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The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

A Comparison of Two Job Club Strategies

The Effects of Enhanced Versus Traditional Job Clubs in Los Angeles

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

The Los Angeles Traditional Job Club (TJC) model, which has been in operation since the mid-1990s, focuses on helping welfare recipients find any type of job quickly. A previous MDRC evaluation showed that this model can yield large employment and earnings gains for participants relative to operating no job clubs at all. However, it was found that most people subject to the TJC model did not obtain jobs with high wage rates, substantial benefits, or advancement opportunities and that many participants had trouble retaining jobs.¹ The EJC study examines whether it is possible to improve on the TJC model's results. The study compares the effectiveness of two types of job club workshops for unemployed Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) applicants and recipients who were in the Greater Avenues for Inde-

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

pendence (GAIN) program — California’s mandatory welfare-to-work program — in Los Angeles County. The Enhanced Job Club (EJC) model focuses on career development activities and targeted job search, and it is compared with the TJC model. The EJC study thus provides valuable findings regarding whether there is an optimal way to use job search workshops to help unemployed welfare recipients find jobs that they can retain and use as a springboard for advancement.

The ERA Project

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

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

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

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

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

Various types of job clubs have been an integral component of welfare-to-work programs since the 1970s. In the early 1990s, the focus of the Los Angeles County GAIN job search workshops was on teaching job-hunting skills, such as how to prepare a résumé and present one's self in a job interview. Finding a job during the workshop, while certainly desirable, was not the primary objective, given GAIN's focus at the time on building clients' educational skills. An MDRC evaluation of six California counties, conducted at this time, found that the Los Angeles GAIN program (which provided a package of services, including job search workshops) did not improve individuals' earnings over a three-year follow-up period, compared with providing individuals with no mandatory welfare-to-work services. As a result, the county retooled the program to have much more emphasis on getting people into jobs. The retooled program — begun in the mid-1990s and renamed as the “Jobs-First GAIN program” — referred all individuals to job club as a first activity, urged individuals to find and take any jobs they could land, and tried to boost the self-esteem of participants so they had more confidence to look for and find jobs.

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

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

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

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

Los Angeles County's Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) and its Office of Education (LACOE) — long-standing partners in delivering GAIN services — jointly ran both types of job club workshop models (EJC and TJC) from June 2002 through December 2004 as part of the GAIN program, with DPSS managing program operations and LACOE operating the EJC and TJC workshops.

The Evaluation's Design

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

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

This report covers the 1,183 single-parent sample members who were randomly assigned into the study from June through September 2004 (598 in the EJC group and 585 in the TJC group). MDRC is tracking both groups using data that show each individual's quarterly earnings in jobs covered by the California unemployment insurance (UI) program and their monthly welfare and food stamp benefits. Six quarters of follow-up data for each sample mem-

ber are available for this report. In addition, a survey was administered to a subset of EJC and TJC group members about one year after they had entered the study.

Key Findings on Program Implementation and Participation

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

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

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

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

The fifth week of EJC consisted of individualized job search assistance with participants who volunteered to receive additional help to find work. Facilitators continued to review

and give feedback on individuals' job search efforts. Staff also provided job leads and identified and addressed barriers to employment as they emerged.

Notably, if they were unable to find a desirable full-time job, some EJC participants had quicker access to education and training than their TJC counterparts. EJC participants in Region 4 could undergo a vocational assessment during the fourth week of the workshop, if they were still unemployed, while EJC participants in Region 3 (and TJC participants in both regions) had to wait until the end of the workshop to undergo a vocational assessment. Since individuals could be referred to education or training only after the completion of a vocational assessment, this situation resulted in a small group of EJC participants (those in one region who were still unemployed in the fourth week) who were eligible for education and training more quickly than other study participants. In addition, EJC participants were strongly encouraged by DPSS and LACOE staff to blend part-time work with their participation in education or training, as stipulated in their assessment plan, to encourage fulfillment of the GAIN program's 32-hour weekly participation mandate.

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

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

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

Several additional types of staff also helped deliver EJC workshop services. Job coaches were available to EJC sample members to help them research potential career fields. In addi-

tion, job developers interacted individually with EJC sample members, to help them prepare résumés and use career development software, among other activities. It is important to note that staff did not provide TJC clients with these particular types of services.

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

EJC and TJC sample members were expected to engage in job search activity at similar rates. Interviews with job club staff suggested that similar proportions of those individuals who were scheduled for EJC or TJC workshops — about 40 percent to 42 percent — attended their initially assigned session. Eventually, however, according to client survey data, about 71 percent of both EJC and TJC sample members participated in some type of job search activity during the year following random assignment. Surprisingly — given the different durations of the two job clubs and the fact that EJC employment searches were supposed to be more targeted — EJC and TJC sample members reported similar lengths of stay in job club: approximately 2.5 weeks. It appears that EJC sample members found jobs as quickly as TJC sample members.

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

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

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

In regards to messages received from any program staff member (including job club staff), some differences between EJC and TJC were found. EJC survey respondents were more likely than their TJC counterparts to “agree a lot” that program staff encouraged them to hold

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Table ES.1

Impacts on Messages Relating to Job Search

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club

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

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

NOTES: See Appendix C in the complete report.

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

out for a good job (although only 13 percent of all EJC respondents reported this) and to “agree a lot” that program staff encouraged them to go to school or training (with 23 percent of all EJC respondents reporting this; these results are not shown in the table).

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

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

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

and TJC sample members in just the one region where the assessment timing difference would have been greatest, no difference was found as well in the take-up of education or training.

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

Key Findings on Program Impacts

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

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

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

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

The EJC model also did not improve the characteristics or quality of sample members' jobs (not shown in the table). For instance, about the same proportion of sample members in both research groups — less than one in six — obtained jobs that offered a health care plan or

medical insurance. Survey and administrative data show that, despite the efforts of EJC program staff to encourage people to hold out for a job in their field of interest, this did not lead to an increase in holding “better” jobs, compared with what normally happened as a result of the TJC workshops.

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

Table ES.2 also presents the outcomes of the EJC model on TANF and food stamp receipt, compared with the outcomes of the TJC model. During the year and half of follow-up, EJC and TJC group members had similar rates of TANF receipt: Individuals in both groups received TANF for an average of 13 of the 18 months in the follow-up period. In addition, both research groups left welfare at the same rate. As of the end of the follow-up period, one-third of both research groups had stopped receiving welfare and food stamps.

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

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

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

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

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

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Table ES.2

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

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

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

NOTES: See Appendix B in the complete report.

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

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

other positive effects for this subgroup. Furthermore, by the end of the follow-up period, similar percentages of EJC and TJC group members were employed.

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

Policy Implications

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

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

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

The EJC model is only one of many types of program models being tested in the ERA evaluation that attempt to find new approaches to help welfare recipients stay steadily employed and advance in their jobs. The results so far suggest that other approaches might be more likely to produce economic impacts for the working poor. For example, the ERA model in Texas provided a monthly financial incentive to individuals for maintaining full-time work and has produced employment and earnings impacts.⁵ In the ERA model in Chicago (another model with economic impacts), working TANF recipients received services from an employer intermediary, which tried to place the low-wage workers into jobs in industries with higher wages.⁶ In addition, the Riverside, California, PASS model (another ERA model with economic impacts that served the working poor) provided services by utilizing different institutional arrangements — in this case, community based organizations.⁷ Over the next two years, the ERA evaluation will seek to systematically identify the characteristics of these programs that may have contributed to their economic impacts, track their longer-term economic effects, and compare the costs of these programs with their benefits.

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

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

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

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