a job more quickly in order to avoid the additional classroom hours. The types of data that would substantiate either of these possible explanations are not available. Notably, after Quarter 2, the quarterly employment rates for EJC and TJC are similar.

Table 7 shows the effects of the EJC model compared with the TJC model on several outcome measures for the full follow-up period (Quarters 2 through 7) and for the last quarter of the follow-up (Quarter 7). During the full follow-up period, sample members in the EJC and TJC group had a similar likelihood of ever finding a UI-covered job: About three-quarters of both groups worked at a UI-covered job. Employment stability is examined by reviewing the

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Table 8

Impacts on Job Characteristics of the Current Job

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
<u>Employment status</u>				
Ever employed since random assignment (%)	56.5	57.0	-0.5	0.898
Currently employed	37.2	36.2	1.0	0.796
No longer employed	19.3	20.8	-1.5	0.646
Current working status: (%)				
Full time	27.1	27.1	0.0	0.999
Part time	10.0	9.0	1.0	0.676
Currently employed at a "good job" ^a (%)	15.4	14.2	1.2	0.685
<u>Hours</u>				
Average hours per week	12.8	12.6	0.2	0.863
Total hours per week (%)				
less than 30	10.0	9.0	1.0	0.681
30-34	3.3	5.4	-2.1	0.206
35-44	20.4	17.8	2.6	0.416
45 or more	2.8	4.2	-1.5	0.336
Average hourly wage (%)				
Less than \$5	1.3	1.4	-0.1	0.880
\$5.00 - \$6.99	5.3	6.3	-1.0	0.603
\$7.00 - \$8.99	14.2	11.8	2.4	0.382
\$9.00 or more	16.5	16.8	-0.3	0.926
<i>Average hourly wage among those employed (\$)</i>	<i>9.40</i>	<i>9.70</i>	<i>-0.30</i>	<i>NA</i>
<u>Earnings</u>				
Average weekly earnings (\$)	121	123	-2	0.911
Total earnings per week (%)				
Less than \$200	8.2	6.9	1.3	0.567
\$201-\$300	10.7	9.7	1.0	0.703
\$301-\$500	14.5	14.2	0.3	0.916
\$500 or more	3.8	5.5	-1.7	0.340
<i>Average weekly earnings among those employed (\$)</i>	<i>324</i>	<i>339</i>	<i>-15</i>	<i>NA</i>
<u>Benefits</u>				
Employer-provided benefits at current job (%)				
Sick days with full pay	12.9	13.1	-0.2	0.931
Paid vacation	16.2	17.1	-0.8	0.784
Paid holidays other than Christmas and New Year	16.2	15.1	1.1	0.716
Dental benefits	11.4	12.4	-1.1	0.692
A retirement plan	12.9	12.5	0.4	0.878

(continued)

Table 8 (continued)

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Employer-provided benefits at current job (%)				
A health care plan or medical insurance	13.4	15.3	-2.0	0.492
Schedule^b (%)				
Regular	20.3	20.6	-0.4	0.912
Split	1.2	1.8	-0.6	0.538
Irregular	2.3	4.3	-2.0	0.183
Evening shift	3.7	3.9	-0.3	0.866
Night shift	2.3	2.0	0.2	0.842
Rotating shift	4.1	3.2	0.9	0.561
Other schedule	0.7	0.0	0.7	0.158
Odd job	2.3	0.6	1.7 *	0.094
Jobs skills index^c	0.29	0.30	-0.01	0.453
Percentage reporting that job requires each at least monthly (%)				
Reading and writing skills	25.1	27.2	-2.1	0.557
Work with computers	19.1	18.5	0.6	0.839
Arithmetic	19.6	18.3	1.3	0.701
Customer contact	33.9	30.2	3.7	0.330
Sample size (total = 608)	311	297		

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

NOTES: See Appendix C.

^aThis definition of a "good job" was adapted from Johnson and Corcoran (2003). A "good job" is one that offers 35 or more hours per week and either (1) pays \$7.00 or more per hour, and offers health insurance, or (2) pays \$8.50 or more per hour.

^bA split shift is defined as one consisting of two distinct periods each day. An irregular schedule is defined as one that changes from day to day. A rotating shift is one that changes regularly from days to evenings to nights.

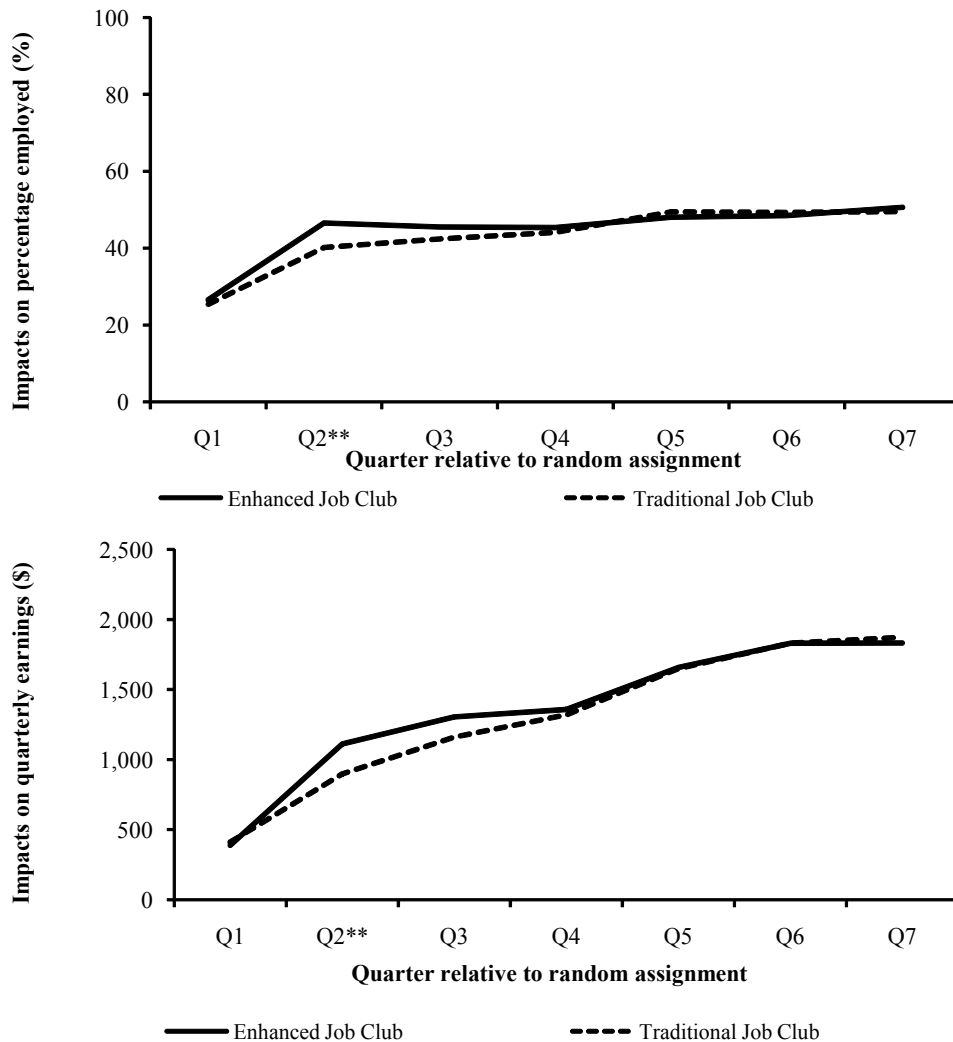
^cThe job skills index was created by regressing the "good job" measure on 10 dummy variables that indicate whether sample members possess specific job skills. This regression generated weights that ranked each skill based on its association with working at a good job. Each sample member was given a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

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Figure 4

Impacts of the Enhanced Job Club on UI-Covered Employment and Earnings Over Time

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from UI administrative records from the State of California.

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

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

percentage of sample members who were working for several quarters consecutively during the follow-up period. As noted above, the EJC model's strategy for job retention was to assist sample members in finding jobs in their field of interest, which hopefully would lead to their wanting to stay in these jobs. The EJC model significantly increased the percentage of sample members who were employed for four consecutive quarters in Year 1, by 4.2 percentage points over the TJC group members' average of 23.9 percent (Appendix Table E.1). However, the increase in employment stability disappeared when the additional two quarters of follow-up were examined (Table 7). During the last quarter of the follow-up period, only about half of both groups were employed. This is a relatively low percentage, given that about three-quarters of the sample were employed at some point after random assignment.

As noted above, if individuals did not find a job in their field of interest, EJC program staff encouraged them to find a job with the potential for advancement. Therefore, in theory, even if there were no employment gains, earnings gains could be expected among the EJC group members. Although the EJC model increased earnings relative to the TJC model in the second quarter after random assignment, both research groups earned about the same amount during the entire follow-up period (Table 7). Results show that the increase in earnings in Quarter 2 was a result of an increase in employment, not a result of wage growth or an increase in work hours: Among those employed in Quarter 2, the earnings levels are similar for the two research groups (Appendix Table E.2).³⁹ EJC and TJC group members were also equally likely to experience employment advancement, as measured by earning \$15,000 or more in UI-covered employment during the follow-up period.⁴⁰

- **The EJC group members and the TJC group members found similar types of jobs.**

The EJC model was expected to improve the quality of jobs that sample members found. To investigate this, data from the 12-month survey were used to examine jobs held at two different points in time: the first job held after random assignment into the study and the job held at the time of the survey interview.⁴¹

³⁹Additional analysis (Appendix Table E.6) suggests that the earnings impact in Quarter 2 was concentrated in low-paying or part-time jobs, among those who were employed and receiving TANF. Thus, the earnings for the EJC group members were not high enough to make them ineligible for public benefits.

⁴⁰Earnings of \$10,000 per year or more is used as an indicator of successful employment for welfare recipients, since an individual who was making the federal minimum wage (\$5.15 per hour during program operations) and who was working 40 hours per week would make approximately this amount. Since the majority of sample members were unemployed at the time of study enrollment, earnings of \$15,000 over 18 months of follow-up would represent advancement to relatively stable employment.

⁴¹Note that the survey results for employment, earnings, and TANF receipt should be interpreted cautiously. As noted above, a random sample of the report sample was selected to be surveyed. Whenever a survey
(continued)

Survey data show that the wages and hours worked for the first job after random assignment do not differ between respondents in the two groups (not shown). For instance, EJC group members earned, on average, \$151 per week, compared with the TJC group members' average weekly earnings of \$155. (These averages include zeros for those who did not work after random assignment.) Among working survey respondents, the EJC and TJC group members were earning an average of about \$9.00 per hour.

The first panel of Table 8 shows the percentage of sample members in each research group who were ever employed since random assignment and their current employment status at the time of the survey interview. The other panels in the table display the characteristics of the respondent's job at the time of the survey interview. Note that when the percentages for the categories are summed, they add up to the percentage of sample members working at the time of the survey interview. The table shows that the EJC model did not have an effect on job quality or type of jobs held at this time either. Among the EJC and TJC survey respondents, only 27 percent worked full time, and about one-third earned \$500 or less per week. The EJC model did not increase the percentage of sample members in "good jobs."⁴² The survey results show that there is no variation in hours worked, benefits, and job schedules between the two groups for jobs held 12 months after study entry. For example, only 13 percent of the EJC survey sample and 15 percent of the TJC survey sample had a current job that offered a health care plan or medical insurance.

In general, the overall employment and earnings patterns suggest that the EJC model is unlikely in future years to lead to improved employment or earnings gains relative to the TJC model. The EJC group members did not obtain jobs with better characteristics that may have resulted in higher earnings. In addition, the EJC model was no more effective than the TJC model in increasing employment, employment retention, or earnings, and the quarterly trends are similar between the two research groups.

Impacts on Public Assistance and Income

- **The EJC model, compared with the TJC model, had no effect on public assistance receipt and income.**

sample is a subset of the report sample, there is the possibility that the two samples' characteristics may differ. This could occur as a result of "nonresponse bias" or an unlucky draw ("selection bias"). According to administrative data, the EJC survey respondents experienced unusually strong employment and earnings effects, compared with the rest of the research sample. Furthermore, EJC group members underreported their employment and TANF receipt in the survey. (See Appendix F for details of the survey response analysis.)

⁴²As defined by Johnson and Corcoran (2003), a "good job" is one that offers 35 or more hours per week and either (1) pays \$7.00 or more per hour and offers health insurance or (2) pays \$8.50 or more per hour and does not provide health insurance.

Based on administrative records data, the EJC and TJC groups had similar rates of TANF and food stamp receipt over the follow-up period (Table 7). Sample members in both research groups received TANF for an average of 13 months during the 18-month follow-up period. TANF and food stamp receipt fell gradually and at the same rate for both research groups. At the end of the follow-up period, about two-thirds of both groups were receiving TANF, and the EJC model led to a small statistically significant increase of \$90 above the TJC group's average payment of \$892. It is not clear why this occurred. Additional follow-up data will help determine whether this effect persists.

A rough measure of income can be obtained by adding the value of earnings, TANF benefits, and food stamps. As shown in Table 7, compared with the TJC model, the EJC model did not increase total measured income. This is not surprising, since EJC did not have a large effect on earnings or public assistance receipt.

Impacts on Other Outcomes

Additional outcomes were examined for sample members who responded to the 12-month survey. These outcomes include employment by other household members, medical coverage, child care use, household composition, and transportation. The EJC model had no notable effects on these outcomes compared with the TJC model (Appendix Tables E.9 and E.10). For instance, survey respondents in both research groups were just as likely to have used child care since random assignment (about 40 percent did so), and only about 50 percent of both research groups had access to an automobile at the time of the survey interview.

Impacts for Subgroups

The preceding sections show that, compared with the TJC model, the EJC model had few impacts for the sample as a whole. However, the model may have worked differently for different types of people. For this reason, the analysis includes a variety of subgroups that may have had different responses to the EJC model.⁴³

- **Compared with the TJC model, the overall effects of the EJC model did not vary across subgroups.**

⁴³In experimental designs, it is reasonable to estimate impacts for any subgroup as long as the groups are defined according to characteristics measured prior to random assignment. The outcomes for the EJC group members in each subgroup are compared with the outcomes for TJC group members in that same subgroup, applying the same regression-adjustment procedures and tests of statistical significance that are used for the full sample.

Effects were first examined for subgroups based on their UI-covered employment in the quarter prior to entering the study. EJC group members without recent prior employment experience may have benefited from the additional classroom activities and additional time for finding a job. Those who had recent employment histories may have benefited from the EJC model's career planning process and from its encouragement to hold out for a better job.

Table 9 shows that the EJC model, compared with the TJC model, produced an increase in UI-covered employment stability among those who were not employed during the quarter prior to random assignment. The EJC group members were 6 percentage points more likely than the TJC group members to work for four consecutive quarters during the follow-up period. It is important to note, however, that the employment rates and earnings for the subgroup without recent employment are similar for both the EJC and the TJC group members during the last quarters of the follow-up period, which suggests that these positive effects were short-lived. In addition, despite this increase in employment stability during Quarter 2 through Quarter 7, the EJC model did not increase the average quarterly employment rate or total earnings for this group. Among those who were employed in the quarter prior to study entry, the EJC model did not increase employment or earnings, compared with the TJC model.

The EJC model could also be expected to have different effects for sample members who had education credentials. For example, a difference may emerge if people with a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate find it easier to obtain a targeted or promotable job in their field of interest. As shown in Table 9, although the EJC model did not increase employment or earnings for those without a high school diploma or GED, a positive impact on employment stability was found for those who did have such a credential. Similar to the results for the subgroup without recent employment history, however, the impacts were short-lived, and — except for the impact on employment stability — no other positive results were found for this subgroup.⁴⁴

Local labor markets and the type of people residing in each region could also be expected to result in different effects. In addition, the fact that impacts on participation varied between Region 3 and Region 4 may have resulted in different effects. Although the EJC model, relative to the TJC model, did lead to a positive effect in Region 4 on job retention in Year 1 (not shown), this impact diminished over time. As indicated in Table 9, the EJC model did not have positive effects on the measures of average quarterly employment, employment in four consecutive quarters, or total earnings in Region 3 or Region 4 during the year-and-a-half study period. This indicates that any differences between the two regions' labor markets, sample populations, or program implementation did not translate into different economic impacts over the full follow-up period.

⁴⁴Note that the differences in impacts between subgroups are not statistically significant.

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Table 9

Quarters 2-7, Impacts on UI-Covered Employment and Earnings for Selected Subgroups of Single Parents

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
<u>Full sample</u>				
Average quarterly employment (%)	47.4	45.8	1.6	0.440
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	37.2	33.1	4.1	0.128
Total earnings (\$)	9,103	8,730	373	0.552
Sample size (total = 1,183)	598	585		
<u>Employment status in quarter prior to random assignment</u>				
Not employed				
Average quarterly employment (%)	41.6	38.7	2.9	0.236
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	31.7	25.7	6.0 **	0.044
Total earnings (\$)	7,665	7,217	448	0.514
Sample size (total = 868)	444	424		
Employed				
Average quarterly employment (%)	63.2	65.5	-2.3	0.556
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	51.8	53.6	-1.8	0.758
Total earnings (\$)	13,076	12,884	193	0.894
Sample size (total = 315)	154	161		
<u>Education status at random assignment</u>				
No high school diploma or GED				
Average quarterly employment (%)	42.1	43.2	-1.1	0.701
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	33.4	30.6	2.7	0.455
Total earnings (\$)	7,877	7,605	272	0.745
Sample size (total = 613)	303	310		
High school diploma or GED				
Average quarterly employment (%)	53.2	48.3	4.8	0.107
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	41.9	35.1	6.9 *	0.086
Total earnings (\$)	10,530	9,821	709	0.461
Sample size (total = 570)	295	275		

(continued)

Table 9 (continued)

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
<u>Region</u>				
Region 3				
Average quarterly employment (%)	52.3	52.1	0.2	0.954
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	42.5	39.7	2.8	0.522
Total earnings (\$)	10,034	10,181	-147	0.886
Sample size (total = 506)	256	250		
Region 4				
Average quarterly employment (%)	43.7	41.1	2.5	0.355
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	33.1	28.3	4.9	0.150
Total earnings (\$)	8,461	7,592	869	0.270
Sample size (total = 677)	342	335		
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>				
Hispanic/Latino				
Average quarterly employment (%)	48.1	48.4	-0.3	0.926
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	37.4	37.1	0.3	0.946
Total earnings (\$)	8,934	9,472	-538	0.522
Sample size (total = 666)	332	334		
Black/African-American				
Average quarterly employment (%)	42.7	41.8	0.9	0.790
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	32.1	25.9	6.2	0.155
Total earnings (\$)	8,106	7,250	856	0.388
Sample size (total = 409)	211	198		

SOURCES and NOTES: See Appendix B.

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

Separate impact estimates for subgroups defined by race/ethnicity were also calculated. As shown in Table 9, within each race/ethnicity grouping, members of the EJC and TJC groups worked at UI-covered jobs for about the same number of quarters and received about the same

amount in total earnings during Quarters 2 through 7, suggesting no real differences in the effects of the EJC model for these subgroups.⁴⁵

As shown at the end of this report's third section, participation differences were found for several subgroups. For instance, a larger percentage of EJC group members, compared with TJC group members, who were not employed in the quarter prior to study entry reported having been encouraged to hold out for a good or better job and to either go to school or get training. Yet no causal relationship can be established between these subgroup findings and the economic impacts for this subgroup. The full research sample and other subgroups also had positive impacts on these participation measures, but the EJC model did not have an effect on their economic outcomes.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

Past research has suggested that the Traditional Job Club model is effective in increasing employment and earnings for welfare applicants and recipients, relative to not requiring participation in job clubs, but the model has not been found to be effective in helping people to retain jobs. In developing the Enhanced Job Club model, Los Angeles County was interested in exploring new strategies that might promote employment stability and career advancement for welfare recipients. The EJC study thus tested a variation of the usual quick-job-entry model, one that sought to increase employment retention and advancement beyond the levels that most job clubs have been able to achieve. This report's findings suggest that a radical change in the TJC model — more substantial than the changes embedded in the EJC model — or other policy changes may be needed to improve further on the TJC model's employment retention and advancement outcomes.

Despite the good efforts of the EJC program staff, the main message that EJC group members recalled — when they were surveyed a year after their study entry — was that they were to find a job quickly. This reflects the fact that it is difficult within a welfare agency that has a strong focus on immediate “work first” to expose clients to a message that is more nuanced. Furthermore, it may have been difficult for clients to find and obtain targeted or promotable” jobs in their fields of interest. And, even for sample members who did find such jobs, the jobs may not have paid well or may not have been “good” jobs. It also should be noted that performance goals for the EJC and TJC workshop facilitators in this study were the same: Staff who led both types of job clubs were expected to place 30 percent of workshop participants in jobs (of any type) by the end of the job club session. It is possible that directly linking the staff's

⁴⁵Additional impacts were estimated for subgroups defined by prior TANF history and levels of disadvantage. Results show few consistent or statistically significant differences between outcomes for EJC and TJC sample members within these subgroups.

performance goals to the expected goals of the EJC model — perhaps by placing specific percentages of EJC clients in targeted jobs by the end of Week 2 and in targeted or promotable jobs by the end of Week 3 — might have improved upon the EJC results. Finally, the intervention tested here extended only to the job club component of GAIN. For example, the focus on one’s area of career interest for EJC clients did not extend into the later phases of the GAIN program, such as education or training courses.

The early results presented here show that the EJC model did not improve on — or, as also could have happened, did not erode — the employment outcomes that sample members were able to achieve through the TJC model. But the EJC model is likely to have been more costly to implement than the TJC model, since the EJC model lasted two weeks longer than the TJC model and involved additional staff. While the EJC model may have other advantages over the TJC model, the particular benefits of the EJC model considered in this report do not justify its additional costs.

The EJC model is only one of many types of program models being tested in the ERA evaluation in the effort to find new approaches to help welfare recipients stay steadily employed and advance in their jobs. The results so far suggest that other approaches might be more likely to produce economic impacts for the working poor. For example, the ERA model in Texas provided a monthly financial incentive to individuals for maintaining full-time work and has produced employment and earnings impacts.⁴⁶ In the ERA model in Chicago (which also had economic impacts), working TANF recipients received services from an employer intermediary that tried to place the low-wage workers into jobs in industries with higher wages.⁴⁷ In addition, the Post-Assistance Self-Sufficiency (PASS) Program in Riverside, California — another ERA model with economic impacts that served the working poor — utilized different institutional arrangements (in this case, community-based organizations) to provide services.⁴⁸ Over the next two years, the ERA evaluation will seek to systematically identify the characteristics of these programs that may have contributed to their economic impacts, will track their longer-term economic effects, and will compare their costs with their benefits.

The results presented in this report, however, are not the final word on the EJC model. MDRC will continue to track sample members in this study using administrative records, and longer-term results will be made public when they are available.

⁴⁶Martinson and Hendra (2006).

⁴⁷Bloom, Hendra, and Page (2006).

⁴⁸Navarro, van Dok, and Hendra (2007).

Appendix A

Supplementary Tables for “Introduction”

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project
Appendix Table A.1
Description of ERA Models

State	Location	Target Group	Primary Service Strategies
<u>Advancement projects</u>			
Illinois	Cook County (Chicago)	TANF recipients who have worked at least 30 hours per week for at least 6 consecutive months	A combination of services to promote career advancement (targeted job search assistance, education and training, assistance in identifying and accessing career ladders, etc.)
California	Riverside County Phase 2 (Work Plus)	Newly employed TANF recipients working at least 20 hours per week	Operated by the county welfare department; connects employed TANF recipients to education and training activities
California	Riverside County Phase 2 (Training Focused)	Newly employed TANF recipients working at least 20 hours per week	Operated by the county workforce agency; connects employed TANF recipients to education and training activities with the option of reducing or eliminating their work hours
<u>Placement and retention (hard-to-employ) projects</u>			
Minnesota	Hennepin County (Minneapolis)	Long-term TANF recipients who were unable to find jobs through standard welfare-to-work services	In-depth family assessment; low caseloads; intensive monitoring and follow-up; emphasis on placement into unsubsidized employment or supported work with referrals to education and training, counseling, and other support services
Oregon	Portland	Individuals who are cycling back onto TANF and those who have lost jobs	Team-based case management, job search/job readiness components, intensive retention and follow-up services, mental health and substance abuse services for those identified with these barriers, supportive and emergency services

(continued)

Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

State	Location	Target Group	Primary Service Strategies
Placement and retention (hard-to-employ) projects (continued)			
New York	New York City PRIDE (Personal Roads to Individual Development and Employment)	TANF recipients whose employability is limited by physical or mental health problems	Two main tracks: (1) Vocational Rehabilitation, where clients with severe medical problems receive unpaid work experience, job search/job placement and retention services tailored to account for medical problems; (2) Work Based Education, where those with less severe medical problems participate in unpaid work experience, job placement services, and adult basic education
New York	New York City Substance Abuse (substance abuse case management)	TANF recipients with a substance abuse problem	Intensive case management to promote participation in substance abuse treatment, links to mental health and other needed services
Projects with mixed goals			
California	Los Angeles County EJC (Enhanced Job Club)	TANF recipients who are required to search for employment	Job search workshops promoting a step-down method designed to help participants find a job that is in line with their careers of interest
California	Los Angeles County (Reach for Success program)	Newly employed TANF recipients working at least 32 hours per week	Stabilization/retention services, followed by a combination of services to promote advancement: education and training, career assessment, targeted job development, etc.
California	Riverside County PASS (Post-Assistance Self-Sufficiency program)	Individuals who left TANF due to earned income	Family-based support services delivered by community-based organizations to promote retention and advancement

(continued)

Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

State	Location	Target Group	Primary Service Strategies
Projects with mixed goals (continued)			
Ohio	Cleveland	Low-wage workers with specific employers making under 200% of poverty who have been in their current jobs less than 6 months	Regular on-site office hours for counseling/case management; Lunch & Learn meetings for social support and presentations; and supervisory training for employer supervisors
Oregon	Eugene	Newly employed TANF applicants and recipients working 20 hours per week or more; mostly single mothers who were underemployed	Emphasis on work-based and education/training-based approaches to advancement and on frequent contact with clients; assistance tailored to clients' career interests and personal circumstances
Oregon	Medford	Newly employed TANF recipients and employed participants of the Oregon Food Stamp Employment and Training program and the Employment Related Day Care program; mostly single mothers	Emphasis on work-based and on education/training-based approaches to advancement and on frequent contact with clients; assistance tailored to clients' career interests and personal circumstances; access to public benefits purposefully divorced from the delivery of retention and advancement services
Oregon	Salem	TANF applicants	Job search assistance combined with career planning; once employed, education and training, employer linkages to promote retention and advancement
South Carolina	6 rural counties in the Pee Dee Region	Individuals who left TANF (for any reason) between 10/97 and 12/00	Individualized case management with a focus on reemployment, support services, job search, career counseling, education and training, and use of individualized incentives
Texas	Corpus Christi, Fort Worth, and Houston	TANF applicants and recipients	Individualized team-based case management; monthly stipends of \$200 for those who maintain employment and complete activities related to employment plan

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Appendix Table A.2

Selected Characteristics of Single-Parent Families, by Research Group

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Characteristic	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Total
<u>Full sample</u>			
Gender (%)			
Female	91.8	90.1	91.0
Limited English ability (%)	12.5	12.6	12.6
Primary language (%)			
English	84.9	86.2	85.5
Spanish	15.1	13.8	14.5
Race/ethnicity (%)			
Hispanic	55.6	57.2	56.4
Black/non-Hispanic	35.3	33.9	34.6
Other	9.0	8.9	9.0
Age (%)			
20 or younger	12.0	12.1	12.1
21-30	46.3	49.9	48.1
31-40	25.3	22.7	24.0
Older than 40	16.4	15.2	15.8
Average age (years)	30.2	29.8	30.0
Education (%)			
California High School Proficiency Exam / GED	5.7	5.5	5.6
High school diploma	39.8	35.0	37.4
Technical/associate's degree / 2 or more years of college	3.8	6.5	5.2
None of the above	50.7	53.0	51.8
Number of children (%)			
0	0.2	0.0	0.1
1	46.0	44.3	45.1
2	28.3	30.8	29.5
3 or more	25.6	25.0	25.3

(continued)

Appendix Table A.2 (continued)

Characteristic	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Total
Age of youngest child (%)			
2 or younger	47.8	47.7	47.8
3-5	19.2	21.7	20.5
6 or older	32.9	30.6	31.8
Location			
Region 3	42.8	42.7	42.8
Region 4	57.2	57.3	57.2
Employed in the quarter prior to random assignment	26.3	25.6	26.0
Employed in the prior year	49.2	50.9	50.0
Received TANF in the quarter prior to random assignment	78.8	75.0	76.9
Received TANF in the prior year	81.1	76.6	78.9
Sample size	598	585	1,183

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from UI and TANF administrative records from the State of California and the Los Angeles County GAIN Employment Activity and Reporting System (GEARS).

NOTES: In order to assess differences in characteristics across research groups, chi-square tests were used for categorical variables, and t-tests were used for continuous variables.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

Unless otherwise stated, results are for sample members randomly assigned from June to September 2004.

Appendix B

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

Estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics of sample members.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

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

Italics indicate comparisons that are nonexperimental. These measures are computed only for a subset of the full sample. Since there may be differences in the characteristics of program group and control group members among this subset, any differences in outcomes may not necessarily be attributable to the ERA program. Statistical tests were not performed.

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

The p-value indicates the likelihood that the difference between the program and control group arose by chance.

NA = not applicable.

Appendix C

**Notes for Tables and Figures Displaying Results
Calculated with Responses to the ERA 12-Month Survey**

Estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics of sample members.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

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

Italics indicate comparisons that are nonexperimental. These measures are computed only for a subset of the full sample. Since there may be differences in the characteristics of program group and control group members among this subset, any differences in outcomes may not necessarily be attributable to the ERA program. Statistical tests were not performed.

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

The p-value indicates the likelihood that the difference between the program and control group arose by chance.

NA = not applicable.

Appendix D

**Background Characteristics and Impacts
for the Early Sample**

Appendix D examines the background characteristics of sample members who were randomly assigned before June 2004 (called the “early sample”) and compares them with the report sample. In addition, it compares the effects of the Enhanced Job Club (EJC) model and the Traditional Job Club (TJC) model on the early sample’s employment and earnings.

Background

As noted in the report’s Introduction, random assignment for this study began in June 2002 and ended in September 2004. In the middle of the assignment process, MDRC found that approximately 23 percent of the sample members (about one-fifth of the TJC group and about 3 percent of the EJC group) were referred to a job club that was not consistent with the research group to which they were assigned. However, only half of those who were referred to the wrong job club actually attended the related workshop.¹

The problems with the referral process were corrected by June 2004. Since sample members who attended the wrong job club program would dilute the effects of the EJC model, compared with the TJC model, all sample members who were randomly assigned before June 2004 (the early sample) were excluded from the main report’s findings.²

Characteristics of the Early Sample

A total of 3,321 single parents were randomly assigned between June 2003, and May 2004. A total of 1,601 sample members were randomly assigned to the EJC group, and 1,620 sample members were randomly assigned to the TJC group. Appendix Table D.1 shows selected characteristics for each group at the time of random assignment. The table shows that there were no systematic differences between the research groups in the early sample.

Appendix Table D.1 also shows that the characteristics of the early sample resemble the characteristics of the report sample (Table 1 in the Introduction). Most of the early sample members are female, and most are black or Hispanic. Approximately half of them do not have a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. Furthermore, about a quarter of the early sample were employed, and 79 percent received Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) during the quarter prior to random assignment.

¹It is assumed that random assignment to the EJC or TJC research group in and of itself — that is, without actually attending one of the two types of workshops — likely had no effect on sample members’ subsequent behavior.

²It was not possible to exclude just the early sample members who were referred to or attended the incorrect type of job club, as doing so would violate the integrity of the experimental research design: Individuals who had certain characteristics (whether measurable or unmeasurable) may have been more likely to be excluded from the EJC group than from the TJC group.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project
Appendix Table D.1
Selected Characteristics of Single-Parent Families in the Early Sample
Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Characteristic	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Total
<u>Early sample</u>			
Gender (%)			
Female	90.8	92.3	91.6
Limited English ability (%)	12.6	13.3	13.0
Primary language (%)			
English	87.6	86.0	86.8
Spanish	12.4	14.0	13.2
Race/ethnicity (%)			
Hispanic	51.6	52.2	51.9
Black/non-Hispanic	40.6	38.4	39.5
Other	7.8	9.5	8.6
Age (%)			
20 years or younger	10.6	10.4	10.5
21-30	45.3	45.5	45.4
31-40	28.0	27.1	27.6
Older than 40	16.1	17.0	16.5
Average age (years)	30.5	30.8	30.7
Education (%)			
California High School Proficiency Exam / GED	6.7	6.1	6.4
High school diploma	34.9	33.1	34.0
Technical/associate's degree / 2 or more years of college	6.4	6.2	6.3
None of the above	52.0	54.6	53.3
Number of children (%)			
0	0.1	0.2	0.1
1	44.9	43.5	44.2
2	28.1	28.6	28.3
3 or more	26.9	27.7	27.3

(continued)

Appendix Table D.1 (continued)

Characteristic	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Total
Age of youngest child (%)			
2 or younger	45.0	42.9	43.9
3-5	21.4	23.6	22.5
6 or older	33.6	33.5	33.6
Location			
Region 3	38.4	39.6	39.0
Region 4	61.6	60.4	61.0
Employed in the quarter prior to random assignment	25.5	27.6	26.5
Employed in the prior year	47.4	47.7	47.6
Received TANF in the quarter prior to random assignment	79.1	79.1	79.1
Received TANF in the prior year	81.4	81.4	81.4
Sample size	1,601	1,620	3,221

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from UI and TANF administrative records from the State of California and the Los Angeles County GAIN Employment Activity and Reporting System (GEARS).

NOTES: In order to assess differences in characteristics across research groups, chi-square tests were used for categorical variables, and t-tests were used for continuous variables.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

Unless otherwise stated, results are for sample members randomly assigned from June to September 2004.

Impacts on Employment and Earnings

- **Among the early sample, the EJC model did not increase employment or earnings compared with the TJC model.**

Although the average impact of the EJC model on the early sample would be diluted due to the large number of sample members who attended the wrong job club, the large sample size allows for the detection of impacts that are small. Appendix Table D.2 shows the impacts on quarterly UI-covered employment and earnings for the early sample members. The EJC model did not increase their employment or earnings compared with the TJC model.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table D.2

**Impacts on Quarterly UI-Covered Employment and Earnings for the
Early Sample**

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Early sample^a				
Ever employed (%)				
Quarter of random assignment	25.4	27.7	-2.3	0.118
Quarter 2	37.9	39.5	-1.6	0.321
Quarter 3	41.0	42.1	-1.0	0.540
Quarter 4	41.4	42.5	-1.1	0.512
Quarter 5	42.5	42.7	-0.1	0.938
Quarter 6	42.8	44.6	-1.8	0.270
Quarter 7	44.6	44.6	0.0	0.995
Quarter 8	45.3	47.2	-1.8	0.276
Quarter 9	45.5	47.1	-1.5	0.415
Quarter 10	44.3	47.7	-3.4	0.133
Total earnings (\$)				
Quarter of random assignment	311	368	-57 *	0.058
Quarter 2	842	865	-24	0.649
Quarter 3	1,093	1,191	-98	0.132
Quarter 4	1,238	1,332	-94	0.184
Quarter 5	1,348	1,384	-36	0.627
Quarter 6	1,481	1,485	-4	0.953
Quarter 7	1,557	1,580	-23	0.774
Quarter 8	1,627	1,669	-43	0.606
Quarter 9	1,636	1,809	-174 *	0.067
Quarter 10	1,684	1,842	-159	0.176
Sample size (total= 3,321)	1,601	1,620		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from UI administrative records from the State of California.

NOTES: See Appendix B.

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

^aEarly sample members were randomly assigned from July 2002 through May 2004.

Appendix E

Supplementary Impact Tables

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.1

**Year 1 Impacts on UI-Covered Employment,
Public Assistance, and Measured Income**

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever employed (%)	65.6	65.8	-0.3	0.921
Average quarterly employment (%)	46.3	44.0	2.3	0.287
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)	28.0	23.9	4.2 *	0.089
Earnings (\$)	5,437	5,027	410	0.306
Earned over \$10,000 (%)	23.4	20.4	3.0	0.191
<i>For those employed in Year 1:</i>				
Average quarterly employment (%)	70.7	66.9	3.8	NA
Average earnings per quarter employed (\$)	2,934	2,856	78	NA
Ever received TANF (%)	99.3	99.2	0.0	0.961
Amount of TANF received (\$)	5,517	5,518	-2	0.990
Ever received food stamps (%)	93.6	93.0	0.6	0.637
Amount of food stamps received (\$)	2,801	2,760	41	0.542
Total measured income ^a (\$)	13,755	13,305	450	0.231
Sample size (total = 1,183)	598	585		

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from UI, TANF, and food stamp administrative records from State of California.

NOTES: See Appendix B.

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

^aThis measure represents the sum of unemployment insurance earnings, TANF, and food stamps.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project
Appendix Table E.2
Impacts on Quarterly UI-Covered Employment and Earnings
for the Report Sample
Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Report sample^a				
Ever employed (%)				
Quarter of random assignment	26.5	25.4	1.2	0.598
Quarter 2	46.5	40.2	6.3 **	0.021
Quarter 3	45.5	42.4	3.1	0.253
Quarter 4	45.3	44.1	1.2	0.653
Quarter 5	48.0	49.4	-1.4	0.617
Quarter 6	48.5	49.3	-0.8	0.765
Quarter 7	50.6	49.5	1.1	0.690
Total earnings (\$)				
Quarter of random assignment	388	411	-23	0.657
Quarter 2	1,113	897	216 **	0.025
Quarter 3	1,307	1,160	147	0.212
Quarter 4	1,360	1,320	40	0.740
Quarter 5	1,658	1,650	8	0.953
Quarter 6	1,832	1,830	2	0.989
Quarter 7	1,834	1,873	-39	0.788
Total earnings among those employed				
<i>Total earnings (\$)</i>				
<i>Quarter of random assignment</i>	<i>1,463</i>	<i>1,623</i>	<i>-160</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>Quarter 2</i>	<i>2,393</i>	<i>2,234</i>	<i>160</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>Quarter 3</i>	<i>2,871</i>	<i>2,738</i>	<i>133</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>Quarter 4</i>	<i>2,999</i>	<i>2,993</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>Quarter 5</i>	<i>3,454</i>	<i>3,340</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>Quarter 6</i>	<i>3,782</i>	<i>3,714</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>Quarter 7</i>	<i>3,624</i>	<i>3,786</i>	<i>-162</i>	<i>NA</i>
Sample size (total= 1,183)	598	585		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from UI administrative records from the State of California.

NOTES: See Appendix B.

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

^aMembers of the full report sample were randomly assigned from June through September 2004.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project
Appendix Table E.3
Quarters 2-7, Impacts on TANF Receipt and Payments
Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever received TANF (%)				
Quarter of random assignment	100.0	100.0	0.0	0.000
Q2	98.2	96.8	1.4	0.120
Q3	89.0	88.9	0.0	0.979
Q4	79.5	80.2	-0.7	0.762
Q5	74.2	75.5	-1.3	0.587
Q6	70.5	69.3	1.3	0.625
Q7	63.9	63.6	0.3	0.920
Amount of TANF received (\$)				
Quarter of random assignment	1,701	1,735	-34	0.166
Q2	1,676	1,674	2	0.940
Q3	1,402	1,415	-13	0.743
Q4	1,273	1,267	6	0.895
Q5	1,166	1,163	3	0.952
Q6	1,097	1,023	73	0.144
Q7	983	892	90 *	0.071
Sample size (total = 1,183)	598	585		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from TANF administrative records from the State of California.

NOTES: See Appendix B.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project
Appendix Table E.4
Quarters 2-7, Impacts on Food Stamp Receipt and Payments
Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever received food stamps (%)				
Quarter of random assignment	90.3	90.2	0.1	0.925
Q2	91.9	89.9	2.0	0.160
Q3	90.6	88.2	2.4	0.137
Q4	85.1	83.0	2.1	0.296
Q5	79.6	77.1	2.5	0.277
Q6	71.9	72.1	-0.2	0.950
Q7	66.1	64.4	1.6	0.540
Amount of food stamps received (\$)				
Quarter of random assignment	651	663	-11	0.447
Q2	734	732	2	0.924
Q3	719	702	17	0.388
Q4	703	702	0	0.996
Q5	645	623	22	0.402
Q6	584	578	6	0.822
Q7	533	511	22	0.404
Sample size (total = 1,183)	598	585		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from food stamps administrative records from the State of California.

NOTES: See Appendix B.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project
Appendix Table E.5
Quarters 2-7, Impacts on UI-Covered Employment
Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome (%)	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever employed				
Quarter of random assignment	26.5	25.4	1.2	0.598
Q2	46.5	40.2	6.3 **	0.021
Q3	45.5	42.4	3.1	0.253
Q4	45.3	44.1	1.2	0.653
Q5	48.0	49.4	-1.4	0.617
Q6	48.5	49.3	-0.8	0.765
Q7	50.6	49.5	1.1	0.690
Earned \$2,500 or more				
Quarter of random assignment	4.7	3.8	0.9	0.405
Q2	18.5	13.9	4.7 **	0.025
Q3	22.2	19.0	3.2	0.158
Q4	24.9	23.4	1.5	0.538
Q5	28.2	27.6	0.6	0.812
Q6	31.1	31.3	-0.3	0.911
Q7	31.7	32.5	-0.8	0.770
Earned between \$500 and \$2,499				
Quarter of random assignment	13.9	14.7	-0.9	0.653
Q2	20.2	17.1	3.1	0.175
Q3	17.8	15.3	2.5	0.240
Q4	13.8	14.0	-0.2	0.910
Q5	14.8	16.2	-1.5	0.495
Q6	12.5	12.9	-0.4	0.826
Q7	13.0	12.9	0.0	0.987
Earned between \$1 and \$499				
Quarter of random assignment	8.0	6.9	1.2	0.443
Q2	7.8	9.2	-1.4	0.400
Q3	5.5	8.1	-2.6 *	0.076
Q4	6.7	6.7	0.0	0.986
Q5	5.1	5.6	-0.6	0.675
Q6	4.9	5.1	-0.1	0.928
Q7	5.9	4.1	1.9	0.143
Sample size (total = 1,183)	598	585		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from UI administrative records from the State of California.

NOTES: See Appendix B.

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

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project
Appendix Table E.6
Quarters 2-7, Impacts on UI-Covered Quarterly Employment
and Welfare Status
Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome (%)	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Quarters 2-7				
Employed, and did not receive TANF in quarter	13.7	12.9	0.8	0.515
Employed, and received TANF in quarter	33.7	32.9	0.8	0.645
Not employed, and did not receive TANF in quarter	7.1	8.1	-1.0	0.345
Not employed, and received TANF in quarter	45.5	46.2	-0.6	0.754
Employed, not receiving TANF				
Quarter of random assignment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.000
Q2	1.2	1.2	0.1	0.913
Q3	7.2	6.5	0.6	0.673
Q4	14.0	12.5	1.6	0.413
Q5	17.0	16.6	0.4	0.854
Q6	20.2	18.7	1.4	0.522
Q7	22.6	21.8	0.8	0.734
Employed, receiving TANF				
Quarter of random assignment	26.5	25.4	1.2	0.598
Q2	45.3	39.0	6.3 **	0.022
Q3	38.4	35.8	2.5	0.353
Q4	31.3	31.6	-0.3	0.903
Q5	31.0	32.8	-1.8	0.507
Q6	28.3	30.6	-2.3	0.395
Q7	28.0	27.7	0.3	0.901
Not employed, receiving TANF				
Quarter of random assignment	73.5	74.7	-1.2	0.598
Q2	53.0	57.8	-4.9 *	0.076
Q3	50.6	53.1	-2.5	0.371
Q4	48.3	48.6	-0.4	0.897
Q5	43.2	42.7	0.5	0.869
Q6	42.2	38.7	3.5	0.201
Q7	35.9	36.0	0.0	0.986
Not employed, not receiving TANF				
Quarter of random assignment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.000
Q2	0.5	2.0	-1.5 **	0.025
Q3	3.9	4.6	-0.7	0.578
Q4	6.4	7.3	-0.9	0.549
Q5	8.8	7.9	1.0	0.558
Q6	9.3	12.0	-2.7	0.134
Q7	13.5	14.6	-1.1	0.596
Sample size (total = 1,183)	598	585		

(continued)

Appendix Table E.6 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from UI and TANF administrative records from the State of California.

NOTES: See Appendix B.

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

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.7

Impacts on Employment Retention

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever employed in Year 1 (%)	54.1	54.5	-0.4	0.913
Average months employed in Year 1	3.9	3.9	0.0	0.921
Total months employed in Year 1 (%)				
Less than 4	11.1	11.3	-0.2	0.949
4-7	17.6	17.3	0.3	0.917
8-10	11.7	12.6	-0.9	0.746
More than 10	13.6	13.3	0.3	0.921
Worked during Months 1-3 and worked for (%)				
Less than 6 consecutive months	8.3	9.5	-1.2	0.620
6 or more consecutive months	22.3	21.7	0.6	0.862
Number of jobs in Year 1 (%)				
0	45.9	45.5	0.4	0.913
1	38.8	35.8	3.0	0.459
2 or 3	14.9	17.7	-2.8	0.369
4 or more	0.3	1.0	-0.7	0.345
Ever worked for one employer for 6 months or more (%)	30.5	31.1	-0.6	0.879
Sample size (total = 608)	311	297		

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

NOTES: See Appendix C.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.8

Impacts on Advancement

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Employed in first 6 months and at interview (%)	25.7	26.0	-0.3	0.921
<u>Employed in first 6 months and at interview and:</u>				
Weekly earnings				
Increased	11.7	12.6	-0.9	0.739
Increased by less than 20 percent	2.1	3.5	-1.3	0.324
Increased by 20 percent or more	9.6	9.2	0.4	0.852
Decreased	5.0	5.9	-1.0	0.598
Stayed the same	9.0	7.5	1.5	0.509
Hours worked				
Increased	9.2	8.6	0.6	0.797
Increased by less than 20 percent	1.3	1.0	0.3	0.731
Increased by 20 percent or more	7.9	7.6	0.3	0.892
Decreased	3.3	6.0	-2.8	0.107
Stayed the same	13.2	11.4	1.8	0.506
Hourly pay				
Increased	12.2	11.4	0.8	0.755
Increased by less than 20 percent	5.9	6.6	-0.7	0.746
Increased by more than 20 percent	6.3	4.8	1.5	0.434
Decreased	4.0	6.6	-2.7	0.156
Stayed the same	9.4	8.0	1.5	0.532
Sample size (total = 608)	311	297		

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

NOTES: See Appendix C.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.9

Impacts on Household Income and Composition

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
<u>Household income</u>				
Percentage with each income source (%)				
Own earnings	43.8	41.6	2.2	0.585
Earnings of other members	30.9	29.3	1.6	0.664
Child support	10.8	13.0	-2.2	0.394
Public assistance	73.0	76.4	-3.4	0.344
TANF	45.3	54.2	-8.9 **	0.031
Food stamps	68.1	71.5	-3.4	0.358
SSI or disability	13.1	9.5	3.5	0.182
Total household income in prior month (\$)	1,329	1,357	-28	0.730
Percentage of household income that is respondent's (%)	77.0	80.2	-3.2	0.214
Alternative household income ^a (\$)	1,331	1,261	70	0.292
<u>Household composition</u>				
Number in household	4.0	3.7	0.2 *	0.066
Ever married (%)	31.0	28.5	2.5	0.460
Living with partner (%)	8.4	14.1	-5.8 **	0.025
Current marital status (%)				
Married and living with spouse	7.5	5.3	2.1	0.284
Separated or living apart from spouse	14.0	11.3	2.7	0.303
Divorced	9.0	11.1	-2.0	0.391
Widowed	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.482
Sample size (total = 608)	311	297		

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

NOTES: See Appendix C.

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

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table E.10

Impacts on Other Outcomes

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
<u>Health care coverage</u>				
Respondent has health care coverage ^a (%)	95.3	95.5	-0.3	0.866
Publicly funded	92.7	93.2	-0.5	0.829
Publicly funded and not on TANF or SSI	14.5	14.8	-0.2	0.932
Privately funded	6.6	6.5	0.1	0.971
All dependent children have health care coverage (%)	93.9	93.0	0.9	0.662
All dependent children have health care coverage and respondent is not covered by TANF or SSI (%)	18.7	15.4	3.3	0.281
Respondent and all children have health care coverage (%)	93.6	92.6	0.9	0.656
Respondent and all children have health care coverage and respondent is not covered by TANF or SSI (%)	16.9	14.7	2.2	0.455
<u>Child care</u>				
Ever used any child care in Year 1 (%)	40.8	41.8	-1.1	0.779
Any informal child care (%)	5.4	7.2	-1.9	0.357
Child care expenses (%)	33.9	31.9	2.0	0.581
Paid entirely by respondent	7.0	3.2	3.8 **	0.037
Paid partially by respondent	8.9	8.2	0.8	0.735
Not paid by respondent	18.0	20.6	-2.6	0.411
Child care was a barrier to school, job training, or work (%)	12.9	9.4	3.5	0.175
Quit job, school, or training because of child care problems	11.9	8.5	3.4	0.167
Missed work because of child care problems	1.3	1.7	-0.4	0.718
<u>Transportation</u>				
Owns car, van, or truck (%)	44.4	50.5	-6.1	0.120
<i>Commuting time (minutes)</i>	<i>41.6</i>	<i>40.7</i>	<i>0.9</i>	
<i>Transportation costs per week (\$)</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>0</i>	
Method of transportation to work (%)				
By car	21.7	22.4	-0.7	0.837
By bus	23.9	21.5	2.4	0.484
Gets a ride	12.4	11.3	1.1	0.670
Walks	4.3	3.6	0.8	0.632
Sample size (total = 608)	311	297		

(continued)

Appendix Table E.10 (continued)

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

NOTES: See Appendix C.

^aHealth care coverage measures combine data from the survey's employment section, health care section, income section, and administrative records on public assistance receipt. A person can be receiving both public and private health coverage.

Appendix F

**ERA 12-Month Survey Response Analysis
for the Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club Test**

Appendix F assesses the reliability of impact results for the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) 12-Month Survey. It also examines whether the impacts for the survey respondents can be generalized to the impacts for the report sample. The appendix first describes how the survey sample was selected. Then it discusses the response rates for the survey sample and the two research groups: the Enhanced Job Club (EJC) group and the Traditional Job Club (TJC) group. Next, it examines differences between survey respondents and survey nonrespondents, followed by a comparison of the two research groups among the survey respondents. The appendix then compares the impacts on employment, earnings, and receipt of public assistance across the survey sample and the report sample, as calculated using administrative records. Finally, it compares the levels for each research group and the impacts on measures of employment and public assistance as calculated using both survey responses and administrative records.

This appendix concludes — with some caution — that the survey is reliable and that the results for the survey respondent sample can be generalized to the report sample. A comparison of the EJC and TJC groups among the survey respondents shows no systematic differences in background characteristics. However, respondents and nonrespondents differed significantly in some characteristics before random assignment. Furthermore, although the survey respondents' impacts on public assistance receipt and payments as calculated using administrative records data are similar to the report and fielded samples' impacts, the respondents' impacts on employment and earnings are larger and are statistically significant in Year 1. Finally, large differences were found between the survey and administrative records in employment-item responses and impacts.

Survey Sample Selection

As noted in the Introduction, the report sample includes 1,183 single-parent sample members who were randomly assigned from June through September 2004. Everyone in the report sample was eligible to be surveyed. A random sample of 809 individuals was chosen to be interviewed. This sample is referred to as the “fielded sample” (see Box F.1). The fielded sample constitutes about 69 percent of the report sample, and it includes 405 EJC group members and 404 TJC group members.

Survey Response Rates

Sample members who were interviewed for the ERA 12-Month Survey are referred to as “survey respondents,” or the *respondent sample*, while sample members who were not interviewed are known as “nonrespondents,” or the *nonrespondent sample*. A total of 608 sample members, or 75 percent of the fielded sample, completed the survey. The response rates of the

Box F.1

Key Analysis Samples

- **Report sample.** All single parents who were randomly assigned from June through September 2004.
- **Fielded sample.** Sample members in the report sample who met the criteria for inclusion in the survey.
- **Respondent sample.** Sample members in the fielded sample who completed the ERA 12-Month Survey.
- **Nonrespondent sample.** Sample members in the fielded sample who were not interviewed because they were not located or refused to be interviewed or because of other reasons.

research groups are similar: 77 percent of program group members completed the survey, compared with 74 percent of control group members. Of the nonrespondent sample, 90 percent refused to be interviewed or could not be located.¹

Whenever the response rate is lower than 100 percent, *nonresponse bias* may occur. Differences may exist between the respondent sample and the larger, fielded sample, owing to differences between the sample members who completed a survey and those who did not. Furthermore, the estimates may be biased if the background characteristics differ between the research groups.

Comparison Between Respondents and Nonrespondents Within the Survey Sample

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

Appendix Table F.1 shows the estimated logistic regression coefficients for the probability of being a respondent to the ERA 12-Month Survey. As can be noted from this table, besides such background characteristics as race/ethnicity, age, and number of children, a research status indicator was included in the model. The first column of the table provides the odds ratio

¹Other respondents were not interviewed because they were incapacitated, institutionalized, located after the fielding period expired, or deceased.

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Appendix Table F.1

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

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

	Survey Sample		Standardized Estimate
	Odds Ratio	P-Value	
ERA group	1.174	0.341	0.044
Female	3.136 ***	<.0001	0.184
Age	1.005	0.720	0.025
Black, non-Hispanic	1.157	0.754	0.039
White	1.570	0.430	0.055
Hispanic	1.201	0.686	0.051
U.S. citizen	0.703	0.245	-0.074
Age of youngest child	0.987	0.639	-0.031
Number of children	0.780 **	0.026	-0.111
Limited English	1.240	0.531	0.040
Earnings in prior quarter	1.000	0.858	0.014
Earnings in prior year	1.000	0.789	-0.027
Earnings in prior 3 years	1.000	0.572	0.071
Region 3	0.675 **	0.044	-0.105
Employed in the prior quarter	0.759	0.334	-0.066
Employed in the prior 3 years	1.084	0.179	0.136
Received TANF in the prior year	1.222	0.515	0.044
Received food stamps in the prior year	0.977	0.934	-0.006
Long-term TANF recipient	1.019	0.916	0.005
Pseudo R-square (0.0539) $\chi^2(19)$	44.8081 ***		
Sample size	809		

SOURCES: Los Angeles baseline and administrative records.

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

for each variable in predicting the probability of completing the survey. The asterisks and p-values show the statistical significance of these relationships, and the standardized estimate provides a measure of effect size.

Overall, the model was successful in predicting response (model $\chi^2(19) = 44.81$; p-value = < 0.01). The most important predictors of response were gender (respondents were three times more likely to be female: p-value = < 0.0001); number of children (p-value = < 0.05); and re-

gion (p -value = < 0.05). While gender was positively related to response, number of children and region were negatively related to response, which implies that a larger percentage of respondents than nonrespondents lived in Region 4 and had fewer children. Approximately 93 percent of respondents are female, compared with 83 percent of nonrespondents. About 35 percent of respondents were from Region 3, versus 44 percent of nonrespondents. On average, respondents had 1.7 children, compared with an average of 1.9 children for nonrespondents.

Comparison Between the Research Groups in the Survey Respondent Sample

Random assignment designs minimize potential bias. There is the possibility, however, that the characteristics of each research group differed due to the selective nature of the survey response process. If this is true, the reliability of impact estimates for the respondent sample may be affected.

Appendix Table F.2 shows baseline characteristics of the TJC and EJC group members. In general, differences between the research groups are small and not statistically significant. The only exception to this finding is that TJC group members had higher earnings in the prior year. Furthermore, MDRC performed a logistic regression to test whether or not there was a relationship between the background characteristics and the research status, and this obtained a similar finding (results not shown).

Comparison of Survey Respondents and the Fielded Sample and Report Sample

Using administrative records data, this section discusses whether the survey respondents' impacts can be generalized to the fielded sample and the report sample. Consistency of impact findings among the samples is considered to be the best result, suggesting that impacts on measures calculated from survey responses can be generalized to the report sample. Survey results may be considered unreliable because of response bias when impacts for survey respondents that are calculated using administrative data differ in size and direction from results for all other samples. An unlucky sample draw, or "sampling bias," may be inferred when impacts for the respondent sample resemble results for the fielded sample, but findings for both samples vary from those for the report sample, from which the samples were drawn.

Appendix Table F.3 shows the adjusted means and impacts on several employment and public assistance outcomes for the report, fielded, and respondent samples in Year 1 and during

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Appendix Table F.2

**Background Characteristics of Survey Respondents Who Were
Randomly Assigned Between June and September 2004**

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Variable	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club
Female (%)	92.9	93.3
U.S. citizen (%)	79.4	83.5
Limited English (%)	14.8	12.5
Region 3 (%)	33.8	35.4
Race (%)		
Hispanic	51.8	54.5
Black	37.9	38.7
White	5.8	4.4
Asian	3.9	1.3
Other	0.6	1.0
Age (%)		
20 or younger	15.1	13.5
21-30	44.4	49.2
31-40	23.5	20.5
41 or older	17.0	16.8
Number of children (%)		
0	0.3	0.0
1	47.3	49.8
2	28.9	27.9
More than 3	23.5	22.2
Age of youngest child (years)	4.6	4.7
Short-term recipient ^a (%)	55.3	55.6
Employed during the quarter prior to random assignment (%)	24.4	26.9
Employed during the second quarter prior to random assignment (%)	25.1	30.0
Earnings in the prior quarter (\$)	525	564
Earnings in the prior year (\$)	2,766	3,661 *
Relative month of random assignment (%)	46.4	46.4
Sample size (total = 608)	311	297

(continued)

Appendix Table F.2 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from UI and TANF administrative records from the State of California and the Los Angeles County GAIN Employment Activity and Reporting System (GEARS).

NOTES: Chi-square (categorical) and two-tailed T (continuous) tests were used to assess the difference in characteristics across research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

^aShort-term recipients either never applied for TANF or received TANF for less than two years.

the last quarter of the follow-up period.² This table shows that impacts on public assistance receipt and payments are similar across the samples. However, the impacts on employment, earnings, and income are larger and are often statistically significant. All the samples had a statistically significant impact on one measure (“employed four consecutive quarters”), but the impact is larger for the respondent sample. Although not statistically significant, the employment and earnings differences in Quarter 5 for the respondent sample are also larger. As shown in the table, the effects of the respondent sample somewhat resemble the effects for the fielded sample, which suggest that — in addition to response bias — some “sampling bias” was introduced when selecting the fielded sample. Note that although the magnitude of the impacts varies, the direction of the impacts is the same.

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

This section compares the outcomes and impacts on employment and receipt of public assistance that were calculated using survey responses with the findings on similar measures calculated using administrative data for survey respondents. Several factors lead to differences in reported employment rates between the survey and UI-covered employment. First, some respondents may underreport employment on surveys, whereas others may claim employment when they are not working. In addition, employment data reported in surveys include jobs not covered by the UI system, such as self-employment, informal employment, and out-of-state jobs. The mismatch on welfare measures is also discussed in this section.

For this analysis, survey results are considered to be less reliable when members of one research group show a greater propensity to underreport their employment or receipt of public assistance than their counterparts in the other research group. Underreporting occurs when a respondent does not report employment or receipt of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

²All the impacts are regression-adjusted within each sample, to control for differences in background characteristics, prior earnings, prior employment, prior public assistance receipt, location or residence, and period of sample intake.

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Appendix Table F.3
Comparison of Impacts for the Report, Fielded, and Respondent Samples
Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
<u>Quarters 2-5</u>				
Ever employed (%)				
Report sample	65.6	65.8	-0.3	0.921
Fielded sample	67.0	63.3	3.6	0.261
Respondent sample	71.0	60.7	10.3 ***	0.006
Average quarterly employment (%)				
Report sample	46.3	44.0	2.3	0.287
Fielded sample	46.9	42.5	4.4	0.104
Respondent sample	49.3	41.5	7.9 **	0.011
Employed 4 consecutive quarters (%)				
Report sample	28.0	23.9	4.2 *	0.089
Fielded sample	28.7	23.2	5.5 *	0.065
Respondent sample	31.0	22.7	8.3 **	0.017
Number of quarters employed				
Report sample	1.9	1.8	0.1	0.287
Fielded sample	1.9	1.7	0.2	0.104
Respondent sample	2.0	1.7	0.3 **	0.011
Earnings (\$)				
Report sample	5,437	5,027	410	0.306
Fielded sample	5,416	4,778	639	0.186
Respondent sample	5,597	4,441	1,156 **	0.029
Ever received TANF (%)				
Report sample	99.3	99.2	0.0	0.961
Fielded sample	99.4	99.4	0.0	0.991
Respondent sample	99.7	99.3	0.4	0.503
Amount of TANF received (\$)				
Report sample	5,517	5,518	-2	0.990
Fielded sample	5,473	5,592	-120	0.473
Respondent sample	5,620	5,627	-7	0.970

(continued)

Appendix Table F.3 (continued)

Outcome	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Ever received food stamps (%)				
Report sample	93.6	93.0	0.6	0.637
Fielded sample	93.4	93.5	-0.1	0.953
Respondent sample	92.7	93.2	-0.5	0.798
Amount of food stamps received (\$)				
Report sample	2,801	2,760	41	0.542
Fielded sample	2,781	2,767	14	0.863
Respondent sample	2,782	2,718	64	0.501
Total measured income (\$)				
Report sample	13,755	13,305	450	0.231
Fielded sample	13,670	13,137	533	0.240
Respondent sample	13,999	12,786	1,213 **	0.013
Quarter 5				
Ever employed during Q5 (%)				
Report sample	48.0	49.4	-1.4	0.617
Fielded sample	48.6	47.5	1.1	0.749
Respondent sample	52.8	46.4	6.4	0.108
Earnings during Q5 (%)				
Report sample	1,658	1,650	8	0.953
Fielded sample	1,649	1,539	109	0.499
Respondent sample	1,738	1,477	262	0.149
Ever received TANF during Q5 (%)				
Report sample	74.2	75.5	-1.3	0.587
Fielded sample	74.1	76.7	-2.5	0.397
Respondent sample	76.2	79.2	-3.0	0.369
Ever received food stamps during Q5 (%)				
Report sample	79.6	77.1	2.5	0.277
Fielded sample	78.8	79.2	-0.4	0.875
Respondent sample	81.0	80.5	0.6	0.858

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from UI, TANF, and food stamp administrative records from the State of California.

NOTES: The report sample includes 1,183 sample members; EJC group: 598; TJC group: 585.

The fielded sample includes 809 sample members; EJC group: 405; TJC group: 404.

The respondent sample includes 608 sample members; EJC group: 311; TJC group: 297.

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

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Appendix Table F.4

**Comparison of Impacts from Administrative Records and Survey Responses
for the Sample of Survey Respondents**

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

Outcome (%)	Enhanced Job Club	Traditional Job Club	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Employed in Year 1				
Records impact	71.0	60.7	10.3 ***	0.006
Survey impact	56.5	57.0	-0.5	0.898
Employed at end of Year 1				
Records impact	52.8	46.4	6.4	0.108
Survey impact	37.2	36.2	1.0	0.796
Received TANF at end of Year 1				
Records impact	76.2	79.2	-3.0	0.369
Survey impact	45.3	54.2	-8.9 **	0.031
Received food stamps at end of Year 1				
Records impact	81.0	80.5	0.6	0.858
Survey impact	68.1	71.5	-3.4	0.358
Sample size (total = 608)	311	297		

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from UI, TANF, and food stamp administrative records from the State of California and from responses to the ERA 12-Month Survey.

NOTES: See Appendixes B and C.

Records employment impacts include only employment and earnings in jobs covered by the California unemployment insurance (UI) program. The records do not include employment outside California or in jobs not covered by UI (for example, "off-the-books" jobs, some agricultural jobs, and federal government jobs).

(TANF) or food stamps, whereas administrative data show employment or receipt. MDRC performed a match analysis on employment and found some variation by research group in the level of underreporting. About 24 percent of the EJC group respondents reported that they were not working at the end of Year 1, even though the UI records indicated employment, compared with only 17 percent of respondents in the TJC group (results not shown).

Appendix Table F.4 shows a comparison of impacts from administrative records and survey responses for the survey respondent sample. As discussed above, the EJC group members showed a propensity to underreport their employment. As a result, the survey shows much lower employment rates for the EJC group during Year 1 and at the end of Year 1, compared with levels calculated using administrative records data. This resulted in differences in impacts.

As shown, when using administrative records, the employment increase in Year 1 is 10.3 percentage points and statistically significant. However, when using the survey data to calculate employment in Year 1, little difference is found between the research groups.

EJC group members also significantly underreported TANF receipt (not shown). This underreporting resulted in a large and statistically significant decrease in receipt that appears only in the survey. There was also underreporting of food stamp receipt, but no difference was found between the research groups.

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MDRC is a nonprofit, nonpartisan social and education policy research organization dedicated to learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people. Through its research and the active communication of its findings, MDRC seeks to enhance the effectiveness of social and education policies and programs.

Founded in 1974 and located in New York City and Oakland, California, MDRC is best known for mounting rigorous, large-scale, real-world tests of new and existing policies and programs. Its projects are a mix of demonstrations (field tests of promising new program approaches) and evaluations of ongoing government and community initiatives. MDRC's staff bring an unusual combination of research and organizational experience to their work, providing expertise on the latest in qualitative and quantitative methods and on program design, development, implementation, and management. MDRC seeks to learn not just whether a program is effective but also how and why the program's effects occur. In addition, it tries to place each project's findings in the broader context of related research — in order to build knowledge about what works across the social and education policy fields. MDRC's findings, lessons, and best practices are proactively shared with a broad audience in the policy and practitioner community as well as with the general public and the media.

Over the years, MDRC has brought its unique approach to an ever-growing range of policy areas and target populations. Once known primarily for evaluations of state welfare-to-work programs, today MDRC is also studying public school reforms, employment programs for ex-offenders and people with disabilities, and programs to help low-income students succeed in college. MDRC's projects are organized into five areas:

- Promoting Family Well-Being and Child Development
- Improving Public Education
- Raising Academic Achievement and Persistence in College
- Supporting Low-Wage Workers and Communities
- Overcoming Barriers to Employment

Working in almost every state, all of the nation's largest cities, and Canada and the United Kingdom, MDRC conducts its projects in partnership with national, state, and local governments, public school systems, community organizations, and numerous private philanthropies.