

Welfare and Employment Outcomes of the WorkFirst Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyzes the welfare and employment outcomes of clients in the WorkFirst program, Washington State's implementation of the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

WorkFirst clients are more likely to gain employment, have higher earnings, work more hours, and leave the caseload when compared to similar clients under Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Jobs, Opportunities, and Basic Skills (AFDC-JOBS).

WorkFirst is Washington State's implementation of the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Since its enactment in April 1997, WorkFirst has changed the nature of income assistance in Washington State, replacing the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC-JOBS) entitlement program. WorkFirst clients are required to participate in employment, job search, or other approved activities and face lifetime limits on welfare receipt.

This report explores the following question regarding the WorkFirst program: *How do the employment and welfare experiences of AFDC-JOBS and WorkFirst clients differ?*

The analysis concludes that clients in WorkFirst are more likely to gain employment, have higher earnings, work more hours, and leave the caseload than did similar clients under the previous AFDC-JOBS program.

When possible, the analysis accounts for different client characteristics such as age, education, work experience, and changes in local economic conditions.

This report is part of an evaluation of the WorkFirst program mandated by the Washington State Legislature. The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) and the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) are collaboratively assessing "the success of the program in assisting clients to become employed and to reduce their use of temporary assistance for needy families" (RCW 44.28.155).