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**A Study of Work  
Participation and Full  
Engagement Strategies**

*Final Report*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) made sweeping changes to the welfare system in the United States, replacing the 60-year-old Aid to Families with Dependent Children program with a block grant to states to create the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. A system that once focused on the delivery of cash benefits now encourages families to make the transition from welfare to work.

This dramatic policy change has drawn attention to the need to engage recipients in activities that build their capacity to work. In fact, PRWORA requires states to engage a certain minimum percentage of their caseload in specified work and work-related activities for a specified number of hours per week. The required rate in most states has been relatively low to date, however, because the minimum rate is reduced by one percentage point for each percentage point that a state's average monthly caseload drops below its average monthly caseload for fiscal year 1995 (and the drop is not a result of eligibility or other policy changes). Thus, most states have not been terribly restricted by the federal legislation. While the percentage of TANF cases meeting the participation requirement nationwide is relatively low (33 percent in fiscal year 2002), states are likely engaging a larger share of cases either in activities other than those specified in the legislation or in the specified activities but for fewer hours than required by the federal law. The goal of engaging all or nearly all TANF recipients in work and work-related activities is even explicit in some state and local programs.

Information on the strategies state and local programs use to engage all or most TANF recipients in work activities is important because it could help other programs that have the same goal in mind. Yet, we know little about which programs currently strive toward this goal or the strategies they use to do so. To learn more, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) to conduct the Study of Work Participation and Full Engagement Strategies, an examination of seven state and local programs that attempt to engage all or nearly all TANF recipients (excluding recipients in child-only cases) in work and work-related activities. This report presents the study findings, which are especially timely, as the proposed reauthorization of the TANF legislation will likely require states to engage a greater percentage of their caseload in work activities.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The Study of Work Participation and Full Engagement Strategies had three broad objectives: to identify state and local programs that intend to engage all or nearly all TANF recipients (excluding those in child-only cases) in work or work-related activities, to examine how these programs operate, and to identify ways in which other programs might engage a larger share of their caseload in work or work-related activities. More specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

- Which state and local programs currently strive to engage all or nearly all TANF recipients in work or work-related activities?

- What program services and administrative procedures do state and local programs use to engage all or nearly all TANF recipients in work or work-related activities?
- To what extent are programs that attempt to engage all or nearly all TANF recipients succeeding, and how do levels of engagement in these programs compare to program participation rates as defined by the federal TANF legislation?

## **SITE SELECTION AND DATA SOURCES**

Our primary objective in selecting study sites for the study was to include a wide range of programs that intend to engage all or nearly all TANF recipients (excluding those in child-only cases) in work or work-related activities, regardless of the extent to which they have succeeded in doing so. Sites were not selected for their best or promising practices for engaging clients, nor were they selected on the basis of their federal participation rate. The final study sites were selected on the basis of our review of existing data and discussions with a diverse group of researchers, policymakers, and staff at nongovernmental organizations.

The sites included in the study represent three types of programs, distinguished by (1) whether some or all recipients are required to participate in activities and by (2) the activities in which recipients are required to participate. The first type of program requires all TANF recipients to participate in work or work-related activities. Programs in El Paso County, Colorado; in Franklin and Montgomery counties in Ohio; and in the states of Utah and Wisconsin fall into this category. The second type of program requires only some recipients to participate (by providing exemptions for circumstances such as disabilities or the need to care for very young children) but strives to engage all nonexempt recipients in work or work-related activities. Riverside County, California, falls into this category and is most typical of TANF programs nationwide. It was included in the study, in part, because of its efforts to maximize participation among employed TANF recipients. The third type of program requires all recipients to participate in activities but not necessarily in work or work-related activities. Oswego County, New York, represents this type of program in that it mandates that all TANF recipients take part in case management but attempts to engage in work or work-related activities only recipients who are not exempt from work requirements for medical or other reasons.

Data for the study were derived from two sources: comprehensive case studies of all seven sites and administrative data from management information systems in two sites—El Paso County, Colorado, and Utah. The purpose of the case studies was to gather information from a variety of sources in order to create a comprehensive picture of strategies used to engage TANF recipients in work and work-related activities. Toward this end, two members of the MPR project team conducted two- to three-day visits to each program during winter and spring 2004 to interview program administrators and staff and to review case files for various types of TANF recipients. The purpose of the administrative data analysis was to examine the extent to which recipients are engaged in program activities and the circumstances of those who are not counted in the federal participation rate.

## KEY FINDINGS

Key findings on programs that aim to engage all or nearly all TANF recipients (excluding those in child-only cases) in work and work-related activities, and the strategies they use to do so include the following:

*Relatively few states or counties appear to have explicit policies or procedures for engaging all or nearly all TANF recipients in work or work-related activities.*

- We asked a broad group of researchers, policymakers, and staff at nongovernment organizations to identify program sites that (1) exempt very few recipients from participating in work or work-related activities, (2) have an explicit goal of actively engaging all or nearly all recipients in program activities, and (3) have an explicit strategy in place to achieve this level of engagement.
- Only three state and five local programs nationwide were identified (it is possible other state and local programs have policies and procedures in place for engaging all or nearly all TANF recipients in work or work-related activities, but were not identified in this process).

*Programs that aim to engage a large share of TANF recipients in work and work-related activities do not approach this goal in the same way.*

- Five of the study sites require virtually all recipients to participate in program activities. However, the philosophies guiding the programs and the contexts in which they operate differ. El Paso County focuses on the needs of the entire family, while Utah focuses on the individual recipient's strengths. The other three sites use a "work-first" model, but the Ohio counties emphasize work experience placements, while Wisconsin emphasizes a more individualized style of service delivery.
- Two sites take different approaches that do not require all recipients to participate in work activities. Oswego County in New York requires all recipients to participate in monthly group case management meetings but requires only some to participate in work activities. The county's philosophy is that regular contact with staff and peer support will help recipients take incremental steps toward employment. Riverside County in California requires only some recipients to participate in activities, but the activities must pertain directly to work. The county's philosophy is that work plus education and training is the best way to become self-sufficient.

*To engage a large share of recipients in work and work-related activities, programs use two key strategies, alone or in combination: (1) defining the activities in which recipients can participate broadly and (2) providing employment opportunities outside the labor market.*

- Six of the seven study sites allow recipients who are not work ready to participate in a broad range of activities, including many that do not count in the federal participation rate calculation. Many of these activities are designed to (1) address personal and family challenges such as mental health problems or substance abuse, (2) help

recipients obtain work supports such as child care or transportation, and (3) support recipients' efforts to obtain services or comply with requirements in other programs, such as child welfare or child support enforcement services or programs.

- Four of the seven sites use work experience placements as a primary strategy for engaging recipients who have not found employment. These placements are designed to give recipients with limited work histories the opportunity to learn new skills and to gain a better understanding of workplace norms and behaviors.

*Individualized service planning, supported by comprehensive assessments, helps program staff determine the activities that are most appropriate for each TANF recipient.*

- To identify the unique circumstance that may help or hinder each recipient's progress toward employment, all sites conduct standard employability assessments, and most conduct more specialized assessments. Case managers use the results to determine which activities are most appropriate for each recipient and, in sites that allow case managers to do it, to justify variation in the hours recipients are required to participate.
- Even after the initial assessment and employment plan are complete, case managers play an active role in helping recipients move into paid employment. They regularly follow up with recipients to reassess their circumstances, modify employment goals, address barriers to employment, and provide encouragement and support. Small caseloads or group case management meetings make frequent contact feasible.

*Four administrative procedures—communicating a clear and consistent program message, tracking participation, sanctioning for nonparticipation, and holding staff accountable through performance standards and supervision—advance broad engagement.*

- Communicating clearly and consistently that the mission of the welfare agency is to put TANF recipients back to work—and that all recipients are capable of taking steps toward this goal—is extremely important, particularly in programs that offer a broad range of acceptable activities. Administrators must communicate this message to program staff and agency partners, and staff must communicate it to TANF recipients.
- Tracking participation allows case managers to (1) identify nonparticipation quickly, (2) respond to it by re-engaging recipients and/or helping them to resolve issues that affect participation, and (3) document noncompliance as a mechanism for holding recipients accountable for their progress.
- When case managers identify nonparticipation, they frequently use the sanction process as the means to re-engage recipients. In all sites, case managers communicate with those at risk of being sanctioned via mail and telephone, but in some sites, they conduct face-to-face conciliation meetings or refer recipients to specialized workers who do more intensive outreach.

- In some sites, performance standards for local offices and front-line staff are used to encourage high levels of engagement in activities, and in most of the sites, supervisors play an active role in making sure that case managers develop and monitor employment plans for all recipients on their caseloads.

*When all program activities are taken into account, the study sites in which we were able to analyze administrative data achieved high levels of engagement.*

- In the two study sites that allow all TANF recipients to participate in the broadest range of program activities—El Paso County, Colorado, and Utah—the vast majority of all recipients (90 and 82 percent, respectively) are assigned to participate in program activities to some extent.
- A substantial portion of recipients in these sites (44 percent in El Paso County and 62 percent in Utah) either participates only in activities that are not considered in the federal participation rate calculation or combines nonfederal with federally countable activities. Currently, most of these recipients are not counted in the numerator of the federal participation rate.

*Keeping the majority of TANF recipients engaged in program activities is an ongoing struggle.*

- Despite the multitude of engagement strategies programs use, a nontrivial portion of the caseload is not actively involved in any activities at any point in time. Moreover, the likelihood of sitting idle on the caseload increases with time on the caseload; in a cohort of TANF recipients in a typical month, the percentage remaining on TANF but not in activities doubles within five to six months.
- Programs face a number of challenges not only in engaging TANF recipients in work or work-related activities initially but also in sustaining their participation. These challenges include shrinking fiscal resources, staff turnover and high caseloads, and inadequate capacity in traditional and specialized program activities.

## **POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS**

Two limitations to this study suggest areas for additional research. First, the study did not set out to identify factors that contribute to high or low levels of engagement among TANF recipients, nor did it include sites for their best or promising engagement practices. Additional research designed specifically to identify factors that lead to higher levels of engagement would offer better guidance to state and local programs on how to respond to the new participation requirements that may be included in the pending TANF reauthorization legislation. Second, we examined actual levels of engagement only in the two sites that offer the broadest range of activities to all TANF recipients. Similar analyses in sites that offer a more narrow range of activities would provide deeper insight into the extent to which both the federal participation rate calculation is capturing activity among TANF recipients and recipients are actively striving toward self-sufficiency.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) made sweeping changes to the welfare system in the United States, replacing the 60-year-old Aid to Families with Dependent Children program with a block grant to states to create the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. A system that once focused on the delivery of cash benefits now encourages families to make the transition from welfare to work.

This dramatic policy change has drawn attention both to the services intended to help families with this transition and to the need to engage recipients in activities that build their capacity to work. In fact, PRWORA requires states to engage a certain minimum percentage of their caseloads in specified work and work-related activities for a specified number of hours per week. The required rate in most states has been relatively low to date, however, because the minimum rate is reduced by one percentage point for each percentage point that a state's average monthly caseload drops below its average monthly caseload for fiscal year 1995. Thus, most states have not been terribly restricted by the federal legislation. While the percentage of TANF cases meeting the participation requirement nationwide is relatively low (33 percent in fiscal year 2002), states are likely engaging a larger share of cases either in activities other than those specified in the legislation or in the specified activities but for fewer hours than required by the federal law. The goal of engaging all or nearly all TANF recipients in work and work-related activities is even explicit in some state programs.

Information on the strategies used by state and local programs to engage a large percentage of TANF recipients in work activities is important because it could help other states that have the same goal in mind. Yet, we know little about these strategies other than that they are likely to comprise a combination of policies, program services, and administrative procedures. To learn

more about these strategies and the extent to which they have been successful, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., (MPR) to conduct the Study of Work Participation and Full Engagement Strategies, an examination of seven state and local programs that attempt to engage all or nearly all TANF recipients in work and work-related activities. This report presents the study findings, which are especially timely, as the proposed reauthorization of the TANF legislation will likely require states to engage a greater percentage of their caseload in work activities.

The remainder of this chapter describes the policy context for the study, outlines the research questions that guided the study, and presents the study methodology. Chapter II provides background on the study sites and describes their general approaches to engaging TANF recipients in work or work-related activities. Chapter III presents findings on the strategies programs use to engage recipients, Chapter IV presents findings on the administrative procedures that support these strategies, and Chapter V presents findings on levels of engagement and program participation. Chapter VI summarizes the findings, presents their associated policy implications, and identifies questions to explore in future research.

#### **A. POLICY CONTEXT: PRWORA AND WORK PARTICIPATION**

PRWORA afforded states flexibility in providing assistance to low-income families with children but mandated that a high percentage of these families be involved in work or work-related activities. In fact, Congress specified a minimum state participation rate for all TANF families and another minimum rate for two-parent families. Congress also specified the types of activities in which families must participate and the minimum number of hours of participation per week that count toward the state rate.

Specifically, adults in single-parent families must participate for a minimum of 30 hours per week, 20 of which must be devoted to at least one of nine core activities: unsubsidized employment, subsidized employment, subsidized public sector employment, work experience, on-the-job training, job search and job readiness assistance, community service programs, vocational education training, or providing child care for a community service participant. The remaining 10 hours can be devoted to three other activities: job skills training directly related to employment, education directly related to employment (for high school dropouts only), or satisfactory attendance in secondary school or the equivalent (for high school dropouts only). Adults in two-parent families must participate for a combined minimum of 35 hours per week, 30 of which must be devoted to any of the nine core activities and the remaining 5 hours to any of the other three activities.

When TANF began in 1997, Congress set the minimum work participation rate at 25 percent for all families and 75 percent for two-parent families. For each subsequent year through 2002, Congress steadily raised the rate until it reached 50 percent for all families and 90 percent for two-parent families. However, for each percentage point that a state's average monthly caseload drops below its average monthly caseload for fiscal year 1995, the minimum participation rate is reduced by one percentage point.<sup>1</sup> States report data necessary to calculate their participation rate to the federal government each quarter. In fiscal year 2002, the most recent year for which participation data are available nationwide, almost all states met the federal participation requirements, in many cases because the caseload reduction credit lowered the minimum rate to considerably below 50 and 90 percent. Nevertheless, actual rates at which TANF families

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<sup>1</sup> The caseload decline must not be as a result of changes in state or federal policy in order to count toward the caseload reduction credit.

participated in federally countable activities varied substantially by state, ranging from 8 to 85 percent of all families.

The wide variation in participation rates, and the extremely low rates in some states in particular, has sparked interest in what recipients who are not counted toward the rates are doing. Are they participating in the activities specified in PRWORA but for fewer than the required hours? Are they participating in activities other than those specified in the legislation, such as mental health counseling or substance abuse treatment? Are they sitting idle on the caseload, or are they perhaps lost in the system? If these recipients are participating in activities to some extent, how are programs engaging them? Are some state or local programs being more aggressive than others in engaging more recipients? These questions are particularly relevant in the current policy environment, as the proposed PRWORA reauthorization is likely to both increase the minimum participation rates and change the methodology used to calculate these rates—including the required number of hours, the types of countable activities, and the use of the caseload reduction credit. In making these changes, it may be helpful for policymakers to consider the experience of programs that have already made efforts to engage all or nearly all TANF recipients in work and work-related activities.

## **B. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The Study of Work Participation and Full Engagement Strategies had three broad objectives: to identify state and local programs that intend to engage all or nearly all TANF recipients (excluding recipients in child-only cases) in work or work-related activities, to examine how these programs operate, and to identify ways in which other states might engage a larger share of their caseloads in work or work-related activities. More specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

- Which state and local programs currently strive to engage all or nearly all TANF recipients in work or work-related activities?
- What program services and administrative procedures do state and local programs use to engage all or nearly all TANF recipients in work or work-related activities?
- To what extent are programs that attempt to engage all or nearly all TANF recipients succeeding, and how do levels of engagement in these programs compare to program participation rates as defined by the federal TANF legislation?

### **C. SITE SELECTION**

Our primary objective in selecting study sites was to include a wide range of programs that intend to engage all or nearly all TANF recipients (excluding those in child-only cases) in work or work-related activities, regardless of the extent to which they have succeeded in doing so. Sites were not selected for their best or promising practices for engaging clients, nor were they selected on the basis of their federal participation rate.

We used a two-step process to identify the sites. In the first step, we analyzed the 2001 TANF data all states submitted to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) for the purpose of calculating federal participation rates. We also reviewed reports and databases on state participation requirements, including “State Welfare-to-Work Policies for People with Disabilities” (the Urban Institute 1998), the 2000 Welfare Rules Database (the Urban Institute), and the 1999 State Policy Documentation Project Database (Center for Law and Social Policy/Center on Budget and Policy Priorities). On the basis of this information, we then divided the states into two groups: those that appeared to require most TANF recipients to participate in work and work-related activities and those that did not. We considered a state to have such a requirement if it met either one of two criteria:

1. It grants no or few exemptions from work requirements—regardless of whether exemptions are for a personal disability, caring for a family member with a disability, caring for a young child, etc.—or it has a set of exemptions that does not apply to most of the caseload.

2. It counts at least 90 percent of its adult caseload in the denominator of the federal participation rate *and* exempts under 5 percent of its caseload from work requirements according to the ACF participation data.<sup>2</sup>

Using these criteria, we found that 10 states require most TANF recipients to participate in work and work-related activities: Arizona, Idaho, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Montana, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

In step two of the site selection process, we asked a diverse group of researchers, policymakers, and staff at community-based and nongovernmental organizations—such as the American Public Human Services Association and the National Governors Association—to suggest sites that (1) exempt very few recipients from work or work-related activities, (2) have an explicit goal of engaging all or nearly all recipients in program activities, and (3) have an explicit strategies in place to achieve this level of engagement. The sites identified in this process include programs in the states of Ohio, Utah and Wisconsin, and local programs in El Paso County, Colorado; New York City, New York; Norfolk, Virginia; Oswego County, New York; and Riverside County, California.

To make the final selection, we compared the results of the two steps and included each state that appeared in both groups.<sup>3</sup> We also attempted to include each county suggested by the individuals we consulted. All but two of the counties suggested were included in the study—one

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<sup>2</sup> While the ACF data are available for both the county and state, other sources of information on work requirements are not as readily available at the county level. Therefore, we did not attempt to systematically classify counties in the same manner as states. In order to identify counties that intend to engage all or nearly all TANF recipients in work or work-related activities, we relied on suggestions from knowledgeable individuals outside of MPR in the second step of the site selection process.

<sup>3</sup> In Ohio, where the TANF program is operated and administered at the county level, we selected two counties for the study: Montgomery County, which includes Dayton, and Franklin County, which includes Columbus.

was not interested in participating in the study, and the other was too early in its program implementation to add value to the study.

The sites included in the study represent three types of programs, distinguished by (1) whether some or all recipients are required to participate in activities and by (2) the activities in which recipients are required to participate (see Table I.1). The first type of program requires all TANF recipients to participate in work or work-related activities. These include programs in El Paso County, Colorado, Franklin and Montgomery counties in Ohio, Utah, and Wisconsin. The second type of program requires only some recipients to participate (by providing exemptions for circumstances such as disabilities or the need to care for very young children) but strives to engage all nonexempt recipients in work or work-related activities. Riverside County, California, falls into this category and is most typical of TANF programs nationwide. It was included in the study, in part, because of its efforts to maximize participation among employed TANF recipients. The third type of program requires all recipients to participate in activities but not necessarily in work or work-related activities. Oswego County, New York, represents this type of program in that it mandates that all TANF recipients take part in case management but attempts to engage in work or work-related activities only recipients who are not exempt from work requirements for medical or other reasons. More detailed descriptions of each site's approach to engagement are presented in Chapter II.

#### **D. DATA SOURCES**

Data for the study were derived from two sources: comprehensive case studies of all seven sites and administrative data from management information systems in two sites—El Paso County, Colorado and Utah.



TABLE I.1  
TYPES OF PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN STUDY

Activity Required	Recipients Required to Participate	
	All	Some
Work or work-related activities	El Paso County, Colorado Franklin County, Ohio Montgomery County, Ohio Utah Wisconsin	Riverside County, California
Case management	Oswego County, NY	

### 1. Case Studies

The purpose of the case studies was to gather information from a variety of sources in order to create a comprehensive picture of strategies used to engage TANF recipients in work and work-related activities. Toward this end, two members of the MPR project team conducted two- to three-day visits to each program during winter and spring 2004. In some sites, we visited two local TANF offices to discern how policies, program services, and administrative procedures are carried out; in other sites, we visited one office (Table I.2). Using semi-structured guided discussion techniques, we interviewed state and local TANF administrators, case managers and supervisors, eligibility workers, other TANF program line staff (such as job developers), administrators and staff at contracted service providers, and staff who handle data collection and reporting as well as management information systems. We also reviewed a small number of case files for various types of recipients, including those who have participated in program activities consistently, sporadically, or not at all. These case file reviews enriched the interview data by providing concrete examples of the concepts and issues raised by interviewees.

## 2. Administrative Data

To supplement the case studies, we analyzed administrative data from management information systems in two of the study sites—El Paso County, Colorado and Utah. To the extent that data were available, we collected information on the number and types of activities to which recipients are assigned, the number of hours they are assigned to participate, the extent to which they actually participate in assigned activities, and their progress over time. This information revealed both the extent to which recipients are engaged in program activities and the circumstances of those who are not counted in the federal participation rate.

TABLE I.2  
NUMBER AND LOCATION OF LOCAL OFFICES VISITED IN EACH SITE

	Number	Locations
El Paso County, Colorado	1	—
Franklin County, Ohio	1	—
Montgomery County, Ohio	1	—
Oswego County, New York	1	—
Riverside County, California	2	Lake Elsinore, Riverside
Utah	2	Davis County, Salt Lake County
Wisconsin	1	Dane County

The administrative data in El Paso County include all 1,204 adult recipients who were on TANF in August 2003 and reflect their participation from August 2003 through December 2003. The administrative data in Utah include the 6,187 adult recipients who were subject to program

requirements in May 2003.<sup>4</sup> Most analyses cover the six months from May 2003 through October 2003, but some cover all months from the opening of each TANF case through December 2003. August 2003 and May 2003 reflect typical months in El Paso County and Utah, respectively.

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<sup>4</sup> We excluded 927 adult recipients who were ineligible aliens, disqualified for fraud, deemed parents, or receiving Supplemental Security Income.

## **II. APPROACHES TO ENGAGEMENT**

The study sites all set out to engage a large share of TANF recipients in program activities, but they did so using different approaches. For instance, one site requires only some TANF recipients to participate in program activities, but those activities must be related to work. Another site requires all TANF recipients to participate in case management, but only some to participate in work activities. And although five sites require virtually all recipients to participate in work activities, the philosophies guiding the programs and the contexts in which they operate differ. This chapter discusses each site's philosophy and general approach to engagement as well as the key TANF policies and program features that put the approaches into practice. Additional information on site-specific policies and program features appears in Appendix A.

### **A. MODELS OF BROAD ENGAGEMENT IN WORK ACTIVITIES**

#### **1. El Paso County, Colorado—A Focus on the Family Unit**

El Paso County, Colorado, operates under the philosophy that human services delivered to TANF recipients should focus on the needs of the family unit rather than the needs of the individual recipient. The stated vision of the Department of Human Services (DHS), which administers the TANF program, is “to eliminate poverty and family violence in El Paso County,” and the mission is “to strengthen families, assure safety, promote self-sufficiency, eliminate poverty, and improve the quality of life in our community.” The county puts this philosophy into practice by (1) requiring that all TANF recipients be engaged in activities that will best improve their families' circumstances and providing no exemptions from this requirement; (2) providing access to a range of activities and services to meet the families' needs; and (3) customizing case management to individual family needs.

El Paso County’s menu of work-related activities and services reflects this family-oriented approach to engagement. Recipients may participate not only in federally countable activities but also in a variety of other activities that address barriers to work and family well-being. These activities may include attending domestic violence counseling, taking a child to mental health treatment, and/or attending parenting classes. To improve access to these activities, the county co-locates a number of partner agencies in its service centers and has developed strong partnerships with community service providers.

The county backs its “no exemptions” policy by providing highly individualized case management to a diverse set of families. A large proportion of the TANF caseload in El Paso County consists of individuals with serious and multiple challenges to work, such as substance abuse or mental health issues. Other recipients are more “job ready.” The former receive intensive case management services through in-house DHS staff, while the latter receive case management and job search services through Goodwill Industries, a contracted service provider. Both county and contracted case managers have the flexibility to vary recipients’ hours of participation to reflect individual circumstances and abilities.

## **2. Franklin County, Ohio—A Focus on Work Experience**

Franklin County takes a “work-first” approach to moving low-income families off the welfare rolls. It exempts from work participation requirements only recipients with a child under the age of one; all other recipients must participate in work and work-related activities for at least 30 hours per week. Unfortunately, Franklin County’s quest for broad engagement of the TANF caseload has become an uphill battle as a result of a recent budget crisis. This formerly resource-rich community, which includes the city of Columbus, once purchased comprehensive employment and supportive services from more than 20 agencies. Now, it primarily offers in-

house job search assistance, work experience placements, and substantially limited education and training opportunities.

Historically, Franklin County has relied heavily on work experience, and the majority of TANF recipients in the county are still assigned to a work experience placement as their primary work activity. Recipients who are unemployed after six weeks in a job readiness program are referred to an in-house resource unit that develops, coordinates, and monitors work experience placements for over 1,600 TANF and non-TANF job seekers at any point in time. Work placements are primarily clerical, retail, janitorial, and maintenance positions in government and nonprofit agencies (e.g., Goodwill Industries, Salvation Army, American Red Cross). While the recent budget crisis has not undermined this historical emphasis on work experience, it has seriously eroded the ability of county staff to supplement this experience with supportive services or programs.

### **3. Montgomery County, Ohio—A Focus on Service Integration**

The TANF program in Montgomery County, Ohio, places a strong emphasis on employment. It has adopted a 40-hour per week participation requirement to resemble the hours of a full-time employed person and exempts from participation only those recipients with a child under age one. However, nonexempt recipients may participate in a broad range of activities to meet their requirement, as long as nonfederal activities are combined with federally countable activities. For example, recipients may take part in substance abuse treatment, mental health services, or specialized employment and training as long as they devote some portion of the 40 hours to job search, a work experience placement, or job skills training. In making this choice, they are guided by program staff, who design employment plans not only with respect to the recipient's abilities and interests but also with her family's interests in mind.

To expand the availability and accessibility of services to help TANF recipients meet the work requirement, the county has forged partnerships with community social service agencies. For instance, the TANF program is located within the county's Job Center, which is recognized nationwide as one of the largest and most comprehensive one-stop centers for TANF recipients and other job seekers. The approximately 50 agencies co-located in this expansive facility share resources, refer clients to one another, and collaborate on case planning. In addition, the county hosts the Targeted Community-Based Collaborative, which brings together over 60 agencies every month to share information about community resources and develop ways to improve access to services.

#### **4. Utah—A Focus on Individual Strengths**

Utah's welfare system is based on the principle that all parents can and should participate to their maximum ability in program activities that raise family income. This philosophy is most obvious in the changing orientation of the state's TANF program over the past decade. The Family Employment Program (FEP), which once focused on identifying why recipients could not work and granting exemptions accordingly, now concentrates on identifying what recipients *can* do and placing them in activities that are appropriate to their strengths. The new philosophy is reflected in the state's exemption policy; no families are exempt from work participation requirements, and only sanctioned families are excluded from the state's federal work participation rate. Moreover—and perhaps most important—recipients may participate in a range of activities for an appropriate number of hours per week given their abilities and personal and family circumstances.

Utah puts its policies into practice through intensive, individualized case management. Each case manager handles a relatively small caseload of 60 to 90 families, 20 to 30 of which are on TANF. Such caseload sizes enable case managers to work closely with recipients to identify and

capitalize on their strengths. Case managers also have the authority to adjust participation hours and activities, and place recipients in a range of activities offered by community agencies. In addition, in-house social workers support case managers by conducting in-depth psychosocial assessments, providing short-term therapy, and linking clients to specialized service providers.

## 5. Wisconsin—A Focus on Tiered Case Planning

Wisconsin's TANF program—called Wisconsin Works, or W-2—emphasizes rapid attachment to the labor market. The state's philosophy is that everyone who can work should work, and no families are exempt from work requirements. However, the state acknowledges that some recipients have complex service needs that require more individualized attention. W-2 therefore incorporates a tiered approach to work and work-related placements. Case managers assign TANF applicants to one of the four following tiers based on their level of job readiness:

- ***W-2 Transitions (W-2T)***. Individuals assigned to this tier face serious and persistent personal and family challenges such as domestic violence issues, mental health conditions, and substance abuse. They receive services that address these challenges or assistance applying for SSI. Those assigned to W-2T receive a TANF grant and are subject to participation requirements.
- ***Community Service Jobs (CSJ)***. This tier is intended for work-ready individuals who face barriers that prevent them from being hired in the paid labor market, such as little or no work experience or a criminal history. These clients are placed in a work position to gain experience and are paid with TANF funds for the hours they work.
- ***Trial Jobs***. Individuals in this tier are hired by private-sector employers on a probationary basis. The state Department of Human Services arranges placements with employers and pays them \$300 per month for up to six months to supplement the cost of each recipient's wages, which are commensurate with an entry-level salary. Employers agree to hire recipients permanently, provided that their performance during probation was satisfactory.
- ***Case Management***. Individuals in this tier receive intensive job search assistance but are not eligible for a TANF grant. They are linked to a consortium of agencies that provide job readiness support, job search assistance, and placement. Those who have not found a job within 30 days are re-evaluated for a different tier.



In Wisconsin, state performance standards drive service delivery. The state’s “full and appropriate engagement” standard, one of 10 performance standards developed in 2000 that county welfare agencies must meet, requires that 80 percent of the total TANF caseload in a county participate in at least 30 hours of work or work-related activities per week, including federally countable and other state-approved nonfederal activities. This is substantially higher than the rate required by PRWORA in 2000 and today as well.

## **B. VARIATIONS ON MODELS OF BROAD ENGAGEMENT**

Two of the study sites take different approaches to engagement in work and work-related activities. Oswego County in New York requires all TANF recipients to participate in program activities, but requires only some to participate in work activities specifically. Riverside County in California requires only some recipients to participate in program activities, but requires that those recipients participate in work activities. Riverside also places a special emphasis on maximizing participation (through increased hours) and creating advancement opportunities for recipients who are already employed. This section describes how these two sites put their approaches into practice.

### **1. Oswego County, New York—A Focus on Frequent Client Contact**

Oswego County, New York, requires all TANF recipients to participate in a monthly group case management meeting to remain eligible for TANF. The county first introduced this requirement in 1999 with the implementation of the Pathways Case Management System. The core components of Pathways—monthly group meetings, a participant activity diary, and an automated participant tracking system—are used to help recipients take incremental steps toward employment. Pathways encourages detailed and frequent goal setting, peer support and accountability, and participation in a broad range of program activities customized to individual

circumstances. TANF recipients meet monthly with program staff and 10 to 15 peers to develop activity plans and review progress toward employment. Recipients who do not attend these meetings may have their TANF cases closed for failure to comply with eligibility requirements.

While all TANF recipients are required to participate in the monthly case management meetings, some are exempt from work or work-related activities because of domestic abuse, pregnancy, physical or mental health conditions, or application for SSI. In practice, approximately half of the TANF caseload is exempt, mostly on the basis of physical or mental health conditions. Recipients who are exempt are encouraged in the case management meetings to participate in work activities even though they cannot be sanctioned for failing to do so. Nonexempt recipients may be sanctioned if they do not meet their work participation requirements. The penalty for noncompliance with work requirements is a partial reduction in the TANF grant (recall that the penalty for noncompliance with Pathways meetings is case closure).

Oswego County takes a work-first approach with TANF recipients who are not exempt from participating in work and work-related activities. They are expected to participate in federally countable activities for at least 30 hours per week. They must also contact at least five employers per week. The vast majority of these recipients are assigned to job search and job readiness activities first. If they do not find a job, they are placed in a work experience site—either with the local government or nonprofit organizations. Nonfederal activities—such as extended job search, mental health and substance abuse treatment, or caring for a disabled family member or for a child with behavioral problems—are typically assigned in combination with other work-related activities.

## **2. Riverside County, California—A Focus on Work Plus Education and Training**

Riverside County, California, is the only site among the seven included in this study that exempts a substantial percentage of TANF recipients—about 12 percent of the caseload—from participation in any program activities. However, nonexempt clients must participate in work or work-related activities. According to criteria set by the state, the following groups of recipients are exempt:

- Those with disabilities expected to last at least 30 days as verified by a physician
- Those caring for an ill or incapacitated family member
- Pregnant women who cannot work or participate, as recommended by a physician
- Those caring for a first baby up to six months of age or a subsequent baby up to four months of age
- Individuals older than 60 or younger than 16 who are in school full time
- Nonparent relatives caring for dependents at risk of being placed in foster care

Exempting these recipients leaves Riverside County with a TANF population that is more work-ready relative to programs in other study sites.

Riverside County was one of the first counties in the nation to develop a strong work-first approach for welfare recipients, and it continues to operate under that approach today for its nonexempt recipients. California state policy requires nonexempt adults in single-parent families to participate in work activities for 32 hours per week and in two-parents families to participate for a combined 35 hours per week. Twenty of the 32 or 35 hours must be devoted to employment or to activities directly relevant to securing employment. In addition, Riverside County allows recipients to participate in nonfederal activities—such as mental health or substance abuse treatment, domestic violence counseling, and English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. Recipients may participate in these activities alone for a temporary period of

time or for up to 12 or 15 hours per week in combination with federally countable activities indefinitely.

Riverside County recently embarked on an effort to maximize engagement among employed TANF recipients. In 1999, the county began to encourage education and training among working recipients with an eye toward increasing their hours of participation and helping them move on to better jobs. The message under this new program model is that work plus education and training is the best way to become self-sufficient. To put the new philosophy into practice, county administrators developed a two-phase program consisting of intensive job search activities for recipients without substantial employment (Phase I) and job retention and advancement activities combined with education and training for recipients working at least 20 hours per week at minimum wage or higher (Phase II). In 2000, the county expanded its approach to a third phase, which offers continued supportive services for those who have left TANF for work.

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### **III. PROGRAM STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE FULL ENGAGEMENT**

In order to engage all or most TANF recipients in work or work-related activities, programs must be designed and program staff equipped to serve recipients with a range of characteristics, needs, and abilities—including those with few or many challenges to work. As noted in Chapter II, the study sites did not all approach universal engagement in the same way. Some focused on creating a broad range of program options, while others concentrated on providing employment opportunities outside the paid labor market for recipients who are not work ready. To support placement in these activities, the sites also conducted comprehensive assessments, implemented an individualized approach to case planning and worked with other service providers to increase access to needed programs or services.

In this chapter, we examine in detail how the sites used these strategies to engage all or nearly all TANF recipients in work or work-related program activities. It is likely that one of these strategies alone, or even a few combined, will not achieve full engagement. To do so, programs will have to incorporate many of the strategies into their approaches.

#### **A. BROADLY DEFINED AND FLEXIBLE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

Most of the study sites used broadly defined and flexible program requirements to encourage wide participation in program activities. To engage all or most TANF recipients in program activities, six of the seven study sites have flexible work requirements; that is, they define allowable activities broadly and provide case managers with discretion to decide which activities should be included in a recipients' employment services plan. Four of the six also allow flexibility in the number of required hours for at least some portion of the TANF caseload (see Table III.1). Case managers in all sites are encouraged to place recipients in federally countable activities when the activities are deemed appropriate to facilitate the transition to paid

employment. However, case managers in sites that define acceptable activities broadly are encouraged to place recipients who are not ready for work in activities that best address their circumstances and needs—often as a first step to be followed by placement in federally countable activities.

TABLE III.1  
DEFINING PARTICIPATION HOURS AND ACTIVITIES

	Flexibility with Hours	Limited Flexibility with Hours
Broad range of activities	Utah El Paso County Wisconsin (W-2T)* Oswego (Pathways)*	Montgomery County Riverside County Oswego County (traditional)* Wisconsin (CSJ)*
Limited range of activities		Franklin County

\*Indicates study sites that use two different approaches within the same site.

Sites seeking broad participation allow case managers to go beyond federally countable activities in case planning. Nonfederal activities fall into several categories as shown in Table III.2. Many of the activities are designed to address personal and family challenges such as domestic abuse, physical and mental health conditions, drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness, and learning disabilities. Others are intended to help clients obtain work supports, such as child care or transportation, before securing employment. Still others are geared toward facilitating recipient efforts to obtain services or comply with service plans in other agencies (for example, relating to child welfare, social security, and public housing). El Paso County and Utah offer the broadest range of nonfederal activities to the broadest group of TANF recipients.

Although six of the seven sites define activities broadly, they differ in terms of the extent of flexibility afforded to the case managers who work with recipients to design employment plans. Three sites—Montgomery County, El Paso County, and Oswego County—have formal lists of

program activities to help guide case managers’ decisions.<sup>1</sup> The remaining sites (Utah, Wisconsin, and Riverside County) allow case managers complete flexibility in assigning clients to activities. Case managers who are afforded this level of flexibility are usually required to justify their selection of activities.

TABLE III. 2  
GOING BEYOND FEDERALLY DEFINED ACTIVITIES

Employment and Training	Accessing Work Supports	Specialized Treatment	Life Skills	Child-Related Activities	Requirements for Other Agencies
Vocational Rehabilitation	Find child care provider	Specialized assessment	Family life skills	Attend school appointments	Comply with child support enforcement
Homework for college program	Obtain drivers license	Physical or mental health treatment	Teen parent services	Help with homework	Child welfare service plan (for dual agency families)
	Apply for transportation assistance (e.g., car repairs, auto loans, bus passes)	Substance abuse treatment	Parenting programs	Attend to physical or mental health conditions	Apply for SSI
	Obtain work-related equipment or clothing	Domestic violence	Mentoring	Volunteer for child-related activities (e.g., little league, tutor in child’s class)	Attend court appointments
		Physical or developmental disabilities	Personal development activities (e.g., journal writing)		Apply for housing assistance
		Pre-natal programs	Organizational skills workshops		
		Services for learning disabilities	Budgeting skills workshops		

The sites also differ in whether they allow participation in nonfederal activities alone or only in combination with federally countable activities. In both Utah and El Paso County, and for recipients in Wisconsin in the W-2T (Transitions) tier, TANF recipients can participate in activities that are deemed most appropriate to address their needs and circumstances, regardless of whether they are federally countable or not. In the other sites, recipients can only participate in nonfederal activities in combination with federally countable activities. For example, TANF recipients in Wisconsin who are assigned to the community service jobs tier (see Chapter II) must participate in their work placement for at least 20 of the federally required 30 hours per

<sup>1</sup> The list in Montgomery County, for example, contains 17 activities that count toward the work participation requirement. The list in El Paso County contains 27 activities, 17 of which are considered in the federal participation rate calculation and 10 of which are not. However, case managers can place recipients in activities not listed with a supervisor’s approval.



week, leaving 10 hours for other activities. Recipients in Riverside County face similar demands—20 of the county’s 32 required hours must be devoted to federally countable activities.

In addition to defining program activities broadly, sites seeking broad participation may reduce participation hours for those with personal and family challenges. Three of the study sites allow case managers to temporarily reduce the required number of participation hours for individuals with personal and family challenges that interfere with their ability to work. For recipients in Utah, El Paso County, and Wisconsin’s W-2T tier, case managers can reduce the number of hours to whatever they feel is reasonable. The goal is to develop a plan that moves a recipient toward employment without imposing unrealistic expectations.

## **B. USE OF PAID AND UNPAID WORK EXPERIENCE**

Several of the study sites also use paid and unpaid work experience to provide structured work opportunities for TANF recipients who do not find paid employment on their own. Work experience placements are temporary jobs in which recipients work 20 to 30 hours a week in exchange for a TANF grant. Four of the seven study sites—Franklin County, Montgomery County, Oswego County, and Wisconsin—use work experience as the primary means for helping recipients who have been unsuccessful in finding paid employment on their own to meet their work requirements.<sup>2</sup>

Work experience placements are intended to teach workplace skills and norms to those with little work experience. A person placed in a clerical position, for example, may learn new computer skills, how to operate a multi-line telephone system, or new filing methods. In any position, recipients can learn appropriate workplace behaviors such as notifying the supervisor

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<sup>2</sup> Wisconsin is the only study site that provides both paid and unpaid placements. In other study sites, such as El Paso County and Utah, work experience is available through contracted service providers in the one-stop center or in the community, but is rarely used.

when they are unable to attend work, getting along with co-workers, and wearing acceptable attire in the workplace. Recipients are typically placed in entry-level jobs in hospitals and nonprofit or government agencies—Goodwill Industries, Salvation Army, Red Cross, and Catholic Charities, for example. The jobs last from three to nine months and are typically in clerical, cashier, food service, and janitorial and or other cleaning services positions.

Work experience placements often are combined with other activities to expand a recipient's capacity to work. Supplemental activities address personal and family challenges or teach basic life skills such as problem-solving, budgeting, parenting, and anger management.

**WEP Plus: Providing Work Opportunities to TANF Recipients in Montgomery County**

WEP Plus is a three-phase intensive job search and work experience program for TANF recipients in Montgomery County. Lutheran Social Services, co-located in The Job Center, operates WEP Plus. Recipients may be enrolled in WEP Plus for up to 24 months.

**Phase I.** Phase I is a 30-day intensive orientation and job search phase during which recipients are required to complete at least 35 job applications per week. Recipients attend daily classes from 9:00 a.m. to noon and conduct an independent job search from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. They participate in structured job readiness classes, GED classes, life skills education, work site skills training, and case management.

**Phase II.** If recipients have not found a job after a month, they move to Phase II where they are assigned to a work experience site. Work placements are available at over 20 different agencies within the community and include positions such as clerical, medical, factory work, and cashiering. Job developers attempt to find placements that may lead to permanent jobs. Work experience placements are rotated every 90 days. Job coaching and shadowing are available to recipients while in their work placements.

**Phase III.** Phase III is for TANF recipients who get a job. For the first 12 months of employment, staff provide job retention services, such as case management, and work supports to ease the transition from welfare to work. Recipients may receive work subsidies of between \$60 and \$240 (depending on their salary) for every month during which they maintain the job and work at least 35 hours per week.

**C. COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENTS**

In programs where some TANF recipients are not required to participate in work activities, initial assessments often are used to identify those who meet established exemption criteria. In contrast, programs that aim to engage all recipients in work or work-related activities use initial assessments to examine recipients' capacity to work and identify any special needs. When case managers have the option to place recipients in a broad range of program activities, assessments

play a critical role in identifying the most appropriate activities. For recipients who do not succeed in traditional job search programs, in-depth assessments may help case managers determine whether more specialized services might be beneficial. All the study sites have formal assessment processes in place and use these processes for several purposes: (1) to identify immediate service needs, (2) to determine the recipients' employability and employment goals, and (3) to identify specialized service needs. Sites then use these results to develop individualized service plans.

### **1. Screening Recipients to Identify Immediate Service Needs**

By screening recipients “up front,” sites can more readily identify recipients' immediate needs and thus expedite assignments to services and work activities. In each of the study sites, intake workers briefly screen recipients to determine their need for immediate assistance with regard to such issues as housing, clothing, food, utilities, transportation, or child care. Intake workers may ask a TANF applicant, “What brought you in the door?” or “What types of services do you need to begin working?” Intake workers may either refer the recipient to community resources or inform the case manager about the assessment results.

### **2. Determining Recipients' Employability and Employment Goals**

In addition to determining immediate service needs, thorough assessments help to match recipients with suitable work activities. Case managers and/or contracted service providers conduct a standard assessment of a recipient's work history, level of education, job skills and interests, basic skills, work-related needs, and potential barriers to employment—usually during the first encounter. Case managers either use a standardized assessment tool or conduct a more informal interview in which they rely on their professional experience rather than a structured interview guide. They use this information to develop individualized employment goals, match

recipients to work experience placements, and link them to specialized assessments or services such as mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, or domestic violence counseling.

### **3. Using Specialized Assessments to Identify Intensive Service Needs**

A comprehensive assessment strategy also includes specialized assessments, which are typically conducted by licensed professionals who contract with the TANF agency. The assessments, designed to uncover hidden and complex barriers to employment—including mental health conditions, substance abuse, domestic violence, and learning disabilities—can provide the basis for clinical diagnoses and treatment plans.

The procedures involved in setting up specialized assessments and the staff who conduct the assessments vary by site. In Utah, TANF recipients are screened during orientation for drug and alcohol use and domestic violence. If the results are positive, they are referred to a licensed social worker outstationed at one of a number of local employment centers who conducts an in-depth psychological assessment. In El Paso County, recipients are screened for learning disabilities during the case-planning interview. In addition, mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence specialists are stationed in-house to conduct specialized assessments. In Montgomery County, Goodwill Industries conducts an Abilities Assessment for those suspected of having serious barriers to work that includes basic skills and aptitude tests and a four-hour psychological evaluation. In all three of these sites, the specialists give case managers an in-depth evaluation report with treatment recommendations. In some sites, case managers refer recipients directly to specialized treatment providers for an assessment if hidden barriers to employment are suspected. In addition, recipients may self-refer to a co-located mental health, substance abuse, or domestic violence specialist for assessment.

## **D. INDIVIDUALIZED CASE PLANNING**

When programs aim to engage all recipients in a broad range of program activities, case managers play a more active role in helping recipients to develop an employment plan with the ultimate goal of moving from welfare to work. To one degree or another, case managers in the study sites use the following approaches to create employment plans that match the interests and abilities of their TANF recipients:

- Work-focused, client-centered approach to case management
- Regular and frequent contact with recipients
- Formal processes for encouraging progress toward self-sufficiency

### **1. Work-Focused, Client-Centered Approach to Case Management**

Full engagement strategies are built on two primary principles—(1) self-sufficiency is achieved through work and (2) each TANF recipient’s capacity to work is different. The work-focused, client-centered approach to case management was best expressed by a program administrator in Utah and a case manager in Wisconsin. In the words of the former:

All parents can and should participate in their maximum ability in program activities that increase their family income. . . .The ultimate goal is to get the person employable. We shifted from someone saying they can’t work and exempting them to saying, ‘What can they do?’

The latter expands on these ideas by describing the W-2 program as “a work program that is about meeting the needs and goals of clients.”

The principle that underpins both statements is that if work is the final goal, then achieving it means creating an employment plan that responds to a recipient’s needs and capitalizes on her strengths. Case managers throughout the study sites have been able to develop such plans by (1) thinking outside the “work-first box,” (2) encouraging recipients to set their own goals, and (3) considering the recipient’s family.

Thinking outside the work-first box means addressing barriers to work in ways that are innovative and client specific. For example, in developing a service plan for an agoraphobic TANF recipient who did not have access to private transportation, a case manager suggested that she ride the bus each day for one week for as long as she was comfortable, extending the time each day. The recipient eventually became more comfortable on the bus, expanding the range of employers to which she was able to travel. Another case manager encouraged a TANF recipient to volunteer at her child's school as part of her participation requirement, which taught her appropriate workplace behaviors such as showing up regularly and on time.

This approach to case planning depends on how much latitude case managers have in designing employment plans. In several sites, flexibility is the rule. One program administrator in Utah said, "The reason why the program has been a success is that we do have flexibility. It's hard to fit everyone into the same mold and require everyone to meet the same expectations." A Wisconsin program administrator echoed these thoughts, "You have to give case managers discretion and provide a full menu of options for clients."

The second component of a work-focused, client-centered approach to case management is to allow TANF recipients to set their own goals. According to program administrators and front-line staff, this technique makes recipients more willing to participate in an employment plan because they have a greater sense of ownership in the plan. Administrators in El Paso County emphasized the importance of letting recipients make choices about their employment plans. "We believe that clients should make that choice with us. . . . We may have people with the same barriers wanting to do different things." A case manager noted, "I take into account everything that would impact participation and the clients' ability to work. . . . I try to understand where the client is at. The more barriered, the more I look at alternative activities."

The third component of a work-focused client-centered approach is expanding the focus of the case from the client to the family unit by allowing case managers to address child-related problems that may interfere with a client’s ability to participate in work or work-related activities. The “holistic” approach, as described by the El Paso County Department of Human Services is intended “to strengthen families, assure safety, promote self-sufficiency, eliminate poverty, and improve the quality of life in our community.” A TANF program administrator in Montgomery County also noted that staff make an extra effort to determine what is important to families. Similarly, in Oswego County, recipients are encouraged during monthly Pathways meetings to set goals that include their children—for example, taking them to the doctor or dentist, obtaining a immunization records, and attending sporting events.

## **2. Regular and Frequent Contact with Recipients**

Like a client-centered employment plan, regular and frequent contact between TANF recipients and case managers is another part of individualized case planning that is used to motivate recipients to participate in program activities. When their workload allows it, case managers talk regularly with recipients, by telephone or in person, to discuss eligibility changes, review progress toward employment goals, help them access work supports, and address personal and family challenges that interfere with participation in work or work-related activities. They celebrate recipients’ successes and take a tough love approach to nonparticipation.

In four of the seven study sites—El Paso County, Oswego County, Riverside County, and Wisconsin—case managers are required to contact TANF recipients on their caseloads monthly. This is more feasible in sites like Wisconsin and El Paso County because case managers there have relatively small caseload, ranging from a low of 40 to 80 recipients in Wisconsin to 70 to 90 work-ready recipients in El Paso County (Table III.3). Other sites—Franklin and

Montgomery counties, for example—require contact at least every six months. Case managers there have less flexibility in case planning and typically carry a caseload of 250 to 350 families, including anywhere from 30 to 75 TANF families. However, some case managers meet more frequently with TANF recipients who have complex service needs or who are not participating in program activities.

TABLE III.3  
CASE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND FREQUENCY OF CLIENT CONTACT

	El Paso County, CO	Franklin County, OH	Montgomery County, OH	Oswego County, NY	Riverside County, CA	Utah	Wisconsin
Structure of Case Management	In-house (hard-to-employ) Goodwill Industries (work-ready)	Generic case manager (combined caseload)	Generic case manager (combined caseload)	Specialized case manager	Phase I (job search) Phase II (employed)	Generic case manager (combined caseload)	Generic case manager
Average TANF Caseload (per case manager)	100-125 cases (in-house) 70-90 cases (Goodwill)	300-350 cases (30-50 TANF )	250 cases (60-75 TANF)	80-100 cases	100-110 cases (phase I) 60-90 cases (phase II)	60-90 cases (20-30 TANF)	40-80 cases
Required frequency of Client Contact	90 days (in-house) monthly (Goodwill)	6 months	6 months	Monthly contact with Pathways As needed with case manager	Monthly	90 days (monthly in some offices)	Monthly

### 3. Monitoring Progress Toward Self-Sufficiency

Monitoring progress toward self-sufficiency, the third component of individualized case planning, is intended to help recipients stay on track toward employment. Addressing multiple personal and family challenges can be painstakingly slow. To keep recipients moving toward their goals, several sites have developed formal procedures to encourage and record progress. For example, caseworkers in Wisconsin take an incremental approach, seeking to move recipients from one tier to the next, increasing the amount of work and reducing the level of support provided at each level. In Oswego County, staff debriefings are held after each



Pathways case management meeting so that caseworkers can identify recipients who are making progress and those who are not.

**Case Study: Moving Hard-to-Employ TANF Recipients Toward Work in Wisconsin**

Mary Wise<sup>3</sup> received W-2 for six months after fleeing an abusive relationship. A felony charge prevented her from getting a job. Initially, she was placed in the W-2T tier until she could get a handle on her life. During that time the activities included in her employability plan were (1) attend mental health counseling sessions, (2) participate in a domestic violence support group, (3) look for housing, and (4) write in a journal for at least five hours a week. After five months in the W-2T tier, Mary was reassigned to a CSJ placement at a local food pantry. In the CSJ tier, her employability plan changed. She continued to attend mental health counseling and a domestic abuse support group, but spent the majority of her time in a work placement at the food pantry, which she reportedly enjoyed and attended regularly. According to her CSJ worker, she did not complete all of her hours during some pay periods. However, most absences were excused for good cause. The case manager is optimistic about Ms. Wise's outlook, noting that, "She is very motivated and driven."

Riverside County uses education and training "career ladders" to encourage progress for working TANF recipients. TANF recipients who are employed for at least 30 days, for at least 20 hours per week, and earn at least minimum wage move from Phase I (job search) to Phase II (job retention and advancement). Recipients complete CHOICES, a computer-based assessment tool used to identify employment and training that may lead to job retention and advancement. The assessment information is used to develop career advancement plans in Phase II that combine education—basic, ESL, or occupational and vocational training—with work. Case managers on site at community colleges and adult schools help with day-to-day challenges and monitor attendance and progress. Those who no longer qualify for TANF because of earnings are moved to Phase III, where case managers continue to follow up with them periodically. In addition, transportation assistance continues for 12 months and child care for 24 months after cash assistance case closure.

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<sup>3</sup> Fictitious name.

## E. PROVIDING ACCESS TO A BROAD RANGE OF SERVICES

Achieving broad participation means providing adequate access to employment and training services and—for sites with flexible case planning, adequate access to a broad range of services. The study sites have improved access to services by co-locating with employment and specialized service providers, coordinating service planning, and creating formal interagency collaboratives.

### 1. Co-locating the TANF Agency with One-Stop Centers or Service Providers

By co-locating the TANF agency within the one-stop center or employment service provider, the study sites have improved access by tapping into existing community employment and training resources. More than half the sites have co-located local welfare offices in the local Workforce Investment Agency (WIA) one-stop center or have established job resource rooms through contracted service providers (Table III.4). For example, in Montgomery County, the Department of Job and Family Services is co-located in the Job Center, which is recognized as one of the leading one-stop centers in the nation in that it is home to more than 50 agencies that provide employment and work supports, education and training opportunities, and other community-based services to welfare recipients and other job seekers.

TABLE III.4  
STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES

	Co-location in One Stop Centers or Agencies with Resource Rooms	Co-location of Specialized Treatment Providers	Formal Interagency Collaboratives
El Paso County	X	X	X
Franklin County		X	
Montgomery County	X	X	X
Oswego County			
Riverside County		X	
Utah	X	X	X
Wisconsin	X	X	X

## **2. Co-locating with Specialized Treatment Providers**

Co-locating specialized service providers within the welfare agency improves access by giving case managers a valuable resource for dealing with hard-to-employ TANF recipients, especially with regard to addressing personal and family challenges. Specialized treatment providers are agencies that provide services for mental health conditions, learning disabilities, drug and alcohol addictions, domestic abuse, and other conditions. Six of the seven sites co-locate at least one specialized treatment provider in the welfare office, and five of the six co-locate multiple providers. Examples of co-located specialized providers include the following.

**AIMS (Franklin County).** Franklin County’s Advance Intervention, Moving to Success (AIMS) program is an intensive case management program developed by a collaborative of four mental health agencies. AIMS workers—co-located in the five county welfare offices—assess clients, teach them basic life skills, monitor and track their participation in activities, and link them to appropriate services.

**Licensed Social Workers (Utah).** Utah has hired about 20 full-time master’s level social workers, many clinically licensed, to work in local employment centers across the state. They conduct in-depth psychological assessments, link clients to specialized treatment providers, attend sanction conciliation reviews, and, in some cases, conduct short-term therapy.

**Advocates for Domestic Violence (Riverside County).** Advocates for Domestic Violence (ADV) provides shelter, support groups, crisis intervention, parenting workshops, individual counseling, anger management workshops, and case management for TANF recipients in Riverside County. Five specialists are co-located in county welfare offices.

## **3. Establishing Formal Collaborative Partnerships**

Formal collaborative partnerships augment access to services by sharing of policy and program information across agencies, identifying “best practices” in service delivery, developing

strategies to streamline access, and expanding the availability of existing services. For example, the Targeted Community-Based Collaborative (TCBC) brings together 65 agencies in Montgomery County for a monthly day-long meeting led by a professional facilitator. The El Paso County Community Partnership Group, which includes 40 to 50 agencies, meets quarterly for half a day to discuss ways to improve the coordination of services and collaboration between service providers. TANF agency staff attending the meetings inform front-line case managers about the resources available through the partner agencies. In some cases, partner agencies may conduct presentations for TANF program staff on the services available to TANF recipients and how to access them.

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#### **IV. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES THAT SUPPORT FULL ENGAGEMENT**

Achieving full engagement depends on whether and the extent to which this philosophy is supported (1) at the highest levels of management and (2) by TANF agency administrative procedures. For instance, senior policymakers and program administrators must champion the philosophy in the messages they send to their staff and their agency partners; their goal is to ensure that program and contractor staff buy in to the philosophy and use it to guide their daily service delivery efforts. Putting the philosophy into practice, however, means that administrative procedures must facilitate a recipient's movement through the system, track this movement, help staff manage caseloads, give managers the authority to hold staff accountable for outcomes, and document program successes and failures.

We identified four administrative procedures used by the study sites to promote full engagement: (1) communicating a clear and consistent program message; (2) tracking client participation closely; (3) using sanctions to encourage participation; and (4) using performance standards to hold staff accountable for outcomes. Like the strategies, it is not likely that one of these procedures alone will support full engagement. To do so, programs will have to use several procedures.

##### **A. COMMUNICATING A CLEAR AND CONSISTENT PROGRAM MESSAGE**

Achieving full engagement is a "top-down" effort. The message from program administrators to service-delivery staff and from service delivery staff to TANF recipients is that the mission of the welfare agency is to put recipients back to work, and that recipients are capable of taking steps toward this goal. This message must be delivered clearly and consistently, and is particularly important in programs that offer a broad range of acceptable program activities and afford case managers broad discretion in assigning recipients to activities.

Without a clear emphasis on the importance of work and self-sufficiency, programs risk recipients stagnating in activities that are not helping them progress.

Several of the welfare offices we visited have strong leaders who have championed this message in their agencies and throughout their communities. For example, in 1997, program administrators in El Paso County capitalized on the additional resources and flexibility afforded them through PRWORA to redefine the mission of their TANF program. The new mission is to eliminate poverty and family violence in El Paso County by strengthening families, promoting self-sufficiency, ensuring the safety of all county residents, and generally improving the quality of life in the community. To communicate this message to program staff, program administrators printed it on the back of business cards and on documents and posters throughout the Department of Human Services. To communicate it to other agency partners and the community at large, program administrators conducted an aggressive community outreach campaign.

Communicating a strong message about engagement to program staff may be challenging. Everyone may not be receptive to the message and the program implications. For instance, regardless of program administrators' efforts to persuade front-line staff to buy into the changes, resistance was strong when changes were first introduced in El Paso County and Utah. Staff turnover was high as the agencies adjusted to new program goals. To ease the transition in these and other sites, program administrators coordinated agency-wide training sessions to encourage buy-in, supervisors addressed concerns during staff meetings, and front-line staff helped each other to adjust.

Getting the message across to TANF recipients poses a different set of challenges. Aggressive efforts to inform recipients about program requirements do not guarantee that they will participate. Even if they are repeatedly informed in various ways that they must participate

in order to receive benefits, recipients may not clearly understand the rules or believe that they will be enforced.

## **B. TRACKING PARTICIPATION CLOSELY**

Tracking TANF recipients is critical to continuous participation in program activities. The process allows case managers to (1) identify nonparticipation immediately, (2) respond to it by quickly re-engaging recipients and/or helping them to resolve issues that stand the way of participation, and (3) document compliance/noncompliance as the means to holding recipients accountable for their progress.

The study sites use a range of procedures to track participation. Processes differ with respect to the types of information reported, who reports it, the format in which it is reported, and the frequency with which it is reported. Despite variations in procedures, program administrators and front-line staff in all of the study sites reported that tracking was generally timely and consistent. However, heavy workloads sometimes interfere with case managers' ability to respond immediately to reported lapses in participation.

**Types of Information Reported.** At a minimum, study sites gather information on the types of activities in which recipients participate and on the number of hours they devote to these activities during the reporting period. For recipients enrolled in school, staff collect information from instructors on attendance and grades. Examples of other types of information that are gathered in some sites include the length of time recipients have spent in each activity, and notes on their progress within each activity.



**Who Reports on Participation.** Case managers gather information from in-house workshop instructors, contracted service providers, collateral contacts, and recipients.<sup>1</sup> The flow of communication between case managers and these entities is essential to reliable reporting. Three of the seven sites rely primarily on contracted service providers to gather information on participation hours and activities, and to submit this information to case managers in a monthly report. This process appears to work well.<sup>2</sup> El Paso County is the only site that relies exclusively on recipient self-report.

**Reporting Format.** A well-organized, common-sense format helps case managers easily identify recipients who are not participating in program activities. The format is generally a standard summary report from contracted service providers or recipient activity log timesheets. Some study sites, such as Riverside County, use activity logs from recipients as well as more formal reports from contracted service providers.

**Reporting Frequency.** Frequent reporting allows case managers to respond quickly to lapses in participation. In all sites, the formal process for reporting is at least monthly, and three of the seven sites report more often. In addition, program staff often notify case managers directly and immediately when a recipient is not participating in program activities.

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of collateral contacts include mental health counselors, substance abuse treatment staff, and classroom instructors for those enrolled in education or training programs.

<sup>2</sup> Formal contracts with outside service providers help to ensure that the data they report to TANF program staff is consistent and timely. Contracts often contain language that binds providers to comply with specified tracking procedures at the risk of financial or other penalties.

### C. USING SANCTIONS TO ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

Although the study sites have very different sanction policies, all use sanctions to encourage participation in work and work-related activities.<sup>3</sup> Sanctions are consequences—a reduction in the amount of or elimination of the TANF grant, for example—for nonparticipation in work or work-related activities. However, the purpose of sanctions is not to punish recipients but to (1) provide an incentive to participate and (2) create a mechanism for case managers to both identify why recipients are not participating and develop a plan to re-engage them in program activities. States and localities have considerable discretion in how sanction policies are structured, in the process for imposing them, and in how they may be cured. Therefore, it is not surprising that the sites used sanctions in different ways to increase participation.

**Outreach.** Aggressive outreach efforts, which were used by all of the sites to encourage re-engagement in program activities, can take a variety of forms. In all sites, case managers mail a notice to nonparticipating recipients explaining both what they must do to meet requirements and the consequences of continued noncompliance. In some sites, however, case managers go to more extensive lengths. For instance, in Riverside County, case managers must visit nonparticipants in their home before initiating a sanction. Case managers in El Paso County also conduct home visits regularly.

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<sup>3</sup> Oswego and Riverside counties implement partial sanctions, El Paso County and Utah impose gradual full-family sanctions, Franklin and Montgomery counties impose immediate full-family sanctions, and Wisconsin bans individuals from a paid tier after three strikes (or periods of nonparticipation). In addition, Oswego County closes the TANF grant for noncompliance with Pathways case management meetings and Wisconsin uses a pay for performance structure within paid tiers.

### **Re-Engaging Nonparticipating Clients in Utah: Persistence Yields Participation**

Betty Jones,<sup>4</sup> a 28-year old single mother of four children (ages 8, 9, 11, and 13) did not begin actively participating in program activities in Utah until her case manager imposed a sanction. Betty experienced multiple barriers to employment. All of her children had been in and out of foster care. She had low general functioning (e.g., limited problem-solving and life skills), a suspended driver's license, substance abuse problems, limited work history, criminal history, and physical health problems. Ms. Jones committed to participate in substance abuse treatment to fulfill her program requirement, but dropped out of treatment shortly after she began. The case manager scheduled nine appointments with Ms. Jones over a two-month period; Ms. Jones attended the first five and missed the last four. The case manager telephoned her eight times and sent six letters, including a certified letter. She also visited Ms. Jones once in her home. Ms. Jones was invited to an interagency conciliation review, which she did not attend. Finally, the case manager imposed a TANF sanction. "The client had to bottom out before she was going to change," said the case manager. After case closure, Ms. Jones reversed her sanction by participating in substance abuse treatment; she is currently participating in a GED class and attending treatment.

**Sanction Review.** Sanction reviews are used to uncover hidden personal and family challenges that interfere with a recipient's ability to participate. The typical review is a formal case conference—which takes place before a sanction is imposed—between the recipient, agency staff, and community partners to determine why the recipient is not participating and to develop a plan for re-engagement. Utah and El Paso follow this model. Utah invites the recipient to a conference with the case manager, his or her supervisor, an in-house social worker, and staff from other agencies. In El Paso, a "sanction prevention team"—consisting of the recipient's case manager, an eligibility technician, and, where applicable, the child welfare worker involved with the family—reviews not only information gathered during a home visit to the recipient but also the recipient's employment plan and participation history to determine whether to impose a sanction. Case managers indicated that the additional time required for these reviews is well spent in that the process can expose factors that interfere with participation.

**Motivation.** All sites use sanctions to motivate, not to punish, TANF recipients. Recipients may therefore "cure" sanctions and receive cash assistance again by meeting designated participation requirements. In four sites, recipients cure their first sanction by participating in

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<sup>4</sup> Fictitious name.

work or work-related activities for at least 10 days. In the three remaining sites, recipients cure their first sanctions simply by making an oral or written commitment to participate in program activities.<sup>5</sup> The feasibility of the cure encourages recipients to re-engage in program activities.

#### **D. USING PERFORMANCE STANDARDS TO HOLD STAFF ACCOUNTABLE**

Set by the state or the county, performance standards for local offices and front-line staff identify preferred recipient outcomes, such as obtaining a work placement or permanent job, and program priorities, such as a specified level of engagement. By measuring case managers' performance against these standards, supervisors and team leaders promote accountability and motivate case managers to stay on top of their caseloads. The process also identifies staff who may need additional support to perform their jobs—for example, more training or a revised workload.

In most of the study sites, supervisors appear to be actively involved in monitoring case managers' performance. Several sites have formal performance review processes; other measures include case management reports, monthly meetings, and case reviews. In Utah, for example, supervisors conduct monthly or quarterly performance reviews with each case manager in their team, assessing such areas as knowledge of the basic core services, policies, and computer systems; teamwork; recipient outcomes (for instance, job referrals and number of cases closed for earned income); and professional conduct. Supervisors also review case files monthly. They review files for each recipient assigned to a newly hired case manager for six months to a year. For more seasoned workers, they review a small sample of files each month.

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<sup>5</sup> Many sites will not allow recipients to cure second or subsequent sanctions immediately, but require that recipients remain in sanction status for at least a minimum period of time.

One local office in Utah uses a peer review system under which caseworkers exchange files. This not only helps ensure accuracy and appropriateness but also facilitates cross-training and the dissemination of best practices. In addition, program administrators and supervisors use management information system reports to monitor the quality and timeliness of case management and to identify training needs (see box below). If there is a problem, supervisors immediately contact the case manager to explore ways to more effectively manage the caseload. Supervisors said that they review case management alerts generated by the system to determine whether case managers make changes in the system within the required timeframe.

In Wisconsin, office performance is judged by 10 standards, the most prominent being progress toward “full and appropriate engagement.” To meet this standard, counties must demonstrate that 80 percent of their overall TANF caseload is engaged in at least 30 hours of work or work-related activities. All activities in the employment plan—nonfederal or otherwise—count toward this standard. According to program administrators in Wisconsin and elsewhere, performance goals make offices more accountable with respect to achieving program outcomes. The drawback is the burden imposed on staff by performance monitoring and reporting requirements.

#### **Tracking Worker Performance**

Utah’s YODA reporting system pulls information from the state eligibility and case management systems to describe caseload information at all levels of service delivery (e.g., state, region, office, team, and individual case manager). It allows program administrators, supervisors, and front-line staff to generate a variety of monitoring reports. For example, the “Case Management of Active Cases” report provides information on the amount and types of cases (e.g., open program enrollments, cases with open employment plans, cases without notes in the last 30 days) by case manager. The “Case Management Customer” and “Ultimate” reports provide detailed information about the amount and types of activities to which recipients are assigned, progression within each activity, and the frequency of recipient-case manager contact. Information in YODA is based on scheduled, rather than actual, hours.

## V. LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT IN PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Researchers and policymakers are interested not only in which strategies programs use to engage recipients but also in the extent to which the strategies have been successful. There is special interest in the extent to which TANF recipients are engaged in activities beyond those that are captured in the data reported by states to the federal government for purposes of calculating federal participation rates. This chapter presents findings from analyses of administrative data on program participation in two study sites that have management information systems (MIS) that contain substantially more data than used to calculate federal participation rates—El Paso County, Colorado, and Utah.<sup>1</sup> These sites offer the broadest range of activities to the broadest group of TANF recipients and, as such, are not representative of the seven study sites or of TANF programs nationally.

In El Paso County, we conducted analyses of adult recipients on TANF in August 2003. In Utah, we conducted analyses of adult recipients on TANF in May 2003. Both months are typical in each site. The analyses focus on four research questions:

- To what activities are TANF recipients assigned?
- For how many hours do recipients participate in activities relative to the hours they are assigned?
- To what extent do recipients remain engaged in activities over time, and to what extent do they progress from activities that are not considered in the federal participation rate calculation to activities that are?
- To what extent does the federal participation rate capture activities in El Paso County and Utah?

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<sup>1</sup> A description of the administrative data in each site appears in Appendix B.

## A. ASSIGNED ACTIVITIES

In identifying the activities to which recipients are assigned, we looked at the following: how often recipients are assigned to activities that are considered in the federal participation rate calculation relative to those that are not; the range of activities to which recipients are assigned; the activities to which case managers most and least often assign recipients; and the mix of activities to which case managers assign recipients (i.e., how often and in what ways they combine activities). For purposes of this discussion, we grouped all program activities into three categories:

- ***Core Federally Countable Activities.*** There are nine activities that count as priority activities in the calculation of the federal participation rate and in which single-parent adult TANF recipients are required to participate for a minimum of 20 hours per week in order to be included in the numerator of the participation rate. These activities include unsubsidized employment, subsidized employment, subsidized public sector employment, work experience, on-the-job training, job search and job readiness assistance, community service programs, vocational education training, and providing child care for a community service participant.
- ***Other Federally Countable Activities.*** There are three other activities in which TANF recipients may participate for up to 10 hours in order to meet the 30-hour per week requirement for single parents in the federal participation rate calculation. They include job skills training directly related to employment, education directly related to employment (for high school dropouts only), and satisfactory attendance in secondary school or the equivalent (for high school dropouts only).
- ***Nonfederal Activities.*** These activities are not considered at all in the calculation of the federal participation rate, but are allowable under state or county program rules. They include activities such as physical or mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, domestic violence counseling, and child welfare services.

In the two sites where adequate data were available, El Paso County and Utah, the vast majority of all TANF recipients are assigned to participate in program activities (90 percent and 82 percent, respectively).<sup>2</sup> However, in each site, a sizeable portion of the caseload is assigned

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<sup>2</sup> Data supporting all findings and statistics referenced in the report may be found in the tables in Appendix C, regardless of whether the findings and statistics are presented in tables or  
*(continued)*

to activities that are not considered in the federal participation rate calculation—44 percent in a typical month in El Paso County and 62 percent in a typical month in Utah (see Figures V.1 and V.2). Many clients participate exclusively in nonfederal activities, while others combine nonfederal with federally countable activities. Despite the high number of assignments to nonfederal activities, a substantial portion of the caseload is assigned to at least some activities considered in the federal participation rate, including core and other federally countable activities—just above and just below 60 percent in El Paso County and Utah, respectively. In fact, 46 percent of recipients in El Paso County and 19 percent in Utah are assigned exclusively to federally countable activities, and the majority of these are core activities.

In any given month, some portion of the caseload is not assigned to any program activities—10 percent in a typical month in El Paso County and 17 to 18 percent in a typical month in Utah. The primary explanation for this is that a substantial portion of unassigned recipients either has recently entered the caseload and therefore has not yet been assigned to activities, or is about to exit the caseload and likely already completed their activities altogether. Excluding these individuals, only a small percentage of recipients—roughly 4 percent in El Paso County and 5 percent in Utah—remain on TANF without being assigned to any activities (see Table V.1). It is possible that these recipients are in transition between activities, are waiting for activity slots to become available, are particularly difficult to engage in activities, or have lost contact with their case managers.

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*(continued)*

figures throughout the body of the report. Some of the tables in Appendix C present more results than are discussed in the body of the report.



FIGURE V.1  
ASSIGNED ACTIVITIES IN A TYPICAL MONTH  
(EL PASO COUNTY)

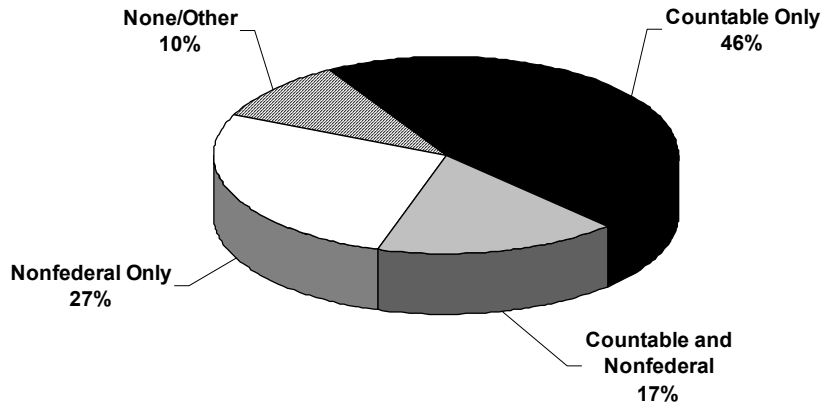


FIGURE V.2  
ASSIGNED ACTIVITIES IN A TYPICAL MONTH  
(UTAH)

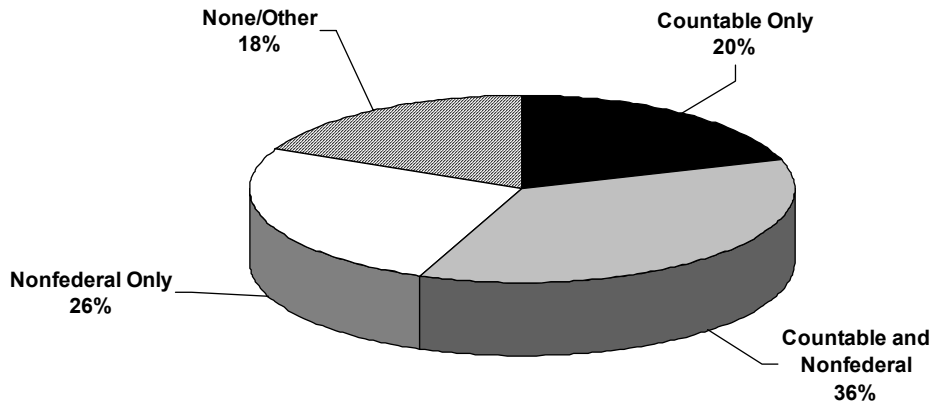


TABLE V.1

## TANF PROGRAM STATUS AMONG RECIPIENTS WITH NO ACTIVITIES

Recipients With No Activities in	Percentage			
	El Paso County		Utah	
	Among All Recipients	Among Recipients with No Activities	Among All Recipients	Among Recipients with No Activities
Cases that opened or closed in typical month*	5.5	54.1	6.6	39.8
Cases that opened in previous month	--	--	4.2	25.3
Cases that closed in following month	0.2	2.5	0.6	3.8
Other cases	4.4	43.4	5.2	31.0
Sample Size	1204	122	6187	1109

\* In El Paso County, most cases that “opened” were reinstated—that is, the cases were closed, but reopened within 30 days. Cases that were reinstated may have been reinstated in typical month or before. Data on case openings prior to typical month are not available for El Paso County.

As noted in Chapter III, the list of activities to which recipients can be assigned is extremely extensive. El Paso County has more than 27 activities, 17 of which are considered in the federal participation rate calculation and the remainder of which are not. Utah has more than 70 activities to which recipients can be assigned, 37 of which are considered in the federal participation rate calculation and the remainder of which are not.

By far, the prevailing activities in which El Paso County and Utah TANF recipients participate are job search/job readiness activities and nonfederal activities. In El Paso County, the largest percentage of recipients assigned to any activities (47 percent) is assigned to job search/job readiness activities followed by nonfederal activities (38 percent). In Utah, the largest percentage is assigned to nonfederal activities (62 percent) followed by job search/job readiness activities (32 percent) (see Table V.2). In both sites, unsubsidized employment is the next most common activity, though only about 14 percent of recipients are assigned to employment.

TABLE V.2

## MOST COMMON ASSIGNED ACTIVITIES AMONG ALL RECIPIENTS IN A TYPICAL MONTH

	El Paso County	Utah
Job search / job readiness	46.9%	61.9%
Nonfederal activities	38.0	31.6
Employment (full-time in El Paso)	13.8	14.5
Case management	12.0	—
Education with no HS degree	7.8	13.6
Job skills training	5.8	13.5

Unlike the El Paso County data, the Utah data contain codes identifying specific activities within the broad category of nonfederal activities. The most common nonfederal activities in Utah are related to issues in three areas: child care—for instance, looking for child care or resolving child care problems—child support enforcement, and physical health treatment (see Table V.3). Other common nonfederal activities include mental health treatment, activities related to other support services—such as life skills activities not considered to be job readiness activities—and pursuing SSI benefits. These two groups of activities account for two-thirds of all nonfederal activities in Utah.

TABLE V.3

## MOST COMMON NONFEDERAL ACTIVITIES IN A TYPICAL MONTH IN UTAH

Working on child care issues	12.7%
Working on child support enforcement	12.4
Physical health treatment	12.2
Mental health treatment	10.3
Working on other support services	8.3
Other life skills activities	4.9
Pursuing disability income	4.8

The majority of recipients assigned to activities are assigned to multiple activities (see Table V.4). Some combine multiple activities within the same category—for instance, job search with work experience, which are both core federally countable activities, or domestic violence counseling with resolving child care issues, which are both nonfederal activities; others combine activities across categories—for instance, job search with mental health counseling. Employed recipients combine work with other activities in different ways in the two sites. In El Paso County, employed recipients, particularly part-timers, combine work primarily with job search; relatively few are assigned to nonfederal activities as well. In Utah, however, the majority of employed recipients combine work with nonfederal activities.

TABLE V.4  
NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES IN A TYPICAL MONTH

Number of Activities	Percentage	
	El Paso County	Utah
0	9.9	16.6
1	42.9	13.4
2	31.6	23.6
3	11.5	23.3
4	4.0	14.6
5+	0.1	8.4

## B. ASSIGNED AND ACTUAL HOURS OF PARTICIPATION

Our analysis of assigned and actual hours of participation is based on MIS data. Most states and counties, including El Paso County and Utah, use different methods to record TANF program participation hours in their MIS. In El Paso County, case managers record assigned hours of participation and actual hours of participation in separate fields, but are required to do so only for federally countable activities; as a result, data on hours of participation in nonfederal

activities are incomplete or nonexistent in El Paso County’s MIS. In Utah, case managers record assigned hours of participation in each and every activity—federally countable and nonfederal activities—in the state MIS and are instructed to overwrite assigned hours with actual hours if the two vary. The extent to which they make this change, however, varies with how often they meet with recipients, their ability to closely track participation, and competing caseload demands. While it is therefore difficult to compare data on or draw conclusions about hours of participation across the two sites, the data do suggest a number of basic findings.

First, recipients are assigned to participate in activities for a substantial number of hours per week but not necessarily the 30 hours required of single parents under the current federal participation rate definition. In El Paso County, recipients are assigned for an average of 24 hours per week to each federally countable, and for an average of 36 hours per week in total across all of these activities (see Table V.5). However, more than one-third of recipients assigned to federally countable activities are assigned for fewer than 30 hours per week. In Utah, recipients are assigned to all types of activities for a combined average of 22 hours per week, and almost two-thirds are assigned to activities—including federally countable and nonfederal activities—for fewer than 30 hours per week.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> We assume that the data on hours of participation in Utah more accurately reflect assigned hours than scheduled hours given the inconsistency with which case managers overwrite assigned hours with actual hours of participation.

TABLE V.5  
AVERAGE ASSIGNED WEEKLY HOURS IN A TYPICAL MONTH

	Percentage or Average	
	El Paso County (in federally countable activities only)	Utah (in all types of activities)
1-19	12.7%	39.7%
20-29	22.5%	21.3%
30-39	26.0%	27.8%
40+	38.8%	11.2%
Average total	36.1	22.0
Average per activity	24.4	7.9

Second, even though a substantial portion of the caseload is assigned to nonfederal activities, these activities account for a relatively small share of a recipient’s weekly participation time. In Utah, weekly assigned hours in federally countable activities are substantially higher than weekly assigned hours in nonfederal activities (recall that there are no data on hours in nonfederal activities in El Paso County). On average, recipients in nonfederal activities are assigned to those activities for 4 to 5 hours per week, compared with 24 hours for employment, 21 hours for work experience, 25 hours for on-the-job training, 15 hours for job search, 18 hours for vocational education, 11 hours for education with no high school diploma, and 13 hours for satisfactory school (see Table V.6).

TABLE V.6

AVERAGE ASSIGNED WEEKLY HOURS IN ACTIVITIES IN A TYPICAL MONTH IN UTAH

	Average
Employment	23.6
Work experience	21.1
On-the-job training	25.9
Job search	14.8
Vocational education	17.9
Job skills training	11.5
Education with no high school degree	11.4
Satisfactory school	12.9
Non-federal activities	4.5

Finally, recipients are actually participating in federally countable activities for the majority of time they are assigned. On average, across all of these activities, TANF recipients in El Paso County actually participate for 70 percent of the time they are assigned (recall that there are no data distinguishing actual and assigned hours of participation in Utah) (see Table V.7). Still, however, about one-quarter of the caseload is still not actively participating in any of the federally countable activities to which they are assigned.

Recipients spend the most time relative to assigned hours in education-related activities and even more time than they are assigned in job skills training and basic education. This may be because job skills training and education courses provide more hours of instruction than required by TANF programs.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, they spend the least amount of time relative to assigned hours in job search and job readiness activities. However, it is often more difficult to track hours of actual participation in job search and job readiness activities for two reasons. First, many of

<sup>4</sup> Note that analyses do not include recipients who participated in an activity to which they were not assigned.

these activities are self-directed, and second, the calculation of hours may correspond not to the actual time devoted to the activity but to the number and types of employer contacts or other accomplishments such as the development of a resume. For instance, one telephone contact may be considered equivalent to one hour of participation, or one face-to-face contact equivalent to four hours of participation. In addition, TANF recipients who find jobs might stop participating in assigned job search/job readiness activities pending the start of their employment. Therefore, the extent to which the data on actual hours in job search and job readiness reflect true levels of participation as opposed to limitations of data collection or definitions is not clear.

TABLE V.7  
PARTICIPATION IN FEDERALLY COUNTABLE ACTIVITIES IN EL PASO COUNTY

	Ratio of Actual to Assigned Hours
Any activity	0.70
Job search/job readiness	0.35
Post-secondary education	0.92
Job skills training	1.10
Basic education	1.42
Percent with no actual hours	24.6%

### C. PARTICIPATION AND PROGRESS OVER TIME

Most TANF programs strive to build recipients' capacity for employment and self-sufficiency. Though they may offer a range of activities to meet recipients' needs, most programs want recipients to progress from activities that address their barriers and supportive service needs to ones that provide more direct work experience and job search support (and finally, to unsubsidized employment). In fact, PRWORA includes provisions intended to prevent recipients from languishing on the caseload, including time limits on assistance, requirements for states to engage recipients in work (as defined by states) after two years of



welfare receipt, and limits on the amount of time job search/job readiness activities and vocational education count toward the federal participation rate.

However, the majority of recipients tend to remain in a given set of activities for several months. Two-thirds of recipients in nonfederal activities in El Paso County remain in those activities for at least three to five months, and on average, recipients in nonfederal activities in Utah remain in those activities for over eight months (see Table V.8).<sup>5</sup> However, recipients may move more often from one activity to the next within the set of all nonfederal activities. For instance, a recipient in nonfederal activities for six months may participate in domestic violence counseling for four months and life skills training for two months. Similarly, two-thirds of recipients in job search and job readiness activities in El Paso County remain in those activities for at least three to five months, and on average, recipients in these activities in Utah remain in them for over five months. In fact, among all adult recipients in El Paso County, almost one-third are assigned to job search/job readiness activities or education activities beyond the maximum time that those activities count toward the federal participation rate (similar data are not available for Utah). However, many of them may be participating in other activities along with extended job search or education; recall that 47 percent in El Paso and 70 percent in Utah are assigned to two or more activities concurrently.

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<sup>5</sup> In El Paso County, data on number of months in activities are based on monthly confirmations of activity assignments. In Utah, data on number of months in activities are based on activity start and end dates.

TABLE V.8  
LENGTH OF TIME RECIPIENTS REMAINED IN ACTIVITIES

	Percentage in El Paso County		Average in Utah
	1-2 months	3-5 months	—
Nonfederal activities	35.2%	64.8%	8.4
Job search/job readiness	35.8%	64.2%	5.2
Employment	49.1-53.8%	46.2-50.9%	6.9

Moreover, an increasing percentage of recipients remaining on TANF is not assigned to any activities at all as time goes on. Among a cohort of TANF recipients in a typical month, the percentage assigned to no activities doubles within five to six months—from 10 to 20 percent in El Paso County within five months and from 18 to 38 percent in Utah within six months (see Figures V.3 and V.4). The proportion of recipients remaining on TANF who are in federally countable or allowable activities shrinks over the same period, though at a somewhat slower pace. These data suggest that it may be difficult to keep recipients engaged in activities over time and that programs may need to develop better strategies for working with those who do not find employment or leave the rolls quickly.

Finally, the majority of recipients who stay on the caseload for five to six months do not, during that time, progress from nonfederal to federally countable activities, or from other federally countable to core federally countable activities. In El Paso County, more than 70 percent of recipients remained in the same category of activities for five months, while 20 percent made forward progress at some point and 9 percent actually moved backward at some point (see Figure V.5). In Utah, 56 percent remained in the same category of activities for six months, while 23 percent made progress at some point and 21 percent moved backward at some point.

FIGURE V.3

ASSIGNED ACTIVITIES OVER TIME AMONG  
AUGUST 2003 CASES IN EL PASO COUNTY

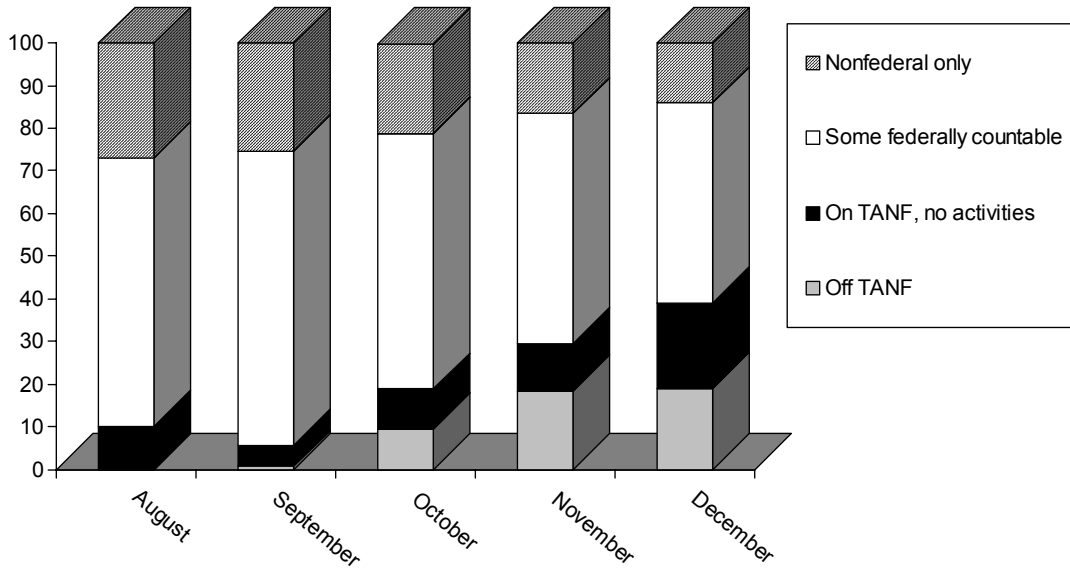


FIGURE V.4

ASSIGNED ACTIVITIES OVER TIME AMONG  
MAY 2003 CASES IN UTAH

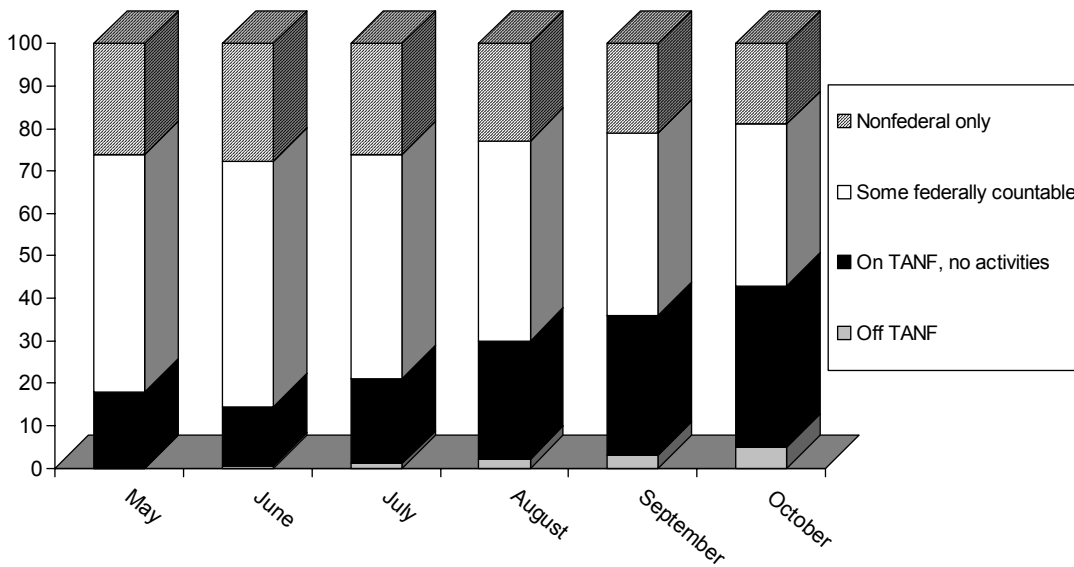
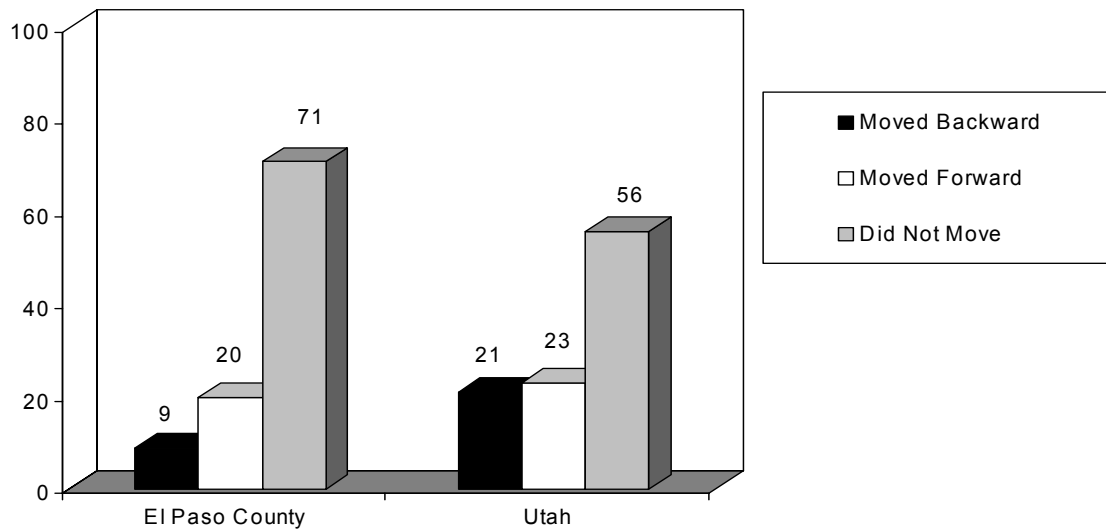


FIGURE V.5  
 PROGRESS FROM NONFEDERAL ONLY TO COUNTABLE ACTIVITIES AND FROM  
 OTHER COUNTABLE TO CORE COUNTABLE ACTIVITIES



#### D. ENGAGEMENT AMONG SUBGROUPS

Differences in engagement among different subgroups of TANF recipients are policy relevant because they can inform decisions about the availability of services and the allocation of resources, especially in programs striving to engage all or most recipients in activities. For instance, if Group A represents one-quarter of the caseload in El Paso County and Group B represents three-quarters of the caseload, and if substantially more recipients in Group A than in Group B are not assigned to any program activities, then it might be more efficient for El Paso County to target additional resources to services and activities that would engage recipients in Group A rather than spreading resources across the caseload as a whole. This section describes the results of subgroup analyses in each site.

El Paso County divides its caseload into hard-to-employ recipients and job-ready recipients, assigning activities according to the needs unique to each group.<sup>6</sup> Highly skilled and trained case managers determine which recipients are hard-to-employ and which are job-ready on the basis of comprehensive individualized assessments conducted at intake. In a typical month, about one-third of the caseload consists of hard-to-employ recipients, and two-thirds consists of job-ready recipients. Results of an analysis comparing hard-to-employ and job-ready cases are shown in Table V.9.

Differences in the types of activities to which hard-to-employ and job-ready recipients are reflected in the data. The percentage of job-ready recipients that is assigned to federally countable activities is almost double the percentage of hard-to-employ recipients assigned to these activities—80 percent compared to 43 percent. Conversely, the percentage of job-ready recipients that is assigned to nonfederal activities is substantially lower than the percentage of hard-to-employ recipients assigned to these activities—14 percent compared to 45 percent. In fact, while job search and job readiness are the most common activities among job-ready recipients, nonfederal activities are the most common among hard-to-employ recipients.

Although hard-to-employ and job-ready recipients are assigned to different kinds of activities, they participate in about the same fraction of their assigned hours in federally countable activities. On average, hard-to-employ recipients participate in these activities about 72 percent of the time they are assigned to participate (33 hours per week on average), and job-ready recipients participate in these activities about 70 percent of the time they are assigned to participate (37 hours per week, on average).

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<sup>6</sup> Hard-to-employ recipients receive case management services from county staff and job-ready recipients receive case management services from staff at a contracted service provider. For each TANF recipient, the data in El Paso County's MIS distinguishes the type of staff—county or contracted—providing the case management services.

Finally, job-ready recipients progress from activities that address their barriers and supportive service needs to activities that provide more direct work experience and job search support more often than do hard-to-employ recipients. At any point in the five-month period over which we tracked recipients, 22 percent of job-ready recipients progressed from nonfederal only to federally countable activities or from other federally countable to core federally countable activities. By comparison, 16 percent of hard-to-employ recipients made forward progress.

TABLE V.9

COMPARISONS BETWEEN HARD-TO-EMPLOY AND JOB-READY RECIPIENTS IN EL PASO COUNTY

	Percentage	
	Hard-to-Employ	Job-Ready
<b>Types of Assigned Activities</b>		
Some federally countable	43	80
Nonfederal only	45	14
None	12	6
<b>Most Common Assigned Activities</b>		
Job search/job readiness	23	58
Nonfederal	34	14
Full-time employment	10	15
Case management	11	11
Part-time employment	7	14
<b>Average Weekly Assigned Hours in Federally Countable Activities</b>	33.1	37.7
<b>Average Ratio of Actual to Assigned Hours</b>	0.72	0.70
<b>Progress over Time</b>		
Moved forward	16	22
Moved backward	10	9
Did not move	74	69

The data for Utah do not allow us to distinguish between hard-to-employ and job-ready recipients, but they do contain information that can be used to make another interesting distinction between recipients in the state—total time on TANF. We divided the caseload in Utah into two groups—long-term recipients, or those who had been on TANF for a total of 36

months or more, and shorter-term recipients, or those who had been on TANF for a total of fewer than 36 months. In a typical month, only 10 percent of the caseload consists of long-term recipients, and 90 percent consists of shorter-term recipients. Results of an analysis comparing long-term and shorter-term recipients are shown in Table V.10.

TABLE V.10  
COMPARISONS BETWEEN LONG-TERM AND SHORTER-TERM RECIPIENTS IN UTAH

	Percentage	
	Long-Term	Shorter-Term
<b>Types of Assigned Activities</b>		
Some federally countable	54	56
Nonfederal only	29	26
None	17	18
<b>Most Common Assigned Activities</b>		
Nonfederal	63	62
Job search/job readiness	30	32
Employment	13	15
Education with no high school degree	12	14
Job skills training	12	14
<b>Average Weekly Assigned Hours in Activities</b>	18.2	18.3
<b>Progress over Time</b>		
Moved forward	23	23
Moved backward	21	21
Did not move	56	56

There are few, if any, differences between long-term and shorter-term recipients in terms of the types of activities and number of hours to which they are assigned and progress to activities that increasingly build their capacity to work and become self-sufficient. Slightly more than half of the recipients in each group are assigned to at least some federally countable activities in a typical month, and one-quarter to one-third are assigned to nonfederal activities only. In both groups, the most common activities are nonfederal activities, followed by job search or job readiness activities, which are federally countable. Both groups are assigned to participate in activities for an average of slightly more than 18 hours per week in total (including recipients

with no assigned hours). In each group, 23 percent of those who were on TANF in all of the six months we tracked progressed from nonfederal only to federally countable activities or from other federally countable to core federally countable activities at some point during that period.

#### **E. ACTIVITIES AND THE FEDERAL PARTICIPATION RATE**

In the two study sites that offer the broadest range of activities to all TANF recipients, virtually all recipients are included in the denominator of the federal participation rate, but the majority of recipients are not included in the numerator.<sup>7</sup> As noted previously, the federal TANF legislation specifies 12 activities in which TANF recipients must participate for at least 30 hours per week to be included in the numerator of the federal participation rate. At least 20 of those hours must be spent in at least one of nine core countable activities and up to 10 hours may be spent in three other countable activities. However, administrative data in El Paso County and Utah reveal that a substantial percentage of the caseload in those locales is in activities other than the 12 specified in the legislation—nonfederal activities—or participates in activities for fewer than 30 hours per week. While 95 percent of the caseload in El Paso County and 97 percent of the caseload in Utah is included in the denominator of the federal participation rate, only 20 and 24 percent, respectively, is included in the numerator (see Figure V.6).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In El Paso County, all recipients should be included in the federal participation rate calculation, but they are exempt from participation requirements if they are disabled, caring for a severely disabled child, or under a federally recognized good cause domestic violence waiver. In Utah, all recipients should be included in the calculation except those subject to sanction for no more than three months within the preceding twelve months, and those who are disabled are exempt from participation requirements.

<sup>8</sup> Recall that analyses are for adult recipients only; child-only cases are not subject to participation requirements and are also excluded from the denominator of the participation rate calculation.



Reasons for relatively low federal participation rates extend beyond frequent assignment to nonfederal activities. Many recipients are not included in the numerator because they are participating in specified activities for fewer hours than PRWORA requires. While one-third of recipients not included in the numerator of the federal participation rate are assigned only to nonfederal activities, 53 percent in El Paso County and 46 percent in Utah are assigned to at least some countable activities (see Figure V.7). Among recipients assigned *only* to core countable activities, only one-third in El Paso County and one-half in Utah are included in the numerator.

FIGURE V.6

FEDERAL PARTICIPANT RATE STATUS AMONG ALL TANF RECIPIENTS  
IN EL PASO COUNTY AND UTAH

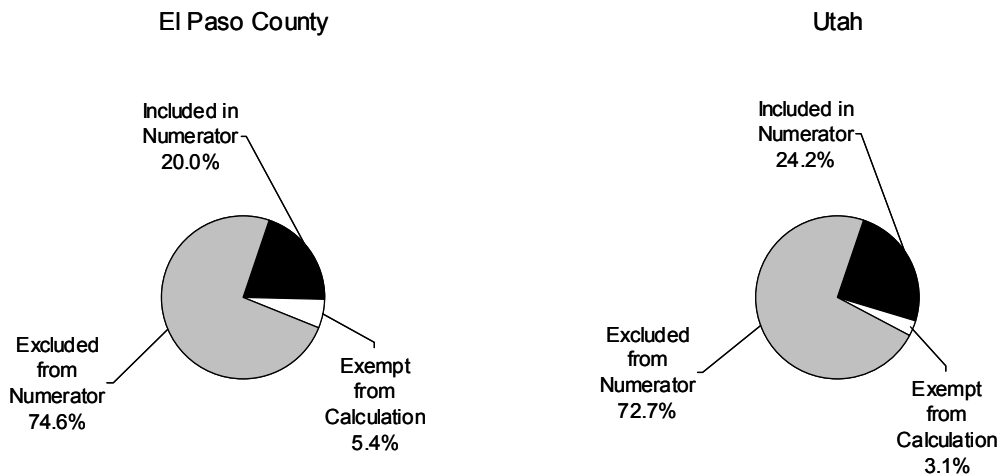
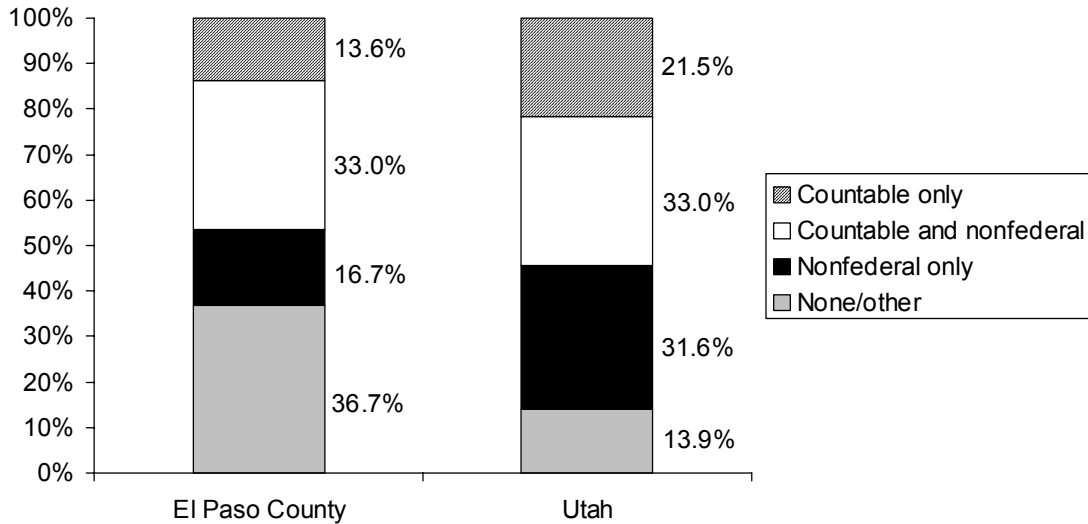


FIGURE V.7

TYPES OF RECIPIENTS EXCLUDED FROM NUMERATOR IN EL PASO COUNTY AND UTAH



**F. KEY FINDINGS FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

The analysis of administrative data on program participation in El Paso County, Colorado, and Utah reveals that more TANF recipients are engaged in activities than federal participation rates suggest. A substantial portion of the caseload is engaged only in nonfederal activities or combines nonfederal with federally countable activities. Currently the vast majority of these recipients are not counted in the numerator of the federal participation rate calculation either because they are not engaged in one of the 12 activities considered in the calculation or because they are not engaged in one or more of those 12 activities for the minimum number of hours required in the calculation. If these recipients were included in the numerator, it is likely that federal participation would be much higher than they are now.

In addition, TANF recipients seem to be engaged in activities for a substantial number of hours per week, though not necessarily for the 30 hours required of single parents under the federal law. Recipients actually participate in federally countable activities for the majority of time they are assigned, and even though a substantial portion of the caseload is assigned to

nonfederal activities, these activities account for a relatively small proportion of recipients' weekly activity time.

Finally, it is difficult to keep TANF recipients engaged in activities over time, and progress up the activity ladder is slow. The longer a recipient remains on TANF, the more likely she is to receive assistance without being assigned to participate in any program activities. And recipients who are assigned to program activities tend to remain in the same kinds of activities for extended periods of time—including activities which count toward the federal participation rate for only limited periods of time, such as job search or job readiness activities—without progressing to activities that are higher on the list of federal priorities. This evidence suggests that sites striving to engage all or most TANF recipients in work or work-related activities may have to demonstrate patience and a willingness to “stay the course” with recipients who move relatively slowly toward self-sufficiency or develop improved strategies for addressing their needs.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The primary objectives of the Study of Work Participation and Full Engagement Strategies were to identify programs that aim to engage all or nearly all TANF recipients (excluding those in child-only cases) in activities and to closely examine their engagement strategies. This chapter presents key findings from the study and suggests areas for additional research that would advance our understanding of the relationship between engagement strategies and actual levels of participation. The findings should be useful to other state and local programs that are searching for effective ways to engage their caseloads in anticipation of the pending reauthorization of the TANF legislation, which will likely require them to engage a larger proportion of recipients in activities.

### A. KEY FINDINGS

*Relatively few states or counties appear to have explicit policies or procedures for engaging all or nearly all TANF recipients in work or work-related activities.*

We asked a broad group of researchers, policymakers, and staff at nongovernmental organizations and community-based organizations to identify program sites that (1) exempt very few recipients from participating in work or work-related activities, (2) have an explicit goal of actively engaging all or nearly all recipients in program activities, and (3) have an explicit strategy in place to achieve this level of engagement. Only three state and five local programs were identified nationwide—El Paso County, Colorado; New York City, New York; Norfolk, Virginia; Ohio; Oswego County, New York; Riverside County, California; Utah; and

Wisconsin—and all but two were included in the study.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that other state and local programs have policies or procedures in place for engaging all or nearly all TANF recipients in work or work-related activities, but were not identified in this process.

*Programs that aim to engage a large share of TANF recipients in work and work-related activities do not approach this goal in the same way.*

Five of the study sites require virtually all recipients to participate in program activities, but the philosophies guiding the programs and the contexts in which they operate differ. In developing employment plans, El Paso County emphasizes the needs of the entire family, while Utah focuses on the individual recipient's strengths. Wisconsin emphasizes rapid attachment to the labor market but acknowledges that some recipients have complex service needs that require a more individualized approach to employment planning. Franklin and Montgomery counties in Ohio emphasize the importance of work experience. Montgomery County also relies heavily on community collaborations and interagency partnerships to expand the availability and accessibility of services that may be included in employment plans.

The other two study sites take different approaches to engagement in work and work related activities. Oswego County in New York requires all TANF recipients to participate in program activities but requires only some to participate in work activities specifically. The county mandates group case management meetings for all recipients to encourage frequent goal setting and peer support, and to help recipients take incremental steps toward employment. Riverside County in California requires only some recipients to participate in program activities, but those

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<sup>1</sup> One program did not express interest in participating in the study, and the other was too early in its program implementation to add value to the study. In Ohio, where the TANF program is operated and administered at the county level, we selected two distinct counties to include in the study: Montgomery County, which includes Dayton, and Franklin County, which includes Columbus.

activities must pertain directly to work. This policy is in keeping with the county's philosophy that work plus education and training is the best way to become self-sufficient

*To engage a large share of recipients in work and work-related activities, programs use two key strategies, alone or in combination: (1) defining the activities in which recipients can participate broadly and (2) providing employment opportunities outside the labor market.*

Six of the seven study sites allow recipients who are not work ready to participate in a broad range of activities, including many that do not count in the federal participation rate calculation. These activities are designed to (1) address personal and family challenges such as mental health problems or substance abuse, (2) help recipients obtain work supports such as child care or transportation, and (3) support recipients' efforts to obtain services or comply with requirements in other programs, such as child welfare or child support enforcement services or programs. Recipients in Utah, El Paso County, and Wisconsin's W-2T program may be assigned to such nonfederal activities alone or in combination with federally countable or allowable activities. However, in other sites, nonfederal activities are usually allowed only in combination with federally countable or allowable activities.

Four of the seven sites use work experience or community service placements as a primary strategy for engaging recipients who have not found employment. The purpose of these placements is to teach workplace norms and behaviors to recipients with a limited work history. Recipients are placed in wide range of entry-level positions in nonprofit or government agencies for three to nine months. All of the sites that use work placements also permit recipients to participate in a broad range of program activities, often combining work experience with nonfederal activities.

*Individualized service planning, supported by comprehensive assessments, helps program staff determine the most appropriate activities for each TANF recipient.*

TANF caseloads comprise recipients with diverse needs, abilities, and personal and family situations. In order to identify the unique circumstance that may help or hinder recipients' progress toward employment, all sites conduct standard employability assessments, and most conduct more specialized assessments. Case managers use assessment results to determine which activities are most appropriate for each recipient. In sites that afford case managers a high degree of discretion in case planning, this information is also used to justify variation in the number of hours recipients are required to devote to program activities.

Even after the initial assessment and the employment plan are complete, case managers play an active role in helping recipients to move into paid employment. They regularly and frequently follow up with recipients to reassess their circumstances, modify employment goals, address barriers to employment, and provide encouragement and support. Again, programs that give case managers the most flexibility encourage them to make contact with recipients at least monthly. Small caseloads or group case management meetings make frequent contact feasible.

*Four administrative procedures—communicating a clear and consistent program message, tracking participation, sanctioning for nonparticipation, and holding staff accountable through performance standards and supervision—advance broad engagement.*

Achieving full engagement depends, in part, on the extent to which senior policymakers and program administrators champion the philosophy of engagement in the messages they send to their staff and agency partners and, in turn, the messages staff send to TANF recipients. Without communicating clearly and consistently that the mission of the welfare agency is to put TANF recipients back to work, and that recipients are capable of taking steps toward this goal, programs risk recipients stagnating in activities that are not helping them progress.

Tracking participation allows case managers to (1) identify nonparticipation quickly, (2) respond to it by re-engaging recipients and/or helping them to resolve issues that affect participation, and (3) document noncompliance as a means to holding recipients accountable for their progress. While case managers have primary responsibility for tracking participation, they rely on other program staff and contractors to provide them with the information they need to identify and respond to nonparticipation in a timely manner. Close working relationships, co-location of service providers, and automated tracking systems facilitate the transfer of information to case managers. When case managers receive reports of nonparticipation, they frequently use the sanction process as the means to re-engage recipients. In all study sites, case managers communicate with recipients at risk of being sanctioned via mail and telephone, but in some sites, they also conduct face-to-face conciliation meetings or refer recipients to specialized workers who do more intensive outreach to identify and address issues that might affecting participation.

Some of the study sites also establish performance standards for local offices and front-line staff to encourage high levels of engagement in program activities. For example, counties in Wisconsin are expected to engage 80 percent of their active TANF caseloads in program activities each month. In most of the study sites, supervisors play an active role in making sure that case managers develop and monitor employment plans for all recipients on their caseloads. Supervisors routinely review cases with case managers and identify any problems they may have in engaging recipients. For example, in Utah, supervisors conduct monthly or quarterly performance reviews with each case manager, and they use a new management information system to review detailed information on every recipient's participation and progress.



*When all program activities are taken into account, the study sites in which we were able to analyze administrative data achieved high levels of engagement.*

In the two study sites that allow all TANF recipients to participate in the broadest range of program activities—El Paso County, Colorado, and Utah—the vast majority of all TANF recipients are actively involved in program activities to some extent. However, a substantial portion of the caseload in these two sites either participates only in activities that are not considered in the federal participation rate calculation or combines nonfederal with federally countable or allowable activities. Most of these recipients are not counted in the numerator of the federal participation rate calculation—either because they are not engaged in one of the 12 activities considered in the calculation or because they are not engaged in one or more of those 12 activities for the minimum number of hours required in the calculation. If these recipients were included in the numerator, it is likely that federal participation rates would be much higher than they are now.

*Keeping the majority of TANF recipients engaged in program activities is an ongoing struggle.*

Despite the multitude of engagement strategies programs use, at any point in time, a nontrivial proportion of the caseload is not actively involved in any activities. Moreover, the likelihood of sitting idle on the caseload increases with time on the caseload. Programs face a number of challenges both in engaging TANF recipients in work or work-related activities initially and in sustaining participation.

For instance, shrinking fiscal resources and other budget concerns at the state and local level have forced officials to cut staff, services, and supports at many of the study sites. In many cases, these actions have compounded the traditional problems of turnover and excessively high caseloads, which can prevent staff from working with and tracking TANF recipients in a timely and efficient way. In addition, it is likely that programs attempting to engage all or nearly all

TANF recipients are working with a sizeable proportion of recipients who have complex service needs. Ensuring that there are enough specialized program activities that are appropriate for these recipients while maintaining adequate capacity in more traditional activities such as job search workshops is yet another challenge. Finally, programs must reconcile the difference between federal and state or local goals if they are to both meet the unique needs of their caseloads and avoid financial penalties by complying with federal participation requirements.

## **B. POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS**

This study did not set out to identify factors that contribute to high or low levels of engagement among TANF recipients, nor did it include sites for their best or promising engagement practices. Though we identified a variety of strategies and administrative procedures used to encourage engagement, it was not possible to identify which ones worked well relative to the others or which had little or no effect on actual engagement. Additional research designed specifically to identify the factors that lead to higher levels of engagement would offer better guidance to other state and local programs in terms of how to adjust their strategies to the new engagement or participation requirements that may be included in the proposed TANF legislation.

In addition, we examined actual levels of engagement in program activities in the two sites that offered the broadest range of activities to all TANF recipients, and compared those levels of engagement to the federal participation rates for those sites. We found that the majority of recipients who are not counted in the federal participation rate calculation are not inactive but are participating in activities not considered in the federal participation rate calculation. Examining actual levels of engagement in sites that offer a more narrow range of activities as well would provide deeper insight into the extent to which the federal participation rate calculation is

capturing activity among TANF recipients and the extent to which recipients are actively striving toward self-sufficiency.

**APPENDIX A**

**COMMUNITY CONTEXT AND KEY TANF POLICIES AND  
PROGRAM FEATURES**

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APPENDIX A

COMMUNITY CONTEXT AND KEY TANF POLICIES AND PROGRAM FEATURES

Community Context							
	El Paso County, CO	Franklin County, OH	Montgomery County, OH	Oswego County, NY	Riverside County, CA	Utah	Wisconsin
Population (2000) <sup>1</sup>	533,428	1,071,524	554,232	122,271	1,545,387	2,233,169	432,654
Primary City/Town	Colorado Springs	Columbus	Dayton	Fulton	Riverside	Salt Lake City Clearfield	Madison
% of Families Below Poverty (2000)	8.0	11.6	11.3	14.0	14.2	9.4	9.4
Unemployment Rate (September 2003)	6.1	4.1	5.2	10.8	5.2	5.1	2.2
Key TANF Policies and Program Features							
TANF Caseload	1,200	9,500	5,600	500	20,100	9,342	506
Average TANF Caseload (per case manager)	100-125 (in-house) 70-90 (Goodwill)	300-350 cases (30-50 TANF)	250 cases (60-75 TANF)	80-100 cases	100-110 (phase I) 60-90 (phase II)	60-90 cases (20-30 TANF)	40-80 cases
Responsibilities Contracted Out	Case management Employment and training services	Employment and training services Case management for refugees	Employment and training services Mental health Substance abuse	Employment and training services	Mental health Substance abuse Domestic Violence	Mental health	Employment and training services
Sanction Policy	Gradual full-family	Immediate full-family	Immediate full-family	Partial (adult portion)	Partial (adult portion)	Gradual full-family	Lifetime ban on tier
Diversion – Financial Payment	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Diversion – Job Search	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Time Limits	60 months	36 months	36 months	60 months	60 months (adult portion only)	36 months	24 months per tier

A.3

<sup>1</sup>Data for population, percentage of families below poverty, racial distribution, and percentage of high school graduates are from the United States Census 2000 gathered by the United States Census Bureau.

<sup>2</sup>Data are from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Unemployment rate for Davis County is based on April 2003 data.

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## **APPENDIX B**

### **DESCRIPTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE DATA**



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## **APPENDIX B—DESCRIPTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE DATA**

We conducted descriptive quantitative analyses of administrative data on program participation in two study sites—El Paso County, Colorado and Utah—to examine the extent to which sites are succeeding in engaging all or nearly all TANF recipients in work or work-related activities. To the extent the data were available, in each site, we collected data on the number and types of activities to which recipients are assigned, the number of hours they are assigned to participate, the extent to which recipients actually participated in assigned activities, and recipients’ progress over time. This appendix describes the administrative data sources and the samples for our analysis in each site.

### **A. EL PASO COUNTY, COLORADO**

The administrative data for El Paso County come from the Colorado Works state management information system (MIS). We obtained the data that are used to create the state’s “Numerator/Denominator” report for each county in the state and for the state as a whole. This report contains information on participation in up to five different activities for all recipients with an open TANF case, including a category for county-defined activities (e.g., substance abuse or mental health treatment) that are not considered in the federal participation rate calculation. Scheduled and actual hours of participation are reported for all activities that are considered in the federal participation rate calculation, but generally neither scheduled nor actual hours are reported for activities that are not considered. An indicator identifies recipients who are in job search or education activities for longer periods than allowable under federal work requirements. The report also identifies the case manager for each recipient, making it possible to distinguish in-house DHS case managers who handle single-parent recipients with multiple and/or serious personal and family challenges that interfere with work from contracted case managers from

Goodwill Industries who handle single-parent job-ready recipients and all recipients in two-parent families. In addition, the report indicates whether each recipient was counted in the numerator of the federal participation rate calculation and provides a reason why a recipient was not counted.

Colorado's MIS stores five months of historical data on program participation. We were able to obtain data for adult recipients in El Paso County for August - December 2003. We conducted most analyses for recipients on TANF in August 2003, which can be considered a snapshot of the El Paso caseload in a typical month. In August, there were 1,204 adult recipients on the caseload. We also tracked the cohort of recipients that was on TANF in August over the ensuing four months.

## **B. UTAH**

Administrative data for TANF recipients in Utah are stored in two systems: (1) the PACMIS system, which stores information on program eligibility and benefits, and (2) the U-WORKS system, which stores information on assigned activities and hours of participation in each and every available program activity. Case managers are instructed to record assigned hours of participation in activities in U-WORKS and to overwrite assigned hours with actual hours if the two vary, however the extent to which they actually overwrite assigned hours varies with the frequency with which they meet with their clients, their ability to closely monitor and track client participation, and competing caseload demands. Both systems store current as well as historical data, and the U-WORKS system indicates whether each recipient was counted in the numerator of the federal participation rate calculation and provides a reason why a recipient was not counted.

We collected data on all 7,114 adult recipients on TANF in Utah in May 2003. From PACMIS we obtained demographic characteristics for recipient as of May 2003, and information

on case openings and closings over time. From U-Works we obtained the start and end dates and assigned hours of participation for each program activity to which each adult recipient was ever assigned. We obtained data as far back as the early 1980s through October 2003. We conducted most analyses for recipients on TANF in May 2003, which can be considered a snapshot of the Utah caseload in a typical month. In May, there were 6,187 adult recipients on the caseload who were subject to program requirements (we excluded from our analysis 927 adult recipients who were ineligible aliens, disqualified for fraud, deemed parents, or receiving Supplemental Security Income). We also tracked the cohort of recipients that was on TANF in May over the ensuing five months and conducted some analyses spanning first case opening through October 2003.

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**APPENDIX C**

**ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAM ACTIVITIES  
FOR EL PASO COUNTY AND UTAH**

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TABLE C.1

## TYPES OF ACTIVITIES AMONG AUGUST 2003 RECIPIENTS—EL PASO COUNTY

Types of Activities	Percentage
<b>August</b>	
Core federally countable activities only	31.0
Core federally countable and other federally countable activities	12.4
Core federally countable, other federally countable, and nonfederal activities	2.2
Core federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	12.2
Other federally countable activities only	2.2
Other federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	2.5
Nonfederal activities only	27.4
No activities/off welfare	9.3
Other	0.8
<b>September</b>	
Core federally countable activities only	34.0
Core federally countable and other federally countable activities	13.0
Core federally countable, other federally countable, and nonfederal activities	3.6
Core federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	13.5
Other federally countable activities only	1.8
Other federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	2.3
Nonfederal activities only	26.2
No activities/off welfare	4.7
Other	1.0
<b>October</b>	
Core federally countable activities only	32.8
Core federally countable and other federally countable activities	11.9
Core federally countable, other federally countable, and nonfederal activities	2.5
Core federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	9.2
Other federally countable activities only	2.0
Other federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	2.2
Nonfederal activities only	20.6
No activities/off welfare	18.1
Other	0.7
<b>November</b>	
Core federally countable activities only	28.8
Core federally countable and other federally countable activities	11.7
Core federally countable, other federally countable, and nonfederal activities	1.1
Core federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	8.6
Other federally countable activities only	2.0
Other federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	1.8
Nonfederal activities only	16.8
No activities/off welfare	28.7
Other	0.6
<b>December</b>	
Core federally countable activities only	24.2
Core federally countable and other federally countable activities	10.1
Core federally countable, other federally countable, and nonfederal activities	1.3
Core federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	7.6
Other federally countable activities only	1.7
Other federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	1.3
Nonfederal activities only	14.3
No activities/off welfare	38.5
Other	1.1
<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>1,204</b>



TABLE C.2

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES AMONG AUGUST 2003 RECIPIENTS BY CASE MANAGEMENT  
IN EL PASO COUNTY

Types of Activities	Hard-to-Employ	Job-Ready
<b>August</b>		
Core federally countable activities only	21.6	39.3
Core federally countable and other federally countable activities	7.1	16.1
Core federally countable, other federally countable, and nonfederal activities	1.0	2.9
Core federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	7.9	15.7
Other federally countable activities only	2.5	2.2
Other federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	2.9	2.4
Nonfederal activities only	45.2	14.1
No activities/off welfare	10.4	6.3
Other	1.5	0.2
<b>September</b>		
Core federally countable activities only	23.7	42.9
Core federally countable and other federally countable activities	7.3	17.9
Core federally countable, other federally countable, and nonfederal activities	1.9	4.9
Core federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	9.8	16.6
Other federally countable activities only	2.9	1.2
Other federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	2.5	2.4
Nonfederal activities only	44.8	12.5
No activities/off welfare	5.6	1.5
Other	1.7	0.2
<b>October</b>		
Core federally countable activities only	21.6	42.4
Core federally countable and other federally countable activities	6.9	16.2
Core federally countable, other federally countable, and nonfederal activities	0.6	3.5
Core federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	6.2	11.5
Other federally countable activities only	3.3	1.2
Other federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	1.7	2.8
Nonfederal activities only	38.0	8.4
No activities/off welfare	20.5	14.0
Other	1.2	0.2
<b>November</b>		
Core federally countable activities only	17.2	38.1
Core federally countable and other federally countable activities	6.0	16.2
Core federally countable, other federally countable, and nonfederal activities	0.6	1.5
Core federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	6.4	10.6
Other federally countable activities only	3.1	1.3
Other federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	1.0	2.5
Nonfederal activities only	31.3	6.5
No activities/off welfare	33.2	23.2
Other	1.0	0.2
<b>December</b>		
Core federally countable activities only	14.7	31.8
Core federally countable and other federally countable activities	4.4	14.9
Core federally countable, other federally countable, and nonfederal activities	0.2	2.1
Core federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	3.7	10.6
Other federally countable activities only	2.3	1.3
Other federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	1.2	1.5
Nonfederal activities only	28.2	4.4
No activities/off welfare	42.7	33.5
Other	2.5	0.0
<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>680</b>

TABLE C.3

## TYPES OF ACTIVITIES AMONG MAY 2003 RECIPIENTS—UTAH

Types of Activities	Percentage
<b>May</b>	
Core federally countable activities only	16.4
Core federally countable and other federally countable activities	2.4
Core federally countable, other federally countable, and nonfederal activities	5.1
Core federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	25.7
Other federally countable activities only	1.2
Other federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	5.0
Nonfederal activities only	26.3
No activities/other	17.9
<b>June</b>	
Core federally countable activities only	17.0
Core federally countable and other federally countable activities	2.4
Core federally countable, other federally countable, and nonfederal activities	5.0
Core federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	26.8
Other federally countable activities only	1.2
Other federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	4.9
Nonfederal activities only	28.1
No activities/other	14.7
<b>July</b>	
Core federally countable activities only	15.8
Core federally countable and other federally countable activities	2.1
Core federally countable, other federally countable, and nonfederal activities	4.3
Core federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	25.0
Other federally countable activities only	1.0
Other federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	4.3
Nonfederal activities only	25.9
No activities/other	21.5
<b>August</b>	
Core federally countable activities only	14.3
Core federally countable and other federally countable activities	1.8
Core federally countable, other federally countable, and nonfederal activities	3.9
Core federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	22.9
Other federally countable activities only	0.8
Other federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	3.5
Nonfederal activities only	22.9
No activities/other	29.8
<b>September</b>	
Core federally countable activities only	12.9
Core federally countable and other federally countable activities	1.6
Core federally countable, other federally countable, and nonfederal activities	3.4
Core federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	21.1
Other federally countable activities only	0.7
Other federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	3.6
Nonfederal activities only	20.8
No activities/other	35.9
<b>October</b>	
Core federally countable activities only	12.4
Core federally countable and other federally countable activities	1.3
Core federally countable, other federally countable, and nonfederal activities	3.1
Core federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	17.9
Other federally countable activities only	0.7
Other federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	3.1
Nonfederal activities only	18.8
No activities/other	42.8
<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>6,187</b>

TABLE C.4

## TYPES OF ACTIVITIES IN MAY 2003 BY TIME ON TANF IN UTAH

Types of Activities	Long-Term (>36 months)	Shorter-Term (≤36 months)
Core federally countable activities only	16.9	16.4
Core federally countable and other federally countable activities	2.0	2.5
Core federally countable, other federally countable, and nonfederal activities	5.1	5.1
Core federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	24.2	25.8
Other federally countable activities only	1.2	1.2
Other federally countable activities and nonfederal activities	4.2	5.0
Nonfederal activities only	29.1	26.0
No activities/other	17.4	18.0
<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>5,576</b>

TABLE C.5

## TANF PROGRAM STATUS AMONG RECIPIENTS WITH NO ACTIVITIES

Recipients With No Activities in	Percentage			
	El Paso County		Utah	
	Among All Recipients	Among Recipients with No Activities	Among All Recipients	Among Recipients with No Activities
Cases that opened or closed in typical month <sup>a</sup>	5.5	54.1	6.6	39.8
Cases that opened in previous month	--	--	4.2	25.3
Cases that closed in following month	0.2	2.5	0.6	3.8
Other cases with no activities in typical month	4.4	43.1	5.2	31.0
Sample size	1204	122	6187	1109

<sup>a</sup> The typical month in El Paso County is August 2003, and the typical month in Utah is May 2003. In El Paso County, most case that “opened” were reinstated—that is, the cases were closed, but reopened within 30 days. Cases that were reinstated may have been reinstated in typical month or before. Data on case openings prior to typical month are not available for El Paso County.

TABLE C.6  
ACTIVITIES IN AUGUST 2003—EL PASO COUNTY

Activity	Percentage		
	All Recipients	Hard-to-Employ	Job-Ready
Assessment/IRC completed	11.5	13.2	10.2
Basic education	1.2	1.7	0.7
Child care for community-service participants	0.0	0.0	0.0
Case management	10.9	10.8	11.0
Conciliation	0.2	0.2	0.2
County-defined work activities	22.7	34.2	14.3
Community work experience (public sector)	2.4	0.2	4.1
Community-service activities	2.7	2.5	2.9
State diversion	1.2	1.7	0.7
IRC revision	31.0	10.8	47.1
English as a second language	0.3	0.2	0.4
GED	7.5	5.0	9.7
Holding	5.8	11.2	2.1
High school	0.3	0.4	0.3
Full-time unsubsidized employment	12.5	10.2	14.9
Job search/job readiness	42.5	23.2	58.4
Job skills training	5.8	2.5	8.4
On-the-job training	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pending work activity	0.9	0.6	1.2
Postsecondary education	6.0	3.7	7.9
Part-time employment	10.6	7.1	13.7
Alternative work experience (private sector)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sanction request	0.2	0.2	0.0
Employer-specific job skills training	5.7	3.5	7.5
Temporary employment	0.3	0.0	0.4
Work study	0.7	0.6	0.7
Work supplementation (private sector)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Work supplementation (public sector)	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>1204</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>680</b>

TABLE C.7  
ACTIVITIES IN MAY 2003—UTAH

Type of Activity	Percentage		
	All Recipients	Long-Term (>36 months)	Shorter-Term (≤36 months)
Employment	14.3	12.9	14.5
Work experience	1.8	2.8	1.7
On-the-job training	0.1	0.3	0.1
Job search	31.5	30.4	31.6
Vocational education	9.5	7.9	9.7
Job skills training	13.4	12.3	13.5
Education with no high school diploma	13.5	12.3	13.6
Satisfactory school	0.2	0.2	0.2
Other work activities	62.0	62.7	61.9
No activities/other	17.9	17.4	18.0
<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>6,187</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>5,576</b>

TABLE C.8

## ALL ALLOWABLE ACTIVITIES IN MAY 2003—UTAH

Activity	Percentage of All Activities	Percentage of Type of Activity
<b>Employment</b>		
Employment	6.1	100.0
Employment support	0.0	0.0
Summer youth employment	0.0	0.0
Youth employment	0.0	0.0
<b>Work Experience</b>		
Apprenticeship/younger youth	0.0	0.0
Apprenticeship	0.0	0.0
Private paid internship	0.0	0.0
Private unpaid internship	0.1	14.3
Public paid internship	0.0	0.0
Public unpaid internship	0.6	85.7
Youth internships/worksites learning	0.0	0.0
<b>On-the-Job Training</b>	0.1	100.0
<b>Job Search</b>		
Chose to work	0.1	0.6
Individualized job search	8.9	54.3
Intensive employment services	0.7	4.3
Job connection activities	1.7	10.4
Job readiness	1.2	7.3
Job retention skills training workshop	0.3	1.8
Other employment-related/work readiness training	1.6	9.8
Out-of-area job search	0.0	0.0
Pre-employment skills training workshop	1.9	11.6
Relocation assistance	0.0	0.0
Resume building workshop	0.0	0.0
Welfare-to-work (GROW)	0.0	0.0
<b>Vocational Education</b>		
Applied technology	2.8	66.6
Associates degree	1.4	33.3
<b>Education With No High School Diploma</b>		
Basic skills/remediation	0.4	7.0
English as a second language	0.3	5.3
GED/high school diploma	5.0	87.7
Leadership development	0.0	0.0
Younger youth work readiness skills	0.0	0.0
<b>Satisfactory School</b>		
Alternative school services	0.0	0.0
Citizenship/leadership services	0.0	0.0
Occupational skills training	0.1	100.0
Youth tutoring/dropout prevention	0.0	0.0
Younger youth basic skills	0.0	0.0
Younger youth occupational skills	0.0	0.0

TABLE C.8 (continued)

Activity	Percentage of All Activities	Percentage of Type of Activity
<b>Other Work Activities</b>		
Assessment review	2.0	3.0
Child care	8.5	12.7
Child support enforcement	8.2	12.3
Comprehensive guidance and counseling	0.0	0.0
Cultural assimilation	0.0	0.0
DWS social worker assessment	2.1	3.1
Employment mentoring	0.1	0.1
Family counseling	0.6	0.9
Family violence treatment	1.1	1.6
Formal assessment	2.1	3.1
Initial/comprehensive assessment	1.3	1.9
Job Corps	0.0	0.0
Life skills (other)	3.3	4.9
Mental health treatment	6.9	10.3
Nonparticipation assessment	0.9	1.3
Physical treatment	8.1	12.1
Problem-solving assessment	2.5	3.7
Pursuing disability income	3.2	4.8
Resolving transportation issues	0.7	1.0
Resolving child care issues	0.9	1.3
Resolving rural location issues	0.0	0.0
Resolving housing issues	1.5	2.2
Resolving court/legal issues	1.5	2.2
Substance abuse treatment	1.5	2.2
Transportation	0.6	0.9
Youth assessment	0.0	0.0
Youth formal assessment	0.0	0.0
Youth mentoring/counseling	0.0	0.0
Other support services	5.5	8.2
Other	3.6	5.4
<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>14,516</b>	



TABLE C.9

## AVERAGE NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES IN AUGUST 2003—EL PASO COUNTY

Number of Activities <sup>a</sup>	Percentage		
	All Recipients	Hard-to-Employ	Job-Ready
0	9.9	11.2	6.5
1	42.9	54.6	35.4
2	31.6	24.9	37.4
3	11.5	7.5	15.0
4	4.0	1.7	5.7
5 +	0.1	0.2	0.0
<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>1,204</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>680</b>

<sup>a</sup> IRC revision, diversion, and sanction are not considered activities and are included in the 0 percentage.

TABLE C.10

## AVERAGE NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES IN MAY 2003—UTAH

Number of Activities	Percentage	
	All Recipients	Recipients in an Employment Category
0	16.6	0.0
1	13.4	10.5
2	23.6	25.5
3	23.3	31.7
4	14.6	21.1
5+	8.4	11.3
<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>6,187</b>	<b>887</b>

TABLE C.11

## ACTIVITIES COMBINED WITH EMPLOYMENT IN AUGUST 2003—EL PASO COUNTY

Activity	Percentage of Recipients		
	Working Full Time	Working Part Time	Not Working
Assessment/IRC completed	2.7	3.9	13.8
Basic education	0.0	0.0	1.5
Child care for community-service participants	0.0	0.0	0.0
Case management	2.7	11.0	12.1
Conciliation	0.0	0.0	0.2
County-defined work activities	7.3	5.5	27.3
Community work experience	2.0	0.8	2.7
Community-service activities (public sector)	2.0	2.4	2.9
State diversion	0.0	0.8	1.4
IRC revision	46.4	48.2	26.6
English as a second language	0.7	0.0	0.3
Ged	7.3	11.8	6.9
Holding	0.0	0.8	7.3
High school	0.7	0.0	0.3
Full-time unsubsidized employment	100.0	11.0	0.0
Job search/job readiness	34.4	53.5	42.5
Job skills training	5.3	4.7	6.0
On-the-job training	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pending work activity	0.7	0.8	1.0
Postsecondary education	5.3	13.4	5.3
Part-time employment	9.3	100.0	0.0
Alternative work experience (private sector)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sanction request	0.0	0.0	0.2
Employer-specific job skills training	6.0	9.5	5.2
Temporary employment	0.0	0.8	0.2
Work study	0.7	1.6	0.6
Work supplementation (private sector)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Work supplementation (public sector)	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>940</b>

TABLE C.12

## ACTIVITIES COMBINED WITH EMPLOYMENT IN MAY 2003—UTAH

Activity	Percentage of Recipients
Work experience	1.1
On-the-job training	0.1
Job search	21.9
Vocational education	12.3
Job skills training	12.7
Education with no high school diploma	12.9
Satisfactory school	0.1
Other work activities	54.6
<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>887</b>

TABLE C.13

AVERAGE SCHEDULED AND ACTUAL HOURS AMONG FEDERALLY COUNTABLE ACTIVITIES  
IN AUGUST 2003—EL PASO COUNTY

Activity	Sample Size	Average Weekly Scheduled Hours	Percent with 0 Scheduled Hours	Average Monthly Actual Hours	Percent with 0 Actual Hours	Ratio of Actual to Scheduled <sup>a</sup>
<b>All Recipients</b>						
One	338	25.3	0	71.0	30.8	0.71
Two	298	22.2	0	56.6	31.9	0.78
Three	116	20.5	0	47.3	28.5	0.77
Four	43	40.8	0	20.2	4.7	0.13
Five	19	30.8	0	19.1	10.5	0.20
All	338	36.1	0	92.0	24.6	0.70
<b>Hard-to-Employ</b>						
All	110	33.1	0	82.0	29.1	0.72
<b>Job-Ready</b>						
All	225	37.7	0	97.4	21.8	0.70

<sup>a</sup> Scheduled hours are weekly and actual hours are monthly. For purposes of calculating the ratio, scheduled weekly hours are multiplied by 4. Ratios exclude cases with 0 scheduled hours.

TABLE C.14

AVERAGE SCHEDULED AND ACTUAL HOURS AMONG THOSE IN ACTIVITY  
IN AUGUST 2003—EL PASO COUNTY

Activity	Scheduled	Actual	Ratio (Actual/Scheduled) <sup>a</sup>
Basic education	15.8	45.9	1.42
Community work experience	19.1	64.0	0.81
Community service activities (public sector)	13.3	23.2	0.56
English as a second language	18.8	38.3	0.43
GED	13.6	30.5	0.68
High school	28.6	59.0	0.54
Full-time unsubsidized employment	42.6	105.1	0.70
Job search/job readiness	30.2	39.5	0.35
Job skills training	19.7	63.3	1.10
Postsecondary education	20.2	65.6	0.92
Part-time employment	19.7	55.5	0.74
Employer-specific job skills training	12.1	25.6	0.76
Temporary employment	31.7	89.7	0.66
Work study	22.5	56.8	0.68
<b>Sample Size</b>		<b>1,204</b>	

<sup>a</sup> Scheduled hours are weekly and actual hours are monthly. For purposes of calculating the ratio, scheduled weekly hours are multiplied by 4. Ratios exclude cases with 0 scheduled hours.

TABLE C.15

## AVERAGE WEEKLY HOURS IN ACTIVITIES IN MAY 2003—UTAH

	Percentage or Average
<b>Any Activity</b>	
1-19	39.7%
20-29	21.3%
30-39	27.8%
40+	11.2%
Average	22.0
<b>Average Among Those in Activity</b>	
Employment	23.6
Work experience	21.1
On-the-job training	25.9
Job search	14.8
Vocational education	17.9
Job skills training	11.5
Education with no high school diploma	11.4
Satisfactory school	12.9
Nonfederal activities	4.5
<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>5,117</b>

TABLE C.16

LENGTH OF TIME IN ACTIVITIES DURING STUDY PERIOD AMONG RECIPIENTS  
IN ACTIVITY IN AUGUST 2003—EL PASO COUNTY

Activity	Sample size	Percentage					Avg.
		1 month	2 months	3 months	4 months	5 months	
Assessment/IRC completed	222	83.3	14.0	1.4	0.5	0.9	1.2
Basic education	17	0.0	17.7	29.4	17.7	35.5	3.7
Child care for community-service participants	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Case management	240	35.6	27.9	17.9	10.4	9.2	2.3
County-defined work activities	353	10.8	24.4	17.6	12.2	35.1	3.4
Community work experience (public sector)	59	17.0	33.9	23.7	10.2	15.3	2.7
Community-service activities	49	24.5	26.5	10.2	18.4	20.4	2.8
English as a second language	7	0.0	57.4	14.3	14.3	14.3	2.9
GED	129	15.5	26.4	12.4	20.9	24.8	3.1
Holding	82	6.1	18.3	26.8	17.1	31.7	3.5
High school	6	33.3	0.0	33.3	33.3	0.0	2.7
Full-time unsubsidized employment	301	20.6	33.2	28.2	10.0	8.0	2.5
Job search/job readiness	737	13.7	22.1	20.1	17.4	26.7	3.2
Job skills training	99	18.2	23.2	18.2	18.2	22.2	3.0
On-the-job training	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pending work activity	61	54.1	37.7	8.2	0.0	0.0	1.5
Postsecondary education	97	8.3	18.6	16.5	27.8	28.9	3.5
Part-time employment	230	19.1	30.0	22.2	14.4	14.4	2.7
Alternative work experience (private sector)	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Employer-specific job skills training	140	37.9	22.9	20.7	10.0	8.6	2.9
Temporary employment	10	10.0	60.0	20.0	10.0	0.0	2.3
Work study	8	12.5	12.5	25.0	12.5	37.5	3.5
Work supplementation (private sector)	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Work supplementation (public sector)	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0



TABLE C.17

LENGTH OF TIME IN ACTIVITIES DURING STUDY PERIOD AMONG RECIPIENTS IN ACTIVITY  
IN AUGUST 2003 BY CASE MANAGEMENT—EL PASO COUNTY

Activity	Sample size	Percentage Among Hard-to-Employ				
		1 month	2 months	3 months	4 months	5 months
Assessment/IRC completed	102	78.4	17.7	1.0	1.0	2.0
Basic education	9	0.0	22.2	11.1	22.2	44.4
Child care for community-service participants	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Case management	78	18.0	26.9	18.0	14.1	23.1
County-defined work activities	196	6.1	20.4	15.3	15.3	42.9
Community work experience (public sector)	3	0.0	66.7	0.0	33.3	0.0
Community-service activities	13	7.7	23.1	7.7	23.1	38.5
English as a second language	2	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0
GED	29	17.2	24.1	10.3	24.1	24.1
Holding	63	6.4	14.3	25.4	20.6	33.3
High school	4	25.0	0.0	50.0	25.0	0.0
Full-time unsubsidized employment	92	12.0	33.7	32.6	15.2	6.5
Job search/job readiness	172	25.0	27.3	19.7	12.8	15.1
Job skills training	16	18.8	6.3	31.1	37.5	6.3
On-the-job training	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pending work activity	11	63.6	36.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Postsecondary education	26	7.7	30.8	11.5	23.1	26.9
Part-time employment	56	10.7	37.5	23.2	17.9	10.7
Alternative work experience (private sector)	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Employer-specific job skills training	27	33.3	14.8	18.5	22.2	11.1
Temporary employment	1	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Work study	3	33.3	33.3	0.0	0.0	33.3
Work supplementation (private sector)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Work supplementation (public sector)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

TABLE C.17 (continued)

Activity	Percentage Among Job-Ready					
	Sample size	1 month	2 months	3 months	4 months	5 months
Assessment/IRC completed	106	85.9	12.3	1.9	0.0	0.0
Basic education	7	0.0	14.3	42.9	14.3	28.6
Child care for community-service participants	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Case management	155	43.2	27.7	17.4	9.0	2.6
County-defined work activities	143	18.2	27.3	20.3	9.1	25.2
Community work experience (public sector)	55	18.2	30.9	25.5	9.1	16.4
Community service activities	35	28.6	28.6	11.4	17.1	14.3
English as a second language	5	0.0	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
GED	98	15.3	25.5	13.3	20.4	25.5
Holding	16	6.3	25.0	31.3	6.3	31.3
High school	2	50.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	0.0
Full-time unsubsidized employment	208	24.5	33.2	26.0	7.7	8.7
Job search/job readiness	556	10.4	9.8	20.1	18.9	30.8
Job skills training	82	18.3	26.8	15.9	14.6	24.4
On-the-job training	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pending work activity	50	52.0	38.0	10.0	0.0	0.0
Postsecondary education	71	8.5	14.1	18.3	29.6	29.6
Part-time employment	171	21.6	26.9	22.2	13.5	15.8
Alternative work experience (private sector)	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Employer-specific job skills training	113	38.9	24.8	21.2	7.1	8.0
Temporary employment	9	11.1	66.7	11.1	11.1	0.0
Work study	5	0.0	40.0	20.0	40.0	0.0
Work supplementation (private sector)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Work supplementation (public sector)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

TABLE C.18

## AVERAGE LENGTH OF TIME IN ACTIVITIES AMONG ACTIVITIES OPEN IN MAY 2003—UTAH

Type of Activity Open in May 2003	Percentage of Activities					
	Average	1-3 months	4-6 months	7-12 months	13-24 months	25 + months
Any	7.8	32.5	24.7	27.3	13.4	2.1
Employment	6.9	37.4	24.7	26.6	9.8	1.5
Work experience	5.6	47.4	26.3	21.1	4.4	0.9
On-the-job training	3.2	85.7	0.0	14.3	0.0	0.0
Job search	5.2	47.5	29.8	18.3	4.0	0.4
Vocational education	10.4	19.3	17.9	34.2	26.3	2.4
Job skills training	7.0	30.4	30.3	29.2	8.9	1.2
Education with no high school diploma	7.0	30.3	30.2	29.5	8.8	1.2
Satisfactory school	9.4	22.2	16.7	44.4	16.7	0.0
Other work activities	8.4	30.2	23.1	28.0	15.9	2.8
<b>Sample Size</b>			<b>14,516</b>			

TABLE C.19

RECIPIENTS IN JOB SEARCH/JOB READINESS AND EDUCATION ACTIVITIES BEYOND  
THE FEDERAL TIME LIMIT IN AUGUST 2003—EL PASO COUNTY<sup>a</sup>

Activity	All Recipients		Hard-to-Employ		Job-Ready	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
One	266	22.1	56	11.6	210	30.9
Two	89	7.4	21	4.4	68	10.0
Three	30	2.5	2	0.4	28	4.1
Four	10	0.8	1	0.2	9	1.3
Five	4	0.3	1	0.2	3	0.4
Any activity	361	30.0	77	16.0	284	41.8
<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>1,204</b>		<b>482</b>		<b>680</b>	

<sup>a</sup> The federal time limits for these activities are 6 weeks per fiscal year with certain exceptions and 12 months per lifetime, respectively.

TABLE C.20

TRANSITIONS AMONG AUGUST 2003 RECIPIENTS WITH ACTIVITIES IN EACH MONTH  
FROM AUGUST TO DECEMBER 2003—EL PASO COUNTY

	All Recipients	Hard-to-Employ	Job-Ready
<b>August - September</b>			
Moved forward <sup>a</sup>	7.9	6.6	8.7
Moved backward <sup>b</sup>	2.3	3.3	2.6
No move	89.3	90.1	88.7
<b>September - October</b>			
Moved forward	5.3	1.9	6.9
Moved backward	2.1	2.4	2.1
No move	92.6	95.8	91.0
<b>October - November</b>			
Moved forward	3.9	4.7	3.6
Moved backward	2.6	2.8	2.6
No move	93.4	92.5	93.9
<b>November - December</b>			
Moved forward	3.6	2.8	3.6
Moved backward	1.6	1.4	1.8
No move	95.1	95.8	94.6
<b>Ever</b>			
Moved forward	20.0	16.0	22.3
Moved backward	9.0	9.9	8.7
<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>609</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>390</b>

<sup>a</sup> Recipient who moved forward moved from nonfederal activities only to any federally countable activity, or from other federally countable activities to core federally countable activities.

<sup>b</sup> Recipients who moved backward moved from core federally countable activities to other federally countable activities and/or nonfederal activities, or from other federally countable activities to nonfederal activities only.

TABLE C.21

TRANSITIONS AMONG MAY 2003 RECIPIENTS WITH ACTIVITIES IN EACH MONTH  
FROM MAY TO OCTOBER 2003—UTAH

	Percentage		
	All Recipients	Long-Term (>36 months)	Shorter-Term (<=36 months)
<b>May - June</b>			
Moved forward <sup>a</sup>	4.9	4.2	5.0
Moved backward <sup>b</sup>	4.2	2.7	4.4
No move	90.0	93.1	90.7
<b>June - July</b>			
Moved forward	5.0	3.9	5.2
Moved backward	4.9	5.0	4.8
No move	90.1	91.2	90.0
<b>July - August</b>			
Moved forward	5.6	8.1	5.3
Moved backward	4.3	6.2	4.1
No move	90.2	85.8	90.7
<b>August - September</b>			
Moved forward	4.8	4.6	4.8
Moved backward	4.3	3.1	4.4
No move	91.0	92.3	90.8
<b>September - October</b>			
Moved forward	4.4	3.9	4.5
Moved backward	4.3	3.9	4.4
No move	91.3	92.3	91.2
<b>Ever</b>			
Moved forward	23.4	23.5	23.4
Moved backward	21.2	20.8	21.1
<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>2678</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>2418</b>

<sup>a</sup> Recipient who moved forward moved from nonfederal activities only to any federally countable activity, or from other federally countable activities to core federally countable activities.

<sup>b</sup> Recipients who moved backward moved from core federally countable activities to other federally countable activities and/or nonfederal activities, or from other federally countable activities to nonfederal activities only.

TABLE C.22

## FEDERAL PARTICIPATION RATE STATUS AMONG ALL TANF RECIPIENTS

Type of Activities	Percentage		
	Included in Numerator <sup>a</sup>	Excluded from Numerator	Exempt from Calculation
<b>El Paso County (N=1,204)</b>			
Core countable only	10.29	20.43	0.25
Core and other countable	6.73	5.48	0.17
Core and other countable and nonfederal	0.42	1.50	0.17
Core countable and nonfederal	1.33	9.39	1.50
Other countable only	0.83	1.41	0.00
Other countable and nonfederal	0.42	1.58	0.50
Nonfederal only	0.00	24.58	2.82
None/other	0.00	10.13	0.00
All types	20.02	74.50	5.48
<b>Utah (N=6,187)</b>			
Core countable only	8.37	7.82	0.21
Core and other countable	1.07	1.36	0.00
Core and other countable and nonfederal	1.92	3.12	0.03
Core countable and nonfederal	9.33	15.56	0.78
Other countable only	0.34	0.89	0.00
Other countable and nonfederal	0.68	4.22	0.05
Nonfederal only	0.70	23.90	1.49
None/other	1.66	15.61	0.52
All types	24.07	72.30	3.07

<sup>a</sup> In order to be included in the numerator of the federal participation rate, adults in single-parent families must participate in federally countable activities for at least 30 hours per week, and at least 20 of those hours must be in core countable activities. However, if the TANF recipient is a single teenager or married teen without a high school diploma, she may be included in the numerator if she maintains satisfactory high school attendance or is engaged in school directly related to work for at least 20 hours per week. The majority of those in other countable activities only or in other countable and nonfederal activities are teenage recipients who are meeting their work requirements through school. It is likely that the small number of cases in Utah that are in nonfederal activities only and appear here in the numerator represent a data reporting error.

TABLE C.23

FEDERAL PARTICIPATION RATE STATUS AMONG TANF RECIPIENTS  
ASSIGNED TO VARIOUS TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

Type of Activities	Sample Size	Percentage			
		Included in Numerator <sup>a</sup>	Excluded from Numerator—Not Participating	Excluded from Numerator—Not Meeting Minimum Requirements	Exempt from Calculation
<b>El Paso County</b>					
Core countable only	373	33.24	43.97	21.98	0.8
Core and other countable	149	54.36	22.82	21.48	1.34
Core and other countable and nonfederal	26	19.23	53.85	15.38	11.54
Core countable and nonfederal	147	10.88	55.78	21.09	12.24
Other countable only	27	37.03	55.56	7.41	0.00
Other countable and nonfederal	30	16.67	50.00	13.33	20.03
Nonfederal only	330	0.00	89.39	0.30	10.31
None/other	122	0.00	99.18	0.82	0.00
<b>Utah</b>					
Core countable only	1017	50.94	22.23	25.57	1.28
Core and other countable	150	44.00	7.33	48.67	0.00
Core and other countable and nonfederal	314	37.90	4.78	56.69	0.64
Core countable and nonfederal	1588	36.33	27.21	33.44	3.02
Other countable only	76	27.64	13.16	59.21	0.00
Other countable and nonfederal	306	13.72	16.01	69.28	0.98
Nonfederal only	1627	2.64	81.87	9.83	5.66
None/other	1109	9.29	60.59	27.23	2.88

<sup>a</sup> See note in Table C-22.