

Family Employment Program (FEP) Study of Utah

A Snapshot In Time - 2010: Wave 4



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The first three Waves of the FEP Study of Utah provided valuable information regarding a large cohort of FEP participants. Building on what had been learned to date, Wave 4 added two years of data to answer questions regarding: 1) FEP usage over a 50 - 60 month period; 2) potential relationships between participants at entry and both the number of months of FEP used and returns to cash assistance; and 3) application of these findings to the structure and policies guiding FEP and leading to the desired outcomes for FEP participants.

Caseload Profile At Entry

A total of 1686 cases were reviewed for Wave 4. Just over half participated in Wave 1 of the study. The others were non-respondents to Wave 1. The addition of the non-respondents to the sample confirms Wave 1 findings regarding the profile of new FEP recipients including: age at entry (28 years), female (93%), is or has been married (64%), is in good to excellent physical health (69%), has a high school/GED (69.1%), and average number of children (1.7).

Use of Cash Assistance: Months and Episodes

Cash assistance benefits were viewed over the study period April 2005 - September 2010 and evaluated for months of usage and episode patterns. The review of that data show that:

- participants used between 2 and 53 months of FEP with a median of 10 months;
- 1072 (63.6%) participants received 12 months or less;
- 40 (2.4%) participants reached the 36 month lifetime limit; and,
- 1118 (66.3%) participants had only one episode of cash assistance (median = 8 months), 389 (23.1%) participants had two episodes and only 179 (10.6%) participants had 3 or more episodes.

By far the most common pattern for using cash assistance is having one episode that lasts 12 months or less (51.6%). This suggests that a person whose FEP months increase far beyond the norm or when a person accumulates multiple episodes of assistance they can be recognized as a “unique” FEP case. Many months and multiple episodes is not the norm.

Predicting Length of FEP Assistance at Entry

Comparing FEP participant characteristics at entry and cash assistance usage over time lead to the identification of several factors associated with short-term (7 months or less and one episode) or long-term (24 months or more) experiences on FEP. Strong predictors of short term receipt include recent work history at entry, no partner inhibiting employment, access to information about FEP, NOT being in school, currently or previously married, access to a telephone and no history of welfare assistance.

Conclusions: Today’s TANF Population

Changes in cash assistance programs have resulted in substantial changes in the population receiving assistance and in the way the assistance is used. To be effective, today’s TANF policies and programs need to recognize and adjust to these changes. As the implementers of DWS services, front line DWS staff are a critical component in achieving success. Attention to their training and updating regarding the findings presented here is a key to success.

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FAMILY EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (FEP) STUDY OF UTAH A SNAPSHOT IN TIME - 2006: WAVE 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The Family Employment Program (FEP) Study of Utah

In the Fall of 2005, the Social Research Institute (SRI) of the University of Utah's College of Social Work partnered with Utah's Department of Workforce Services (DWS) to conduct a longitudinal study of FEP participants. DWS invested in this research to better understand the composition, needs, and attitudes of those seeking financial assistance.

The study was to focus on FEP customers who were beginning their experience with the cash assistance program. FEP recipients who participated in the first round of interviews would be invited to participate in the second and third rounds of data collection, regardless of their status with DWS. The goal of this type of study was to move beyond point-in-time data which typically reflects a larger portion of long-term recipients. By exploring and following the experiences of all FEP participants, especially around self-sufficiency related activities, a more complete profile of participant outcomes would be discovered.

The key questions of this study were conceptualized and developed through a partnership of DWS management, front line workers and SRI researchers. Through this collaborative process it was determined that the focus of this longitudinal study would be to:

- 1) provide information regarding basic demographics, attitudes, employment supports and barriers, and DWS experiences of the general FEP population;
- 2) investigate differences between the general FEP population and other groups such as long-term recipients and those closed due to non-participation; and
- 3) monitor employment, FEP use, and other personal and family life events for the randomly selected group of FEP participants over time.

The previous three waves of the FEP Study have answered the first and second research questions. The third question became the focus of Wave 4. This portion of the FEP Study adds data regarding:

- 1) FEP usage over an extended period;
- 2) potential relationships between participants at entry and both the number of months of FEP used and returns to cash assistance; and
- 3) possibilities for better aligning the structure and policies guiding FEP and the desired outcomes for FEP participants.

METHODS

Wave 4 of the FEP Study of Utah relies primarily on administrative data to review specific participant and family characteristics and use of various public benefits over a 50 - 60 month period. No additional in-person interviews were conducted for this portion of the FEP Study. Because a portion of the Wave 4 sample is comprised of people who were also part of Wave 1 of the FEP Study, comparisons will be made, evaluating trends and relationships between participant characteristics and FEP usage over time.

Sample Selection Process

The Wave 4 sample contains all FEP participants who were randomly selected for Wave 1 of the FEP Study from a statewide pool of FEP recipients. The four inclusion criteria for participants included 1) having received between 2 and 9 months of cash assistance in Utah since January 1997, 2) being in a FEP category which required participation in an employment plan, 3) having an open cash assistance case at the time of the Wave 1 interview and 4) residing in the state of Utah. The pool of potential study participants was evaluated monthly between January and September of 2006. A random sample of qualified participants was selected each month.

Data Collection

Administrative data were generally secured through requests to the management information systems(MIS) division at DWS. These data included information regarding cash assistance and other benefits used during the study period as well as specific data gathered during the initial assessment. Wave 1 data were gathered during in-home interviews conducted statewide by trained interviewers. Wave 1 data is entirely based on self-report. Data collection procedures for Wave 1 can be reviewed in the initial FEP Study report presented to DWS in January 2007 (Harris & Vogel-Ferguson, 2007).

FINDINGS

Study Sample

A total of 2062 FEP participants were randomly selected for Wave 1 of the FEP Study using the procedures described above. Because the purpose of the study was to explore respondents “new” to the use of cash assistance, it was determined that two additional criteria should be added to increase the comparability of study participants. As shown in Table 1, 50 cases were eliminated due to out-of-state months of assistance. In addition, 326 cases were removed due to the first FEP month occurring prior to April 2005. (See Appendix 1 for the distribution of “first month” of FEP cash assistance appearing in the random sample). The Wave 4 sample was thus reduced to 1686 cases.

A key factor in generalizing data to the wider study population is providing evidence indicating no significant differences between those who participated in the study and those who did not. Of the 1686 cases evaluated in Wave 4, 923 (54.7%) participated in Wave 1 of the FEP Study and are referred to as “respondents.” The remaining 763 (45.3%) did not participate in Wave 1 and are referred to “non-respondents.”

Table 1: Wave 4 Sample

Original Sample	Cases with Previous TANF months	Wave 4 Sample
N = 2062	N = 376	N = 1686 (923 - Wave 1 respondents) (763 - Wave 1 non-respondents)

Sample Characteristics

Recall, data presented here reveals characteristics of FEP participants and family composition as they *enter* cash assistance for the first time. The characteristics as reported in the administrative data of the total sample, as well as both Wave 1 respondents and non-respondents, are presented in Table 2.

Respondent Profile

Table 2 displays the general demographic and family characteristics of the Wave 4 sample. While the respondent and non-respondent groups were generally very similar, statistical differences were found in the distribution of gender, gender by age, education and age of youngest child. These differences suggest the need for further discussion in the areas of education and the unique characteristics associated with male participants.

Table 2: Sample Characteristics

Personal Characteristics	Respondents N = 923	Non-Respondents N = 763	Total N = 1686
Age	28.3 years	28.1 years	28.2 years
Gender ($p = .034$)			
Female	94%	92%	93%
Male	6%	8%	7%
Gender and Age ($p < .001$)			
Female	27.8 years	27.5 years	27.7 years
Male	37.6 years	34.9 years	36.1 years
Marital Status	(N = 902)	(N = 739)	(N = 1641)
Common law marriage	1 (0.1%)	1 (0.1%)	2 (0.1%)
Divorced	187 (20.7%)	149 (20.2%)	336 (20.5%)
Separated	209 (23.2%)	177 (24.0%)	386 (23.5%)
Living together as married	96 (10.6%)	86 (11.6%)	182 (11.1%)
Married	86 (9.5%)	52 (7.0%)	138 (8.4%)
Never married	317 (35.1%)	269 (36.4%)	586 (35.7%)
Widowed	6 (0.7%)	5 (0.7%)	11 (0.7%)
Physical Health	(N = 903)	(N = 724)	(N = 1627)
Good to excellent	672 (73.9%)	505 (69.8%)	1177 (72.3%)
Fair to poor	231 (26.1%)	219 (30.2%)	432 (26.6%)
Education ($p = .023$)	(N = 908)	(N = 750)	(N = 1658)
High school/GED or higher	650 (71.2%)	495 (66.0%)	1145 (69.1%)
No high school diploma or GED	258 (28.8%)	255 (34.0%)	513 (30.9%)
Children - Average:			
Number of children in home	1.7	1.6	1.7
Age of oldest child	5.6 years	5.4 years	5.5 years
Age of youngest child - ($p = .002$)	4.4 years	3.4 years	4.0 years

Education: The high levels of educational achievement of FEP participants is often questioned during FEP Study presentations. Many DWS workers question the validity of the findings related to education. Figures in Table 2 do show that those who responded to the study did have a somewhat higher level of education. To confirm study data, administrative data for the Wave 4 sample were analyzed by region as well as through comparing respondents and non-respondents. The data shown in Table 3 was drawn from data gathered by an employment counselor during assessment. Approximately 69% of new DWS FEP participants come with at least a high school diploma or GED (HSD/GED).

Significant differences do exist between the regions. Central region has the lowest rate of HSD/GED completion. Mountainland has the highest rate of participants who have a degree in higher education and the lowest occurrence of participants without at least a HSD/GED. Interestingly, those areas of the state with the most need for adult education resources for completion of a HSD/GED are also the areas with the most readily available resources.

Table 3: Education Levels by Region

Ed. level	Central N = 813	Northern N = 469	Mntland N = 198	Eastern N = 72	Western N = 121	Overall N = 1658
No degree	34.7%	31.3%	22.7%	23.6%	24.8%	31.1%
HSD/GED only	58.1%	63.1%	67.7%	70.8%	71.9%	62.4%
Higher degree	7.3%	5.5%	9.6%	5.6%	3.3%	6.7%

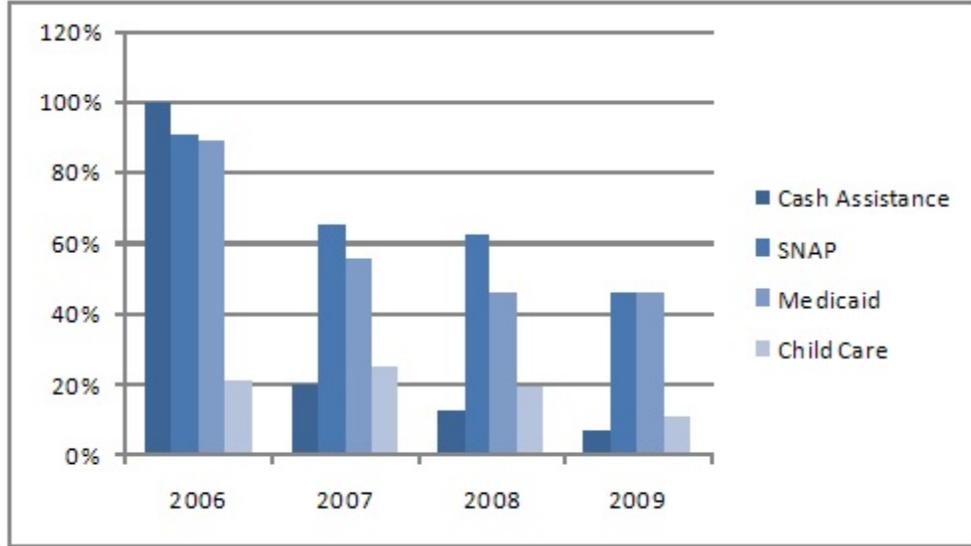
Men and Cash Assistance: While males only comprise about 7% of the overall FEP population, differences between males and their female counterparts are significant in almost every area reviewed for Wave 4. As noted above, men are significantly older than women at FEP entry and as might be expected, their children are on average older as well. Only 45% of the men have a child under age 6 living in the home while this is true for 75% of females. Nearly 76% of the men in the sample have a high school diploma or GED and they are significantly more likely to have been married. Interestingly, men are more likely to report fair to poor physical health.

Males were statistically under represented in the Wave 1 sample. Both the responses encountered in attempting to schedule Wave 1 appointments and answers given by men who did participate in the study suggest that being male in a program typically perceived to be for “single mom’s” adds an extra layer of challenge.

Longitudinal Evaluation of Benefit Use

As stated above, a primary purpose of this phase of the FEP Study was to evaluate the use of benefits over time. As seen in Table 4, four benefits accessed through DWS were tracked through a 36 month time period (See Appendix 2 for details). Benefit usage dropped off dramatically after the first year of assistance, especially relative to cash assistance. Continued use of SNAP benefits and Medicaid suggest that while few participants access cash assistance, many remain eligible for these benefits due to low income. In 2009, at the 36 month review, 50.8% of the sample was not receiving any of these benefits.

Table 4: Use of DWS Resources Over Time



Assessing the Use of Cash Assistance

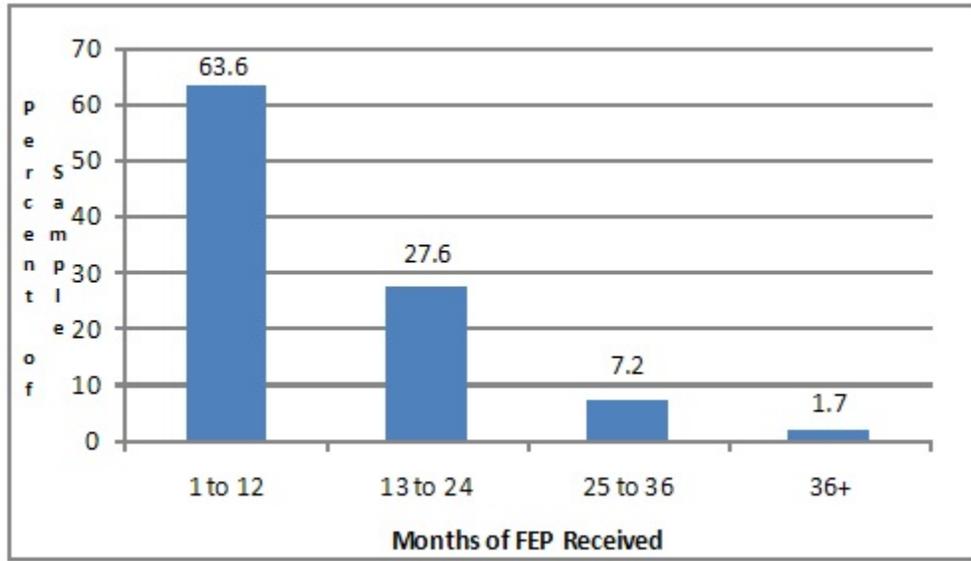
Evaluating the use of cash assistance contains two primary variables. First is the months of assistance received over a given period of time. For purposes of this evaluation “cash assistance” is defined as benefits received in the FEP program by a person required to participate in order to receive the cash benefit. Second, is the number of times a participant cycled on and off assistance. For this evaluation a cycle or “episode” is defined as a closure in cash assistance followed by a gap in cash assistance of two months or more. History has shown that a one month closure generally indicates a paperwork issue, not an actual end of an episode of assistance (Harris, 1996; Heflin, 2003; Janzen, et al., 1997; Scott, 2006). Because of this, one month breaks were treated as continuous receipt, and only two months or more are considered an exit.

Number of FEP Months

The countable FEP months for the Wave 4 sample were analyzed in 2010. This analysis reflected a 50 - 60 month time period for each case in the sample. During this period the number of cash assistance months ranged from 2 to 53. Participants received on average (median) 10 months of FEP assistance. As shown in Table 5, a majority of recipients (63.6%) received one year or less of assistance during the study period. There were 12 participants (0.7%) who received exactly 36 months of assistance and only 28 individuals (1.7%) who exceeded the 36 month lifetime limit and received an extension.

Separating respondents and non-respondents relative to the number of months of FEP used during the study period showed a significant difference. Respondents averaged 11 months of FEP assistance while non-respondents averaged 8 months. Only 30% of non-respondents ever reached 12 months of assistance during the study period while the same was true of 42.5% of respondents. These figures suggest that the results regarding FEP usage presented in Wave 3 would have been even lower had all potential respondents participated in the study.

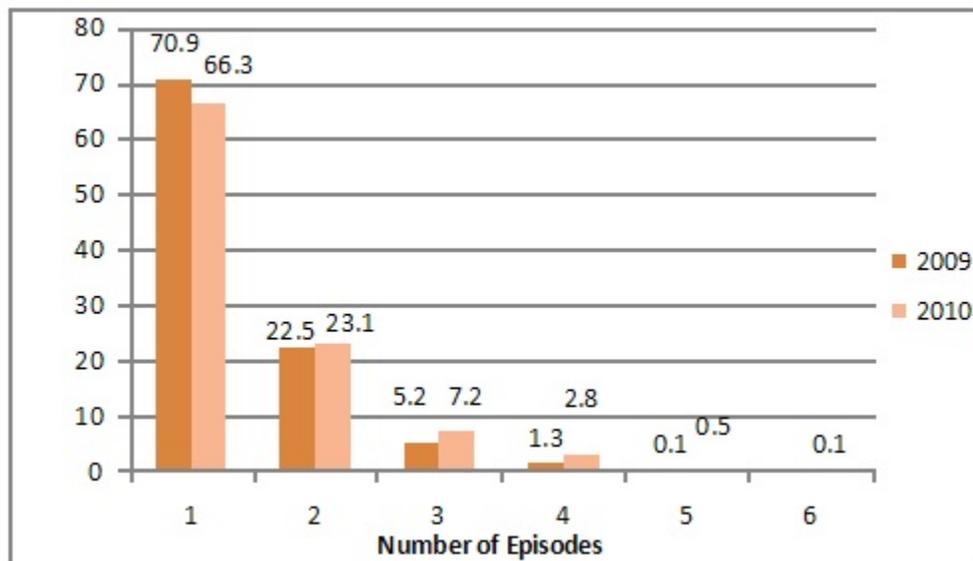
Table 5: Levels of Usage of FEP Benefits by Months



Episodes of Cash Assistance

The number of episodes of FEP receipt was analyzed for the Wave 4 sample in both 2009 and 2010. As reported in Table 6 below, the 2009 analysis reflects a period of 40 - 50 months. During these months 70.9% of the sample received only one episode of assistance. The 2010 analysis expands the evaluation period to between 50 and 60 months. Even with the recession significantly impacting the economy, 66.3% of the sample still had only received one episode of cash assistance. Between 2009 and 2010, 164 individuals (9.7%) reapplied for FEP and received at least one month of assistance. An additional 12 people (0.7%) returned for two episodes of assistance during that year.

Table 6: Episodes of Cash Assistance Over Time



Among these returners, 77 had only one episode through 2009 but returned for a second episode in 2010. This group had an average first stay on FEP of 8 months, slightly longer than the overall average of 7 months (See Table 7). For this unique group the length of the gap between episodes one and two was exceptionally long, 37 months, prior to the return.

Using information from the administrative data it is also possible to identify characteristics associated with a participant having one or more than one episode of assistance. FEP participants most likely to return for more than one episode of cash assistance included those who, at entry, have a child under 6 ($p < .001$), do not have a high school/GED ($p = .017$), and those who are single never married ($p < .001$).

Episodes and Gaps In Cash Assistance

As shown above a large majority of the sample participated in only one episode of cash assistance over the 50 - 60 month evaluation period. For those with more episodes, Table 7 explores the length of the gaps and episodes of assistance following that first episode.

The initial gap between the first and second episode is longer than any of the following gaps. It is clear that once a person returns for a second episode of assistance they are more likely

Table 7: Episodes and Closure Periods of Cash Assistance

N = 1686	2009		2010	
	Sample	Median # months	Sample	Median # months
Episode 1	1686 (100%)	7	1686 (100%)	7
Gap between episode 1 & 2		7		10
Episode 2	491 (29.1%)	5	569 (33.7%)	5
Gap between episode 2 & 3		7		9
Episode 3	111 (6.6%)	4	179 (10.6%)	5
Gap between episode 3 & 4		3.5		5
Episode 4	24 (1.4%)	5	57 (3.4%)	6
Gap between episode 4 & 5		5		5
Time 5	2 (0.1%)	4.5	10 (0.6%)	4
Gap between episodes 5 & 6		---		3
Time 6	---	---	2 (0.1%)	3.5
Gap between episodes 6 & 7				---
FEP open at evaluation month	112 (6.6%)		128 (7.6%)	
Accumulated 36 months or more	20 (1.2%)		40 (2.4%)	

to return for additional episodes. Only 7.6% of the sample was receiving cash assistance at the time of the 2010 review. This figure was up slightly from 6.6% found in 2009. This was the only increase in benefit use observed over the evaluation period and is surprisingly low given the economic conditions during this period.

It can also be noted that only 2.4% (40 cases) of the sample had reached the 36 month time limit by the end of the evaluation period. This is significant as some suggest that extending the 36 month time limit would impact large numbers of recipients.

FEP Months and Episodes Combined

Another way to evaluate the data includes reviewing the combination of the number of months of cash assistance received and the number of episodes of assistance. This combination of descriptors allows for viewing the prevalence of particular usage types over time. Tables 8 presents findings evaluating the number of episodes on assistance as compared to total months used through 2009.

Table 8: Usage Patterns Relative to Months and Episodes - 2009

Total FEP Months	Episodes		
	1	2	3+
2 - 12	923 (54.7%)	194 (11.5%)	18 (1.1%)
13 - 24	227 (13.5%)	147 (8.7%)	72 (4.3%)
25 - 36	35 (2.1%)	37 (2.2%)	21 (1.2%)
37 +	10 (0.6%)	2 (0.1%)	- 0 -

The continued economic downturn might suggest a significant increase in returns to cash assistance by former recipients. A review of the data for 2010 (Table 9) shows only minor shifts in the number of FEP months used and the addition of new episodes of assistance. In fact, only 15.6% of the sample had 1 or more additional month of FEP during the 2010 review period. A majority of the sample, 51.6%, still had only one episode of assistance lasting 12 months or less. Only 171 (10.3%) participants accumulated 24 or more FEP months over the course of the 50-60

Table 9: Usage Patterns Relative to Months and Episodes - 2010

Total FEP Months	Episodes		
	1	2	3+
2 - 12	870 (51.6%)	177 (10.5%)	21 (1.2%)
13 - 24	209 (12.4%)	157 (9.3%)	102 (6.0%)
25 - 36	32 (1.9%)	40 (2.4%)	50 (3.0%)
37 +	9 (0.5%)	13 (0.8%)	6 (0.4%)

month study period. During this same period only 40 individuals (2.4%) reached the 36 month time limit for FEP benefits in Utah, 14 of these individuals reached 36 months during one episode of assistance.

While the economy did not significantly alter the use patterns for cash assistance, there are FEP policies which could be correlated to some of the use outcomes. For example, 27.6% of the sample was in school at Wave 1 and yet nearly half of those with one episode of assistance lasting between 13 and 24 months were in school when they arrived. Given FEP policy regarding education this makes sense. Those who were participating in approved programs received support to continue and remained on FEP while completing their education.

Interestingly, the same “bump” is not visible when evaluating those with physical or mental health issues at entry. In the past, long-term receipt of assistance had been associated with physical and mental health issues as participants could remain on FEP with a doctor/therapist note indicating they could not work. However, as noted in the findings in Wave 2 and 3 of the FEP Study, many people enter FEP with physical and/or mental health issues but most report these issues are made manageable or overcome within a few months after entry to FEP and do not lead to long episodes.

Clearly FEP recipients used the cash assistance benefit in a variety of ways. Given the extensive information known about incoming FEP participants, their families, employment supports and the individual patterns of FEP usage over time, it was possible to analyze these factors to determine which were most predictive of short-term and long-term use of FEP benefits.

Predicting the Length of FEP Assistance at Entry

The second purpose of Wave 4 was to explore the relationship between the participant’s situation (both social and personal factors) at FEP entry, and long term outcomes regarding FEP usage. To do this the sample was divided into two groups representing the extremes of FEP usage. The “short-term” group was defined by those participants who, during the 50 - 60 month evaluation period, only had one episode of cash assistance lasting 7 months or less. (Seven months was chosen as it was the median length of the first episode of FEP for all recipients.) The “long-term” group consisted of all participants who accumulated 24 months or more of cash assistance during the study period, regardless of the number of episodes. The two groups represented the extremes in FEP usage.

The short-term (N = 253) and long-term (N = 121) groups were compared to determine what factors best predict FEP usage over time. There were 43 variables evaluated using bivariate analysis. (See Appendix 3 for full list of variables evaluated.) Twelve variables were found to be significant in predicting those who will leave FEP quickly (and not return) and those who accumulate many more months of assistance. Table 10 lists the individual factors which, as noted when a person starts FEP, predict short term stays.

Each person arrives at the doors of DWS with a different combination of strengths and needs. When the factors listed in Table 10 are found together, the ability to predict the outcome is increased. However, when looking at a model produced by combining all these variables in Table 10, four variables drop out of importance. These variables are age, having a child under age 6, growing up in a two parent home and education level. It is not that these variables are unimportant, only that when combined with the other variables these have less influence.

As noted above, 40 of the 1686 individuals studied had reached 36 months of cash assistance during the study period. Of these cases, 30 (75%) had reached the 36 months using one

or two episodes of assistance. This suggests that very few recipients are entering FEP and remaining on assistance for extended, continuous periods.

Table 10: Factors Predicting Short Term Stays on Assistance

Variable	Short Term Predictor
Strongest Predictors	
Employment	Is currently or has been employed in past 12 months
Cash Assistance History	Has not received cash assistance on their own or as a child on another's case
Current education	Is NOT currently attending school or training
Marital Status	Is or has been married
Telephone access	Does report regular access to a telephone
Recent partnership	In past year, no romantic partner has inhibited participant from engaging in work or school
FEP knowledge	Learned about FEP from a friend or an agency (not family or just knew of it themselves)
Emotional/Informational Support	Has strong social supports for getting needed information and emotional support
Additional Important Factors	
Age	Older clients more likely to exit sooner
Children	Does not have a child under age 6
Education	Has a high school diploma or GED
Family life	Grew up in a two parent home

In addition, 12 of those who reached the time limit closed after exactly 36 months while only 28 individuals (1.7%) received extensions. There were three individuals caring for a medically needy dependent, 2 with an employment extension, one post education extension, and one with a substance abuse issue, Physical health (10) and mental health (10) barriers were the most common reasons for an extension, however the frequency was so small that these factors were not found to predict long-term assistance. Most of the physical and mental health extensions closed with the participant being awarded SSI benefits.

DISCUSSION

Wave 4 of the FEP Study of Utah contributes much to the portrait of incoming FEP recipients. Wave 4 connects personal characteristics, family situations and employment outcomes with the use of cash assistance over time. Using administrative data and the broader sample of Wave 1 respondents and non-respondents enhances the generalizability of the findings and the accuracy of the data. This summary of nearly 5 years of cash assistance history provides important insights regarding the TANF population in Utah and how DWS services might be effected by changes which have occurred in the population over time. The results of the FEP Study of Utah suggests important next steps as evaluations of the FEP Redesign program move forward.

The End of Welfare As We Knew It

President Bill Clinton's famous line ushering in the welfare reforms of the mid 1990s has been applauded in theory. However, the stereotypical "welfare mom" toward which welfare reform was focused no longer exists. (Perhaps they never did, but that is another issue.) The Wave 4 data clearly shows that receiving endless months of cash assistance is no longer the norm. The majority of FEP participants receive short term assistance, exit cash assistance and do not return within 4 - 5 years. Yet short FEP stays and the lack of returns to assistance do not always equate to movement into self-sufficiency.

Since the early years of welfare reform large caseload reductions have been used to declare welfare reform a success (Schram & Soss,2002). However, a review of both participant perceptions and DWS coding suggests that there are many reasons people exit FEP early. Some customers started or returned to employment and no longer needed services. Others either did not find the services helpful and wished DWS would have supported their schooling or "just helped me find a job!" There were a few who felt incapable of completing the activities DWS required and some simply did not want to do what was required to keep cash assistance. With half of new FEP recipients leaving after one short stay distinguishing between these groups is an important element in gauging success.

There is also a relationship between a FEP participants' experience and whether or not they return for additional assistance. The economic downturn would have suggested a significant rise in the FEP caseload with a comparable increase in Wave 4 returners. While there has been a small increase in the caseload, it has not reflected the severity of the recession.. Data from earlier waves of the FEP Study suggest that FEP participants are unlikely to return if they do not feel the program offers what they need to improve their situation. Evaluating how, and if, benefits of participating in FEP outweigh the costs is a critical key to interpreting findings from future evaluations.

Short term stays may be the norm however long-term stays still occur. The fact that only about 11% of the participants reached 24 months in the study period suggests that these FEP participants are truly unique and that extending the 36 month time limit is basically irrelevant to most FEP participants. The data analysis revealed predictors of longer term stays yet the challenge is how to provide more appropriate services for this group. If the participant has accumulated these months due to engagement in schooling or training, they are likely already on the path to success. However others require strong case management around issues such as communicating with doctors, therapists and SSI personnel. The success of the SOAR program exemplifies how workers skilled in these areas can really make a difference.

Implications For the Front Line

While Wave 4 data has many policy and programmatic implications, it is also a helpful resource for front line workers to better understand the realities they face every day. The FEP Study was designed to follow participants over the course of their DWS experience, not to reflect the “average caseload” on any given day. Yet workers experience their caseload day by day and it is understandable why they often react to the FEP Study data with disbelief. The Wave 4 data helps explain this phenomena.

Over time the participants who receive benefits long-term make up a larger proportion of the caseload. As shown in the data, FEP participants who return to assistance are more likely to lack basic education, are single and have very young children. These cases stand out in a workers mind. Participants who need extensive help obtaining doctors notes and other verifications become well known to the worker. The majority of participants who arrive at DWS with basic skills and a plan to return to self-sufficiency do not require as much time and attention. Many of these customers are here and gone very quickly, and just as quickly forgotten. The perceptions of the workers are thus true to their daily experience but not reflective of the overall reality.

Knowing the reality of the composition of the FEP population is a strong selling point for the principles of FEP Redesign. The data shows that FEP participants come with many skills and this fact supports the work first principle and active pursuit of rapid employment. Employment counselors, who often have not had time (and perhaps training) to work with participants in seeking employment, need support in improving their employment focused case management skills. This will be especially important as performance measures expand to include more employment based outcomes. It will take time to unlearn the lessons of the past few years. Yet, many workers have expressed frustration over the current focus of FEP and there seems to be an overall desire to move toward focusing on the best interest of the participant. This of course will need to be experienced by workers as not just support in theory but a consistent message with training and resources to support the new direction.

The insights gained from learning what factors predict short-term and long-term assistance will also be important to communicate to workers. Customers who need more intensive services from the start may be matched with workers who are more skilled at serving this small but vulnerable population. This Wave 4 data will be most useful when it can be used to match each participant with the most appropriate services and resources as quickly as possible.

Next Steps: Additional Data and the FEP Redesign Study

Wave 4 reflects two additional years of FEP usage data. In the future additional years of cash assistance data will be added. Extending the evaluation period will continue to expand our knowledge of cash assistance usage patterns over time. Trends can change thus the longer the cohort can be followed, the more credible the findings.

The FEP Study has provided many insights into Utah’s TANF population and has pointed out additional areas for exploration. Areas which were somewhat addressed but could use further examination include:

- 1) Learning more about a participants experience around case closure. This might include the reason for closure, the participants understanding of the process and their experience as a partner in the process. Administrative data regarding DWS’ understanding of the reason for case closure would be important to gather as well so that these perspectives can be compared.

2) A clear perspective on what customers experienced as “value added” in their interactions with DWS. This might include the employment services received, information regarding additional resources, access to employment networks, and personal and emotional supports that made a difference.

3) Information around experiences with specific programs such as Transitional Cash Assistance, Work Success, SOAR, LCT assistance, educational/training programs, etc.

As with the FEP Study, front line workers, area supervisors and managers will also be included in defining study questions. Continued ownership of the evaluation process is critical in making sure the research is well focused and that these key stakeholders have personal investment in the study outcomes.

Resistance to participation in the FEP Study (that is, new FEP recipients) was much higher than it was with those who were contacted as part of the time limit study. As we invite participants to engage in the FEP Redesign evaluation it is important to continue to be sensitive to the stigma of association with the welfare system. There is a need to learn about a range of experiences. Each voice counts in the effort to better serve FEP participants.

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Appendix 1: Distribution of FIRST month of FEP Cash Assistance

TANF history	1997- 2001 (5 yrs)	2002 - 2003 (2 yrs)	2004 - 3/2005 (15 months)	4/2005 - 5/2006 (14 months)
First FEP month	100 (4.8%)	78 (3.8%)	124 (6.0%)	1760 (85.4%)

Appendix 2: Use of Various Public Benefits Over Time

Resources	2006	2007	2008	2009
SNAP	91%	65%	62%	46%
Medicaid	89%	56%	46%	46%
Child Care	21%	25%	19%	11%
Cash Assistance	100%	20%	12%	7%

Appendix 3: Variables Evaluated Through Bivariate Analysis

Personal Characteristics Evaluated	Family and Social Factors Evaluated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Age - Gender - Race - Marital status - Education history - Learning disabilities - Problems reading/writing - Physical health - Mental health - Job skills - Welfare history - Alcohol dependency - Other drug dependency - Work history - Current employment status - Current enrollment in school/training - Criminal Background - Self-esteem - Self-efficacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Caring for needs of a dependent child - Child under age 6 in the home - Access to transportation - Access to child care - Access to a telephone - Access to a computer - Relationship with DWS employment counselor - Mother's level of education - Father's level of education - Living situation growing up - Sexual or physical abuse as a child - Identification with a specific religion - Domestic violence: current, past 12 months, ever - Partner's effect on work in past year - Social Support Survey: Overall and 4 sub-sets - Social Support satisfaction - Source of information regarding FEP