

# Family Employment Program (FEP) Study of Utah

A Snapshot In Time - 2007: Wave 2  
Initial Findings



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## Family Employment Program (FEP) Study of Utah Taking Another Look - 2007: Wave 2

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the years welfare research has focused on long term recipients, welfare to work cyclers, and point in time cohorts. In Fall 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 new FEP participants beginning their experience with cash assistance. The purpose would be to 1) provide information regarding basic demographics, attitudes, employment supports and barriers, and experiences with DWS; 2) investigate differences between the general FEP population and other groups such as the long term recipients; and 3) monitor outcomes for this group over time. This research endeavor was unique in both the population under study (new TANF recipients), and because the study would capture the first impacts of the newly implemented Deficit Reduction Act of 2005.

In wave 1 of the New FEP Study, 1144 cash assistance recipients new to FEP were interviewed between January and September 2006. Basic demographic profiles, family background and current family composition, respondent characteristics and attitudes toward employment and parenting, access to and use of employment supports, experiences with DWS personnel and services, employment history and current work experience were all covered in the survey. Comparisons were made, where possible with results from a study of former FEP participants who reached Utah's 36 month time limit for cash assistance.

It was discovered that just over half (56.6%) of those new to cash assistance had either been a dependent child on another case or had their own cash assistance under AFDC. The public assistance history was found to be strongly associated with higher levels of violence both in childhood and romantic relationships. Respondents in this group were more likely to have grown up in a single parent home, had parents with lower levels of education, and had more episodes of homelessness as a child. This lack of basic resources and parental modeling contributed to lower graduation rates and lower levels of employment as an adult. The complete findings from wave 1 of the New FEP study can be found at: <http://www.socwk.utah.edu/pdf/fepstudyofutahwave1.pdf>

The 1144 original participants were contacted one year following their wave 1 interview. Of this original group 923 chose to participate in wave 2, an 81% response rate. Most interviews were again conducted face-to-face, generally in the respondents home, by trained interviewers. There were 34 respondents who were living out of state and were interviewed by phone. There were also 19 respondents who were incarcerated at the time of their interview and thus interviews were conducted in the jail facility.

Of the 923 respondents, nearly half (47.9%) received 3 months or less and nearly 70% received 6 months or less of cash assistance in the year following their wave 1 interview. They were referred to as the short term group. The fact that a majority of FEP recipients receive cash assistance for a very short time and are off of cash assistance has significant policy and practice implications.

The short term group was divided into three subgroups reflecting the main reasons why customers believed their cash assistance had closed. The *earned income subgroup* (30.8%) reported cash closure due to getting a job or increased earned income. The *other income subgroup* (12.9%) closed due to accessing child support, disability payments or the return of a partner who was providing support. The *problem situation subgroup* (25.9%) closed due to issues such as non-participation, incomplete paperwork, and the desire to pursue personal goals not supported by DWS. The remaining 270 (30.4%) respondents received 7 months or more in the year between waves 1 and 2 of the study and were identified as the long term group.

Throughout the wave 2 report variables relative to three short term and the long term group were analyzed. As might be expected, those with fewer physical and mental health issues and with more extensive work histories and higher levels of education were more likely to close due to earned income. Those closed due to problem situations had the weakest work histories and lowest levels of education. In general the problem situation group looked most similar to the long term group but experienced other issues which made it difficult to keep the cash assistance case open. The problem situation group also had the strongest link to a welfare history. The challenges which are often associated with growing up in poverty (as suggested by growing up with welfare) lead to gaps in human and social capital making movement toward self-sufficiency more challenging. This is consistent with welfare research which has identified sanctioned welfare recipients as reflecting the most barriered and hard to employ customers on the TANF rolls (Bryner & Martin, 2005; Pavetti, Derr & Hesketh, 2003).

The composition of the long term group reflected the significant shifts TANF policy implemented by the DRA. Previous DWS research studies exploring the characteristics and needs of long term welfare recipients have produced findings consistent with the extensive body of literature relative to long term welfare recipients under both AFDC and TANF. The findings of this wave 2 study suggest that the traditional long term recipient is now more likely to leave the welfare rolls as a problem situation closure. Barriers such as weak work history, lower levels or education, lack of job skills, young children, and age at entry onto welfare are no longer associated with long term welfare receipt. Only physical and mental health issues and participation in approved education and training programs are strongly correlated with long term welfare receipt. This factors match those allowed under DRA regulations.

The findings of the wave 2 study are only preliminary and require the additional data to test the validity of the conclusions drawn here. This data does identify some important theories which will be tested as part of wave 3 of the New FEP study.

## KEY FINDINGS

1. Nearly ½ of the group used 3 months or less of cash assistance between wave 1 and wave 2 of the study. Nearly 70% used 6 months or less of cash assistance. Comments from respondents made it clear that low benefit use is the result of a combination of factors. Some customers apply for and receive cash assistance to bridge a temporary financial gap. Cash assistance closes quickly when a person recovers from surgery, finds a new job after being laid off or a spouse returns. Other customers seek assistance to support a return to school or to improve job skills. Once the limited focus of the program is made clear they leave to seek more effective means for improving their level of self-sufficiency.
2. Factors typically associated with long term receipt (lower education levels, weak work history, lack of job skills, young children in home, age at entrance into welfare) are no longer associated with increased months of cash assistance. Only physical and mental health issues and involvement in an educational or training program were associated with accumulating more months of assistance.
3. Previous research (Taylor et al. 2000, 2002; WES, 1999) has suggested there is a positive relationship between the number of challenges facing an individual and length of time it takes to move off welfare. Results of this study indicate the length of time on assistance is no longer associated with the number of employment barriers experienced by DWS customers.
4. Those whose cash assistance closed due to sanctioning, paperwork, lack of agreement on participation activities, non-cooperation with ORS and other “problem situations” were more likely to have lower levels of education, a poor work history, more physical and mental health problems, more history of welfare assistance and overall high numbers of barriers to employment. These respondents were most similar to long term recipients but lacked the personal qualities or severity of need which would allow them to keep their cash assistance open under the new DRA guidelines.
5. FEP participants most able to comply with program demands are often most likely to exit DWS programs very quickly. Work ready FEP customers leave the program because allowable activities are not flexible enough to match DWS activities to personal goals of self-improvement and improving earning potential versus remaining at the poverty level or below.
6. The loss of cash assistance was commonly associated with the loss of other DWS program benefits, especially medical coverage. The prevalence of uninsured respondents rose from 5.2% to 31.4% between waves 1 and 2. (The percentage of uninsured children rose from 1.4% to 11.2%.) Of those currently employed at the time of the study 41.9% did not have insurance available through their employer and 51.3% had to complete a waiting period.
7. Many customers juggle the demands of work, education, family and welfare. Decisions about what package to put together are often based on what they feel is best for their family. Some customers feel they are being asked to neglect their children by using day care options which are not perceived as safe or by not being home and available to their children. These customers will typically opt out of the program in favor of options which they perceive as serving the best interests of their child.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Given the fact that few FEP recipients remain on cash assistance for more than a few months, evaluate whether more focus on pre-FEP services might be a better use of TANF resources and case manager and customer time. This focus could include up front assessment to identify customers who are work ready and most likely to leave FEP quickly and those most likely to need additional assistance in moving toward work readiness.
2. Review FEP policy which led to more challenged customers being sanctioned and closed for non-participation. Determine program barriers which might be hindering eventual success for customers unable to participate at required levels from day one on FEP.
3. Review employment counselor training to identify possible methods for eliminating unintended structural elements which create opposing goals for customers and employment counselors. Develop tangible supports for employment counselors who are creative in meeting the needs of the hard to employ and retaining high participation rates.
4. Convene DWS leadership to discuss whether the goals of the DRA and the goals of Utah's DWS asking whether the mission of the agency are congruent. If not, develop recommendations for DWS that may require legislative action.

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# **Family Employment Program (FEP) Study of Utah Taking Another Look - 2007: Wave 2**

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

### **The Evolution of National Welfare Reform**

The initial legislation ushering in the “end of welfare as we know it,” expired in the fall of 2002. Reauthorization of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) finally occurred as part of the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) of 2005. Conservatives cheered increased work participation requirements, stricter limitations on countable activities, and more focus on marriage as completing the reforms started in 1996 (Leavitt, 2006). There were also additional changes affecting state programs.

For years the states had been meeting participation rates primarily through attrition. That is, states were given credit toward their participation rate for caseload reductions. This credit was based on the 1995 caseload. New measures of caseload reduction as outlined under reauthorization were based on the 2005 caseload (Tweedie, 2006). This change reduced the credit significantly. Program participants now needed to engage in a federally defined and strictly limited list of activities which counted toward the participation rate, regardless of whether this activity was most appropriate for moving the person toward self-sufficiency. Reductions in countable educational programs, mental health, alcohol and other drug treatment services were significant (Lower-Basch, 8 January, 2007). Millions of dollars in federal funding were in jeopardy if participation rates were not met (Tweedie, 2006).

In addition to increasing required participation rates and reducing countable activities, a General Accounting office (GAO) report released in August 2005 suggested that widely divergent verification processes and definitions of participation made between state comparisons impossible (Welfare Reform: HHS should..., 2005). Lack of verification measures was one of the most criticized elements of AFDC (Bane, 1999). This GAO report, based on a review of just 10 state programs, provided justification for implementing a strict, nation wide, verification process for each and every participation hour, greatly increased program administrative costs.

In September of 2006 Jerry Friedman, the director of APHSA, spoke out against the verification requirements noting the energy wasted in such activities undermined the successful, creative programs which states were implementing and he encouraged states to take a “minimalist attitude” toward the verification burden (Friedman, 2006). This frustration was echoed by advocates of welfare reform who sought to balance reforming welfare recipients with systemic reforms in job training, wages, and child care (From welfare..., 2006; Greenberg, 2006; Lower-Basch, 8, January 2007).

Welfare policy had entered a new era. While a multitude of voices still strive to include measures such as career advancement, poverty reduction and self-sufficiency within welfare policy, the DRA solidified the reality that success is still primarily determined by the number of welfare recipients who move off the roles into work.

## **The Family Employment Program (FEP) Study of Utah**

The Family Employment Program (FEP) Study of Utah was initiated by Utah's Department of Workforce Services (DWS) in the Fall of 2005. This longitudinal study originally focused on FEP customers beginning their experience with the cash assistance program. Data collection coincided with full implementation of new DRA policy requirements and was scheduled to follow the experiences of these FEP recipients over the course of two years, regardless of their status with DWS. The goal of this type of study was to move beyond point-in-time data and learn about the experiences of FEP customers, tracking their experiences, especially relative to self-sufficiency related activities, through a variety of outcomes.

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 purpose of this longitudinal study would be to:

- 1) provide information regarding customer 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 the 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 report that follows presents data from wave2 of the New FEP Study of Utah and takes the next step in answering the questions posed above.

### **METHOD**

Wave 2 of the FEP Study of Utah was conducted using protocol identical to both wave 1 and to all previous FEP studies completed by the SRI for the DWS since 1997. A complete description of the methodology and data collection process was presented in the wave 1 report and will not be repeated here. (See: <http://www.socwk.utah.edu/pdf/fepstudyofutahwave1.pdf>.)

One difference in the wave 2 sample was the inclusion of respondents who have moved out of state. Respondents who lived in another state or country were contacted and the interview conducted at the respondent's convenience over the phone. While data collection by phone created a different type of interaction this was not considered a significant issue as wave 1 interviews were all conducted in person. The interviews collected over the phone represented less than 4% of the overall wave 2 sample.

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Study Sample**

There were 1144 participants in wave 1 of the New FEP sample who consented to being contacted for participation in wave 2. These respondents were contacted for follow-up interviews

which were conducted between January and August 2007. A total of 923 wave 1 respondents agreed to participate in and completed wave 2 of the New FEP study, an 81% response rate.

The statewide distribution of the sample remained relatively stable between waves 1 and 2 (See Table 1). There were 60 (6.5%) respondents who had either moved to another region (26) or out of state (34).

**Table 1: Regional Distribution:**

	<b>Central</b>	<b>Northern</b>	<b>Mntnland</b>	<b>Eastern</b>	<b>Western</b>	<b>Out of state</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Wave 1</b>	545 (47.6%)	351 (30.7%)	128 (11.2%)	50 (4.4%)	70 (6.1%)		1144
<b>Wave 2</b>	412 (44.6%)	279 (30.2%)	98 (10.6%)	41 (4.4%)	59 (6.4%)	34 (3.7%)	923

### **Non-Respondents**

There were 221 wave 1 respondents who did not participate in wave 2. Of the non-respondents 70 (6%) were not interested in continuing, 121 (11%) could not be located, 28 (2%) were known to have moved out of state and could not be located and 2 were deceased. Non-respondent data were gathered and compared to respondents in wave 2 where information was available including: age, gender and region (Appendix 1: Table A1). No significant differences were discovered.

### **Use of Cash Assistance Between Wave 1 and Wave 2**

Utah's DWS administrative data was reviewed to determine the number of months each respondent received cash assistance in the 12 months following study eligibility. Of the 923 wave 2 respondents, 34 were living out of state. Because administrative data from other states was not available to researchers these 34 respondents were removed from any analysis of subgroups based on the number of months of cash assistance received. For the remaining 889 respondents (Appendix 1: Table A2) nearly half the respondents received 3 months of assistance or less between wave 1 and wave 2 of the study and nearly 70% received 6 months or less.

In an effort to identify characteristics associated with potential long term use of welfare benefits the sample was divided into two groups. Those who received between one half and one full year of cash assistance were referenced as the *long term group* (N = 270). A majority (68%) of these respondents were receiving cash assistance at the time of the wave 2 interview. Those who received cash assistance for half a year or less were known as the *short term group* (N = 619). Respondents in the short term group were asked to identify why their cash assistance had closed. In the past DWS closure codes have been used to identify case closure reasons. In other studies it has been noted that respondents sometimes intentionally disengage from DWS when they get a job yet it is recorded as a paperwork issue, incomplete review or non-participation closure. For this study, self report was used to base analysis on the respondent's perception of the

case closure experience. From this self report, answers could be divided into three distinct subgroups (See Table 2).

**Table 2: Short Term Sub-groups' Reasons for Case Closure**

<b>Grouping</b>	<b>Frequency N = 889</b>
<b>Long term group</b>	<b>270 (30.4%)</b>
<b>Short term groups</b>	<b>619 (69.6%)</b>
<b>Earned income</b> I got a job/I made too much	<b>274 (30.8%)</b>
<b>Other income</b> Closure reasons: Child support Spouse/partner moved back into home Spouse/partner/parent/child started providing income Disability Income Unemployment Other	<b>Total 115 (12.9%)</b> 45 31 24 11 2 2
<b>Problem situation</b> Closure reasons: Non-participation Paperwork issues DWS did not support what I felt was best for me Too much required/overwhelmed Problems with DWS worker(s) Other No eligible child in home Don't know why closed Went to jail Was told months of assistance had expired	<b>Total 230 (25.9%)</b> 66 46 44 32 26 19 18 10 7 6

The first and largest of the subgroups were those closed due to their own “earned income” (N = 274). This group represented nearly 30% of the entire sample and was relatively easy to classify as respondents simply said, “I got a job” or “I earned too much at my job and it closed.” Several respondents added additional thoughts to their comments further explaining their situation at the time the case closed.

- *I had found a full time job and I didn't need it anymore. Work was my goal and I met it.*
- *I went back to work and decided to close it. I felt the system was dragging its feet and were not helping me. I could have gotten my GED and they were too slow so I had to go back to work. I needed the money.*
- *I was tired of going to all the appointments at DWS and reporting all the time. I didn't have enough money to keep getting on the bus and them telling me I didn't qualify for*

*things. I also got a permanent position working.*

- *Because my employment counselor explained to me that with my job my cash amount was small and I only have 3 years to get it so I decided to close my cash.*

A second subgroup was identified when the reported closure of cash assistance was due to “other income” replacing welfare assistance and funding the household. Such income sources included child support, disability, or a spouse or partner assuming responsibility for providing financial support (N = 115). This group was more likely to have entered welfare when they had separated from a spouse or partner. Respondents noted:

- *I was only getting it because I wasn't getting child support, when that started coming they closed my cash.*
- *I started getting an SSI check for my daughter and they said I was no longer eligible.*
- *I was on it for help when I was not with my partner, but when I finally believed it was okay to depend on him and we moved in together, I didn't need it any more.*
- *Well they were going after child support from my ex-husband and they were going to garnish his check so he asked me not to go through the state and he would give me more money on the side. So I quit cash but he only paid me for 2 months.*
- *I got one month of child support so they closed it saying I should save months and then my ex husband quit his job and my partner is too sick to work - I was really angry.*

The last short term sub-group reported cash closure due to “problem situations”(N = 230). The problems could have been personal issues such as going to jail or losing custody of children. Other problems included paperwork issues, non-compliance with required activities (non-participation), failure to obtain required verifications, feeling overwhelmed with the process and miscommunication with their DWS worker. A number of respondents also felt the required activities did not match their personal goals or were not in the best interest of their family and let the case close. Examples of responses in this group include:

- *I didn't get a job like I was told - so I lost eligibility.*
- *They didn't consider my employment as employment. They said I had to have a supervisor sign that I was at work for a certain number of hours and since I'm my own supervisor it didn't count.*
- *I was exhausted, it was too hard to keep it open. I was running around like I had a full time job doing this or that and it was too much.*
- *I quit doing the paperwork because they kept saying I didn't bring in the right stuff-I took mine and my son's birth certificate in 4 times and they said they still didn't have it.*
- *I was at the hospital with my son for 2 weeks, he had RSV. They sent me paperwork in the mail but I wasn't home to get it and when I called they were very rude so they ended up closing my cash because of a paper.*
- *Because they wanted me to volunteer work for so many hours a week and I was a new mom and wanted to be home with my baby. So I closed it.*
- *I was in school and didn't want to participate - there was too much time involved.*
- *They were saying that my balance was off. I didn't understand it - they said they made a mistake and I owed them. They closed my cash and took money out of my food stamps.*

- *They told me I didn't participate in their thing, I took a class to become licensed in mortgages but they said I should've talked to them first and didn't count it.*
- *It seemed to be too much of a hassle to keep it open and take care of my son. I eventually got a little part time job and made as much as I used to get from them for cash.*

Respondents often mentioned additional motivating factors contributing to case closure. Several of those closed due to earned income mentioned being fearful their months would run out and wanting to save them for a dire emergency and thus closed their case when not receiving a full grant. Some closed because of non-participation mentioned being unwilling or unable to provide information to ORS. The text of all extended responses can be found in the qualitative summary.

Throughout the remainder of the report findings regarding the total wave 2 population will be presented for the entire sample (N= 923). If significant differences between the four sub groups are discovered, these findings will also be presented using the smaller sample size (N = 889) which excludes the 34 out of town respondents who could not be identified by sub group.

## Demographic Characteristics of Wave 2

### Sample Profile

Analysis of descriptive characteristics of the wave 1 and wave 2 samples reveal no significant differences between the groups in regards to age, gender and race (See Table 3). Marital status remained unchanged for 750 (81.3%) respondents. Of those who experienced a change, 62 (6.7%) married, 87 (9.4%) divorced, 20 (2.2%) became separated and 4 (0.4%) were widowed. There were 121 respondents who added a baby to the family between wave 1 and wave 2. There was a significant increase in the percentage (9%) of respondents living in 2 adult (married or co-habiting) households.

**Table 3: Respondent Demographics**

Personal Characteristics	Wave 2 N = 923	Wave 1 N = 1144	TL Sample N = 1053
Age	29.5 years range 18 - 61	28.5 years range: 17 - 60	32.6 years range: 20 - 68
Gender	Female 94% Male 6%	94% 6%	96% 4%
Race/Ethnicity:			
Hispanic	126 (13.7%)	161 (14.1%)	243 (23.1%)
White (non-Hispanic)	656 (71.1%)	810 (70.8%)	652 (62.0%)
Black (non-Hispanic)	39 (4.2%)	46 (4.0%)	42 (4.0%)
Native American	37 (4.0%)	47 (4.1%)	42 (4.0%)
Asian - Pacific Islander	24 (2.6%)	34 (3.0%)	10 (0.9%)
Other	3 (0.3%)	2 (0.2%)	7 (0.7%)
Mixed Race	38 (4.1%)	41 (3.6%)	56 (5.3%)

<b>Personal Characteristics (con't)</b>	<b>Wave 2 N = 923</b>	<b>Wave 1 N = 1144</b>	<b>TL Sample N = 1053</b>
Marital Status			
Married	125 (13.5%)	101 (8.8%)	
Separated	140 (15.2%)	287 (25.1%)	
Divide “separated” group: Still working on it -	27 (19.3%)	43 (15.1%)	
Permanent Separation -	113 (80.7%)	242 (84.9%)	
Divorced	292 (31.6%)	267 (23.3%)	
Widowed	8 (0.9%)	8 (0.7%)	
Single - never married	358 (38.8%)	480 (42.0%)	
Other	- 0 -	1 (0.1%)	
Relationship Status - single vs. couples			
<b>Single Adult Household</b>	<b>616 (66.6%)</b>	<b>867 (75.8%)</b>	<b>787 (74.7%)</b>
<b>Two Adult Household:</b>	<b>307 (33.3%)</b>	<b>277 (24.2%)</b>	<b>266 (25.3%)</b>
Married	125 (13.5%)	101 (8%)	97 (9.2%)
Separated but working on it	27 (2.9%)	43 (3.8%)	34 (3.2%)
Domestic Partnership	155 (16.8%)	133 (11.6%)	135 (12.8%)

### Family Background and Subgroups

In wave 1 the presence of a welfare history was associated with many childhood difficulties and experiences of violence, abuse and lack of resources. In this study comparisons were made between the factors related to a welfare history and the identified subgroups. As shown in Table 4, those in the problem situation group were significantly more likely to have had a welfare history (defined by having been on another person’s welfare case as a child or having their own AFDC cash assistance) than those in the other groups. Also, those in the problem situation group were more likely to have started their cash assistance history as a teen and were less likely to have been married when their first child was born. The remaining family history variables were not significant between groups.

**Table 4: Respondent History and Subgroup Membership**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Earned Income (N = 274)</b>	<b>Problem Situation (N =230 )</b>	<b>Other Income (N = 115)</b>	<b>Long Term (N = 270)</b>	<b>Signifi- cance Level</b>
Has a welfare history - wave 1	55.1%	65.2%*	49.6%	60.4%	.021
Received first cash assistance as a teen - wave 1	23.4%	35.7%	13.0%	24.8%	<.001
Was married when first child born - wave 1	34.7%	29.1%	51.8%	37.4%	.001

\* - shaded boxes indicate area of greatest difference

## Children

The experiences of children in light of welfare reform and especially the DRA has been one of the areas lacking in recent research. Adding a child to a family can affect a person's ability to retain employment. Some respondents sought welfare assistance as an income resource during the time immediately preceding and/or following delivery of a child as many employers do not provide paid maternity leave. Table 5 presents information regarding changes in family formation between waves 1 and 2.

**Table 5: Children by Subgroups**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Earned Income (N = 274)</b>	<b>Problem Situation (N =230 )</b>	<b>Other Income (N = 115)</b>	<b>Long Term (N = 270)</b>	<b>Total N = 889</b>
Infant under 3 months in home when interviewed at wave 1	19.0%	26.1%	11.3%	18.5%	175 (19.7%)
Added baby to family between wave 1 and 2	10.2%	15.2%	10.4%	14.1%	113 (12.2%)
Currently pregnant - wave 2	6.3%	10.5%	10.5%	7.4%	73 (8.3%)
Child under 6 in home	76.7%	80.4%	78.0%	82.9%	633 (76.5%)
Child has serious issue effecting work or school	8.0%	9.1%	13.0%	13.3%	94 (10.6%)
Had child go live somewhere else since last interview	12.8%	23.1%	13.9%	7.4%	124 (14.0%)

As noted above, 124 respondents (representing 186 children) reported one or more child younger than 18 left the home in the past year. Nearly a quarter (46) of the children were removed by the state. Another 34 (18.3%) went to live somewhere else as the respondent felt the child needed a better living environment and 27 (14.5%) went to live with the child's other parent. There were 12 children who left to establish their own households. "Other" reasons were given for 36 children leaving home. Other reasons included the respondent going to jail or having physical or mental health issues which made it difficult for them to raise a child.

Of the 923 households, 855 reported one or more child under age 18 living in the home resulting in the collection of data related to a total of 1535 children. Only 36 of the children were grandchildren, adopted or under legal guardianship of the respondent, the remainder were the respondents own children. As shown in Table 6, a higher percentage of the children in wave 2 were living with both parents and more children had contact with their other parent. There were also nearly 10% more children with no health insurance at wave 2.

**Table 6: Individual Children in Samples**

<b>Total Number of children in sample</b>	<b>Wave 2 N = 1535</b>	<b>Wave 1 N = 1938</b>
Child has health, mental health, learning, behavior or other special needs that limit their regular activities	221 (14.3%)	307 (15.8%)
Child has problems so severe it effect's parents ability to secure and retain employment or go to school	114 (7.4%)	145 (7.5%)
"Other parent" of the child living in the home	241 (16.1%)	179 (9.0%)
Of children where father does not live in the home: Child has contact with other parent	780 (62.0%)	1081 (55.8%)
Primary form of health insurance for children		
Government/Medicaid	1175 (76.5%)	1740 (90%)
CHIP	6 (0.4%)	18 (0.9%)
Private	189 (12.3%)	141 (7%)
None	173 (11.2%)	27 (1.4%)

### **Respondent Characteristics**

Human capital assets, that is the personal resources a person brings to efforts to gain employment, schooling or training have been repeatedly linked to successful outcomes in moving toward employment (Becker, 1999; Moffitt, et al., 2002; Parisi, et al. 2006; Seefeldt & Orzol, 2005). In this study, data regarding several areas related to personal characteristics were collected (See Table 7 for summary). The presence or absence of certain characteristics were associated with each of the subgroups. For this study the particular characteristics reviewed included work history, education, physical health, mental health including levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy and experiences of domestic violence, and the presence and effect of a criminal record.

#### **Work History**

The presence of a work history made a significant difference when reviewing the subgroup outcomes. As displayed in Table 7, those with a weaker work history were more likely to fall into the problem closure group.

#### **Education**

Educational achievement was evaluated at all levels but with the welfare population, most discussion regarding education focus on the impact of a high school diploma (HSD) or GED. A majority (70.0%) of the wave 1 sample had a HSD or GED. Of the 343 wave 1 respondents without this level of education, 268 participated in wave 2. Table 8 reports on changes in education level between waves 1 and 2 and indicates that less than 10% of those without a HSD/GED at wave 1 completed this education level by wave 2. Attitudes toward completion of education did make a difference.

**Table 7: Summary of Respondent Characteristics by Subgroup**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Earned Income (N = 274)</b>	<b>Problem Situation (N = 230 )</b>	<b>Other Income (N = 115)</b>	<b>Long Term (N = 270)</b>	<b>Significance Level</b>
Has stronger history - wave 1	68.2%	53.9%	67.8%	67.4%	.002
Has HSD or GED - wave 2	78.5%	63.5%	79.1%	72.6%	.001
Going to school in past year as employment barrier - wave 2	20.4%	24.3%	23.5%	43.0%	<.001
Fair to poor physical health - wave 2	17.2%	27.0%	31.3%	34.1%	<.001
Fair to poor mental health - wave 2	13.9%	25.7%	21.7%	28.9%	<.001
Alcohol problem indicated	14 (5.1%)	11 (4.8%)	3 (2.6%)	10 (3.7%)	ns
Other drug use problem indicated	13 (4.7%)	21 (9.1%)	7 (6.1%)	19 (7.0%)	ns
Self-esteem	19.9	20.9	20.9	21.4	ns
Self-efficacy	13.9	14.4	14.4	14.7	ns
Domestic violence in past year - wave 1	65 (23.7%)	72 (31.3%)	35 (30.4%)	62 (23.0%)	ns
Domestic violence in past year - wave 2	33 (12.0%)	32 (13.9%)	15 (13.0%)	32 (11.9%)	ns
Criminal record barrier to school or work past year	32 (11.7%)	42 (18.3%)	9 (7.8%)	34 (12.6%)	.034

All wave 1 respondents were asked to indicate if they had any personal educational or training goals they would like to accomplish at some time in the near future. Just over 90% of wave 1 respondents did have such a goal. There were 142 who indicated receiving a HSD or GED was their goal. When asked what would need to happen before they could pursue this goal, respondents gave a variety of responses. Common events which would need to happen included:

- *Come up with the money to pay for it*
- *Save up money from a job so I could afford to go and work less*
- *Get into stable housing and settle in before I can think about that step*
- *Have physical or mental health improve or complete substance abuse treatment*
- *Improve skills: readings, math, test taking skills*
- *Devote more time to school work; get motivated*
- *Have kids grow up a little more so I have more time*
- *Find good child care and a way to get them there*

**Table 8: Educational Experience Between wave 1 and wave 2 Related to HSD or GED**

<b>Wave 1 respondents without HSD/GED who participated in wave 2</b>	<b>N = 268</b>
Education outcomes wave 2:	
Completed a HSD/GED	24
Had been in classes but had dropped out	22
Were still in HSD/GED classes	26
Attitude toward schooling at wave 1:	
Were not interested in going to school	35 (13.1%)
Were in school	80 (29.9%)
Were interested in going to school	153 (57.1%)
Education programs of the 80 who were in school:	
HSD/GED classes	73
other program	7
Wave 2 outcomes for 73 in HSD/GED programs:	
Completed HSD/GED	15
Still in classes	12
In other programs	7
Dropped out	19
Did not recall reporting attending school	20
Barriers for the 153 interested in school:	
Can't afford to go	28%
Need to work, no time for school	26%
Child care problems	23%
Just want to stay home with kids	16%
Family demands	10%

Table 9 shows the outcomes of this group of 142 who *desired* to earn a HSD/GED.

**Table 9: Wave 2 Outcomes for Those Wanting to Earn HSD/GED**

	<b>N = 142</b>
Completed HSD/GED	12 (8%)
Still working on HSD/GED	11 (8%)
Unable to complete HSD/GED	12 (8%)
Have not participated in any type of schooling in the past year	89 (63%)
Currently working on or completed some training but not GED/HS Diploma.	18 (13%)

Those who had started classes but were unable to finish were asked to indicate what happened to inhibit their education efforts. Reasons included:

- *No transportation or child care (2)*
- *My health got worse and the Dr. said I couldn't do it anymore*
- *Pregnancy and mental health issues got in the way*
- *My baby/child got sick and I had to drop out (2)*
- *Got a full time job, no time for school/ there was a work / school conflict (3)*
- *Had to move to another town/lost housing because rent was too expensive (2)*
- *No child care, no stable housing and no money to pay for school*

There was another group who indicated a desire to reach an educational goal such as a business degree or an LPN but knew they needed to complete a HSD/GED first. The wave 2 outcomes for these 56 respondents are presented in Table 10. Comparing this data to Table 9 above it is clear that when the original educational goal is higher, the level of achievement also increases. A greater percentage of respondents with higher education goals completed a HSD/GED between interviews.

**Table 10: Wave 2 Outcomes for Those Seeking a Goal Higher than a HSD/GED**

<b>Of those who wanted to pursue a HSD/GED on the way:</b>	<b>N = 56</b>
Completed HSD/GED	12 (21%)
Still working on HSD/GED	9 (16%)
Unable to complete HSD/GED	10 (18%)
Have not participated in any type of schooling in the past year	19 (34%)
Currently enrolled or completed some training but not GED/HSD	6 (11%)

Those who were unable to complete the HSD/GED program encountered similar problems as those reported above such as:

- *No stable housing, moved to care for mom and the school was too far.*
- *Failed math portion of the GED, I have to retake that part.*
- *Started working and quit studying for school.*
- *Medical and physical health issues came up.*
- *Working and doing everything on my own, got to be too overwhelming. I quit school.*
- *Found out I have 2 years left to get my HSD, too much to do - I will go back later.*
- *Lost transportation and I couldn't do all DWS wanted me to do if I had to ride the bus.*
- *Car problems and gas is too expensive (2)*
- *Got discouraged and gave up, there was too much going on in my life.*

### **A Broader look at Education**

Overall, there were 380 (41.1%) respondents who participated in some kind of schooling or training between wave 1 and wave 2. There were 148 who were still in school at wave 2 and

more than half of this group was in the long term subgroup. Of those still in school about one quarter were in bachelor's programs, one quarter were in associate degree programs, about 20% in HSD/GED classes and the remainder were in a variety of certificate and training classes.

Of the 232 who had been in schooling or training in the past year but were not currently, exactly one half had completed the program of study; the other half had been unable to complete the program. Reasons for being unable to complete schooling were similar to those reported above: lack of finances and needing to work, child care problems, and transportation issues. Some additional situations reflect the challenges faced by many interested in education but also managing a variety of other responsibilities. For example:

- *My son's alleged father beat him up, so my son was scared of everybody and he would no longer go to the day care provided by the school. I kept getting called out of class because he was so upset and afraid. I had to drop out because it was too hard for us.*
- *I was working 12 hours a day and going to school for 4 hours at night so I never saw my children. I will go back but I am putting it off for the moment*
- *I hate school, I couldn't stand to sit in a classroom all day; school is not for me so I dropped out.*
- *State wouldn't pay for child care assistance or the school and wouldn't give me cash assistance so I couldn't afford it. I was really mad - I was really excited about school but they told me that if I wanted to go to school I'd basically have to figure it out on my own.*
- *After working 12 hours a day, I needed to stop to take care of my health. I was pregnant and began having problems with my pregnancy.*
- *My dad died. I took time off to help my mom. I have 2 semesters left. I have to come up with tuition.*
- *My car broke down, my husband refused to comply with the court order, and I couldn't do all the hours they wanted me to from riding the bus.*

It is clear that wanting to go to school makes a significant difference in one's ability to succeed but it is not all about desire. Life circumstances can and do arise, making pursuing education difficult for the moment. This does not necessarily mean it might not happen in the future.

## **Physical Health Issues**

Respondents were asked to report on the current state of their physical health at both wave 1 and wave 2. As reported in Table 11, the percentage of those who reported fair to poor health was nearly identical, just over one quarter of each sample. In wave 2 those with fair to poor health were more likely to be in the long term subgroup (Table 7). A similar percentage of respondents (46.1%) reported a wide variety of chronic health problems, most common were: back, knee and neck problems, asthma, and arthritis. Interestingly, the impact of physical health issues on employment improved between wave 1 and wave 2. At wave 1 more than half of the respondents indicated that physical health had prevented employment or schooling in the past year and past month. At wave 2 only 32.2% reported physical health was a problem in the past year.

This finding is not surprising when reflecting on the reasons wave 1 respondents gave for first receiving assistance. Many spoke of losing a job or needing to leave a job due to physical health problems. Cash assistance served as a temporary financial safety net while receiving treatment for the physical health issue. Once the physical health problem was no longer an employment barrier the person was anxious to return to employment or education.

**Table 11: Physical Health**

	<b>Wave 2 N = 923</b>	<b>Wave 1 N = 1144</b>	<b>TL N = 1053</b>
Overall health in general:			
Excellent	96 (10.4%)	137 (12.0%)	66 (6.3%)
Very Good	179 (19.45)	200 (17.5%)	150 (14.2%)
Good	402 (43.6%)	498 (43.5%)	384 (36.5%)
Fair	159 (17.2%)	197 (17.2%)	274 (26.0%)
Poor	87 (9.4%)	112 (9.8%)	179 (17.0%)
Physical health problem: couldn't take a job, go to school, etc.:			
In past year	293 (32.2%)	629 (55.0%)	
In past month	136 (45.8%)	317 (50.4%)	

### **Mental Health Issues**

Mental health is a very broad category which can be influenced by many of the factors listed throughout this report. In this section overall mental health and self-esteem/self-efficacy, specific diagnoses including alcohol and other drug issues, and domestic abuse issues will be addressed.

**Mental Health Overall:** The General Health Index question was used to evaluate mental health status on a five point scale. Table 12 indicates a reduction in the percentage of respondents reporting fair to poor mental health (6.5%). Fair to poor mental health was more common in the long term subgroup and to a lesser degree the problem situation subgroup (See Table 7). Between waves 1 and 2, 46 respondents received a new diagnosis of a mental health issue. The use of both counseling and medicaid to address mental health issues was reduced. The frequency of mental health issues interfering with work or education goals was also slightly reduced in the past year.

Measurements of self-esteem and self-efficacy provide insight into how respondents feel about themselves and the control they have within their own lives and life activities. Both the Rosenberg Self-Esteem (Rosenberg, 1965) and Pearlin Self-Efficacy (Pearlin, 1978) scales are reverse coded so that lower numbers indicate higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy. While improvements in these areas were small, larger differences were noted when dividing the sample into groups. Those in the earned income group had significantly higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy than those in the long term group.

**Table 12: Mental Health Issues**

	<b>Wave 2 N = 923</b>	<b>Wave 1 N = 1144</b>	<b>TL N = 1053</b>
Mental health overall			
Excellent	151 (16.4%)	189 (16.5%)	91 (8.6%)
Very Good	202 (21.9%)	239 (20.9%)	189 (17.9%)
Good	67 (39.8%)	390 (34.1%)	360 (34.2%)
Fair	136 (14.7%)	214 (18.7%)	269 (25.5%)
Poor	67 (7.3%)	111 (9.7%)	143 (13.6%)
Was ever diagnosed with mental health issue - wave 1		569 (49.7%)	
First time diagnosis of mental health issue - wave 2	46 (5.0%)		
Currently receive mental health treatment:	286 (31.0%)	<b>N = 691</b> 387 (56.0%)	257 (24.4%)
Counseling	174 (60.8%)	274 (70.8%)	
Medication	226 (24.5%)	296 (42.8%)	
Not receiving now but believe I need treatment now	N = 639 127 (19.9%)	N = 755 150 (19.9%)	N = 796 179 (22.5%)
Mental health a problem: could not take a job, had to stop working or could not go to education / training:			
In past year	209 (22.6%)	337 (29.5%)	
In past month	103 (11.2%)	180 (15.7%)	
Self-Esteem Scale	20.7 Range 10 - 40	21.2 Range 10 - 40	
Pearlin Mastery Scale	14.3 Range 7 - 25	14.7 Range 7 - 28	

**Mental Health Screens:** To evaluate for the current presence of the more prevalent mental health issues, respondents completed the same screening tests for depression, anxiety, alcohol and other drug use as were administered in wave 1 (See Table 13). These screens are produced by the World Health Organization and have been used in multiple studies of this population and found to be valid and reliable (CIDI - 12 month SF). The prevalence rates of depression, anxiety, alcohol dependency and other drug dependency were all lower at wave 2. No significant differences were found between groups when evaluating depression and anxiety (Table 7). However, while significant group differences were not found regarding alcohol and other drug use the small number of positive results may have influenced this outcome and will be addressed later in this report.

**Table 13: Mental Health Diagnosis and Alcohol and Other Drug Use**

	<b>Wave 2 N = 923</b>	<b>Wave 1 N = 1144</b>
Depression	336 (36.4%)	541 (47.3%)
Anxiety	182 (19.7%)	307 (26.8%)
Alcohol dependence indicated positive by screen	40 (4.3%)	63 (5.5%)
Use of alcohol self-reported as barrier in past year	11 (1.2%)	21 (1.9%)
Drug dependence indicated positive by screen	62 (6.7%)	96 (8.4%)
Use of drugs self-reported as barrier in past year	36 (3.9%)	51 (4.6%)

**Domestic Violence:** The experiences of domestic violence were again measured using a portion of the Conflict Tactic Scale (Strauss, 1979). As shown in Table 14, both the reported occurrence rates of domestic violence in the past year and negative impact on employment and schooling dropped by more than half between waves 1 and 2. Interestingly, the occurrence rate of current domestic violence increased. These figures are consistent with respondent reports of originally using welfare assistance in a time of crises when leaving a violent relationship. Once the person stabilized in a new setting away from the violence assistance was no longer needed. Those in the problem situation and other income groups had higher rates of domestic violence at wave 1 and these two groups reported the greatest percent decline at wave 2 (See Table 7).

**Table 14: Domestic Violence**

	<b>Wave 2 N = 923</b>	<b>Wave 1 N = 1104</b>	<b>TL N = 999</b>
Severe domestic violence - ever		676 (59.1%)	720 (72.0%)
Severe domestic violence - in past year	116 (12.6%)	293 (25.6%)	143 (14.3%)
Severe domestic violence - current issue	26 (2.8%)	21 (1.8%)	30 (3.0%)
In past year, current or past romantic partner such a problem couldn't take job, job search, go to school...	91 (10.1%)	234 (21.2%)	

**Criminal Record and Incarceration:** The impact of incarceration or a criminal record effects welfare recipients in several ways. Several respondents reported having been incarcerated at some point during the year between wave 1 and wave 2. There were also 29 respondents who specifically referred to spouses or partners who were in jail and thus unable to pay child support.

There were also 19 respondents (2.1%) who were incarcerated at the time of the wave 2 interview. Several were only in jail for a few days as a result of outstanding traffic tickets or other minor warrants. But even short term stays such as these can lead to many important losses such as losing custody of children, loss of a job or loss of cash assistance. There were 121

(13.1%) respondents who reported that a criminal record had hindered their efforts to gain employment in the past year. Those reporting such problems in the past year were concentrated in the problem situation group (See Table 7).

### **Making Ends Meet: A Profile of Financial and Community Resources and Social Supports**

For most people, the need to begin receiving cash assistance was directly related to a loss of income upon which the respondent had relied in order to support a family. Many of the wave 2 respondents were no longer using cash assistance reflecting another change in the composition of resources used to provide support. In this section the composition of the support structures including the personal financial profile, community resources, and social supports.

#### **Financial Profile**

As reflected in Table 15, there was a significant shift in the types of financial resources upon which respondents were relying to provide for themselves and their families.

**Table 15: The Financial Picture**

	<b>Wave 2 N = 923</b>	<b>Wave 1 N = 1144</b>	<b>TL N = 1053</b>
Earned Income	544 (61.2%)	322 (28.1%)	398 (37.8%)
Spouse/partner Income	232 (26.1%)	144 (28.5%)	204 (19.4%)
Child support	225 (25.3%)	44 (3.8%)	296 (28.1%)
Housing Assistance - Total	195 (21.9%)	197 (17.2%)	410 (38.9%)
Public Housing	90 (45.7%)	83 (42.1%)	
Section 8	95 (48.2%)	90 (45.7%)	
Transitional	4 (2.1%)	5 (2.5%)	
Other	8 (4.1%)	19 (9.6%)	
Utility Allowance	33 (3.7%)	82 (7.2%)	
Unemployment compensation	5 (0.6%)	3 (0.3%)	15 (1.4%)
SSI/SSDI	62 (7.0%)	43 (3.8%)	120 (11.4%)
Cash Assistance	174 (19.6%)	1139 (99.6%)	
Educational assistance (per semester)	64 (7.2%)	178 (15.6%)	44 (4.2%)
Food stamps	575 (64.7%)	1044 (91.3%)	894 (84.9%)
Child care assistance	220 (24.7%)	236 (20.6%)	92 (8.7%)
Tribal dividends	7 (0.8%)	8 (0.7%)	9 (0.9%)
Other	84 (9.4%)	79 (6.9%)	81 (7.7%)

In the month immediately preceding the wave 2 interview, nearly two thirds of respondents had received their own earned income. It was much higher (83.9%) for those in the earned income subgroup. As expected, income from a spouse or partner and child support were significantly higher in the other income subgroup (43.5% and 44.3% respectively) as these were factors in defining this subgroup. Housing assistance was most common among the long term group (32.2%) and least used by the problem situation subgroup (13.9%).

The percentage of respondents receiving Social Security income nearly doubled between waves 1 and 2. Only 19 respondents reported receiving this income for their own disability, the remainder received SSI income for a child or spouse. There were an additional 69 respondents in the process of applying for disability, a majority of whom were in the long term group.

Of the 174 respondents who were receiving cash assistance at the wave 2 interview, 151 (86.8%) were in the long term group. A majority (59.4%) of those receiving educational assistance were in the long term group as well. Food stamps usage was most likely among those in the long term group (84.4%) and least likely among those in the problem closure subgroup (52.2%). Child care assistance was primarily accessed by the earned income and long term subgroups. The “other” regular income reported was typically supplied by friends or family who regularly help with bills such as rent, car insurance, gas, diapers and utility bills.

### Community Resources

One fear of those challenging welfare reform was that people in need would turn to already overstretched community resources as a way to make ends meet. As shown in Table 16, there was an increase in usage of some community resources between waves 1 and 2. The problem situation subgroup was significantly more likely to have needed the food bank and the long term group was more likely to have used mental health services.

**Table 16: Additional Community Resources**

	<b>Wave 2 N = 923</b>	<b>Wave 1 N = 1144</b>	<b>TL N = 1053</b>
WIC - (asked of families with a child under 5 or respondent was pregnant)	<b>N = 675</b> 418 (61.9%)	<b>N = 831</b> 508 (61.1%)	<b>N = 504</b> 261 (51.8%)
Free/reduced cost school meals - (asked of families with school age children)	<b>N = 406</b> 342 (84.2%)	<b>N = 484</b> 386 (79.8%)	
Food bank/food pantry	280 (30.3%)	268 (23.4%)	420 (39.9%)
Thrift store	423 (45.8%)	455 (39.8%)	498 (47.3%)
Homeless shelter	22 (2.4%)	27 (2.4%)	32 (3.0%)
Help from a church/religious organization	224 (24.3%)	277 (24.2%)	282 (26.8%)
Drug or alcohol treatment	95 (10.3%)	77 (6.7%)	90 (8.5%)
Mental health services (self or dependent child)	292 (31.6%)	340 (29.7%)	332 (31.5%)

Respondents were also asked to indicate if there were any resources from which they sought help but received none. Just over one quarter (26.4%) of study respondents indicated this had happened. The most common needs for which respondents could not receive help included housing assistance (68), legal aid (33), H.E.A.T. (32), and state child care assistance (18).

### Family and Other Social Supports

One of the most important reasons for initially accessing welfare assistance is the lack of sufficient social supports to serve as a safety net in difficult times. As noted in Table 17, there has been very little change in the satisfaction with and presence of social supports. Several respondents who moved out of state spoke of doing so to be closer to family members who could provide both emotional and financial support.

**Table 17: Social Supports**

	<b>Wave 2 N = 923</b>	<b>Wave 1 N = 1144</b>	<b>TL N = 1053</b>
Rate satisfaction: Overall level of support from others:			
Very satisfied	350 (39.4%)	420 (36.7%)	
Satisfied	449 (50.5%)	587 (51.4%)	
Unsatisfied	68 (7.6%)	110 (9.6%)	
Very unsatisfied	22 (2.5%)	26 (2.3%)	
Closest personal supports come from:			
Spouse/partner	241 (27.1%)	287 (25.1%)	244 (22.3%)
Parents	498 (56.0%)	657 (57.0%)	[All
Children	231 (26.0%)	282 (24.7%)	Family:
Other family	292 (32.8%)	423 (37.0%)	752 (71.4%)]
Friends	170 (19.1%)	268 (23.4%)	227 (21.6%)
Other	43 (4.8%)	79 (6.9%)	95 (9.0%)
Don't have any supports	11 (1.2%)	19 (1.7%)	61 (5.8%)

Respondents were asked about specific supports (such as help with child care, transportation, housing, cash, paying bills) they had both received from family and friends and given to family and friends in the past year. After totaling both the frequency of giving and of receiving it was determined that more than half (57.0%) the respondents reported receiving more than they gave. This is very similar to wave 1 data and reflects a good reason for the high level of satisfaction with social supports.

### Self-Sufficiency Efforts

Respondents were asked to indicate the means used in the past 6 months to “make ends meet.” At wave 1 this question would have reflected a period immediately prior to or during entry into the FEP program. Comparing wave 1 to wave 2 responses shows the degree of change in income sources over time. Reviewing differences between subgroups as shown in Table 18, provides insight into the nature of the differences between the groups in self-sufficiency efforts.

**Table 18: Efforts to Make Ends Meet**

	<b>Wave 2 N = 923</b>				<b>Wave 1 N = 1144</b>	<b>TL N = 1053</b>
	<b>Earned Income (N = 274)</b>	<b>Problem Situation (N =230 )</b>	<b>Other Income (N = 115)</b>	<b>Long Term (N = 270)</b>		
Had a job	96.0%	70.9%	64.3%	64.8%	61.4%	36.3%
Cut back on necessities	54.0%	58.3%	64.3%	61.9%	78.1%	73.4%
Money from families/friends	52.2%	63.5%	61.7%	54.1%	63.6%	59.8%
Money from boy/girl friend or partner	40.5%	39.6%	45.2%	26.3%	35.0%	27.7%
Cut back on extras	88.3%	85.7%	88.7%	87.4%	84.2%	82.3%
Delayed/stopped paying bills	58.4%	56.5%	67.0%	61.5%	63.1%	70.0%
Child support from other parent	32.5%	29.6%	47.8%	16.7%	14.4%	8.6%
Cash assistance	12.8%	14.3%	12.2%	87.0%	not asked	not asked
Food stamps	69.7%	63.0%	76.5%	94.4%	not asked	not asked
Medicaid	78.5%	73.0%	84.3%	97.8%	not asked	not asked
Got help from charity	15.0%	19.1%	17.4%	24.4%	19.4%	27.4%
Moved in w/others-cheaper house	23.7%	33.9%	23.5%	20.4%	42.1%	22.8%
Put child in someone else’s care	8.0%	10.0%	5.2%	4.4%	8.9%	7.3%
Spent down savings	37.6%	28.7%	33.9%	24.1%	34.6%	
Sold Food stamps	0.7%	3.5%	4.2%	2.6%	2.8%	3.0%
Sold plasma	6.6%	10.4%	4.3%	3.3%	not asked	not asked
Pawned things	16.8%	24.8%	19.1%	17.8%	not asked	not asked
Participate in illegal activity	1.1%	4.3%	0.9%	1.5%	2.9%	2.8%
Odd jobs	5.1%	8.7%	5.2%	4.1%	not asked	not asked

While the methods of making ends meet may have shifted, the most important question was whether or not the financial profile, access to community resources and efforts to make end meet ultimately resulted in an overall improved situation for the respondents and their families. Table 19 presents the responses to several questions regarding the respondent’s overall situation. Most respondents reported improvement in their financial situation but most also noted they still worry about having enough money. Those in the earned income subgroup were most likely to report such worries and to report struggles with being able to buy the things

they need. While a majority of respondents were interested in learning more about managing finances, those in the earned income subgroup were most likely to seek such assistance.

**Table 19: Overall Financial Situation**

<b>Variable: Level of agreement with following statements:</b>	<b>Earned Income (N = 274)</b>	<b>Problem Situation (N =230 )</b>	<b>Other Income (N = 115)</b>	<b>Long Term (N = 270)</b>	<b>Signifi- cance Level</b>
Overall, my financial situation is better than it was at the last interview.	84.7%	80.9%	86.1%	89.6%	.05
I worry about having enough money	73.7%	54.3%	58.3%	60.0%	<.001
These days I can generally afford to buy the things we need.	65.0%	77.0%	80.0%	77.8%	.001
There never seems to be enough money to buy something, or go somewhere just for fun.	81.3%	76.1%	79.1%	75.9%	ns
I feel confident that I can manage my own finances and resources.	69.0%	70.4%	73.9%	70.7%	ns
If offered at a good time, I would be interested going to a class to learn about managing finances	76.6%	57.4%	64.3%	61.5%	<.001

### **Employment Supports**

Respondents in wave 1 of the study typically sought welfare assistance due to circumstances affecting their primary source of support. Moving back into self-sufficiency involved restablizing areas of life which contribute to a successful move toward employment. In this study a review of employment supports include: child care, housing, availability of health care and access to transportation and a telephone.

#### **Child Care**

Quality, affordable child care is a well recognized employment support needed by many families in which all adults in the household are employed. As noted in wave 1, respondents are very reluctant to put children in child care settings which are not viewed as safe. Fears regarding the use of day care centers were fueled by personal experience and the news media. There were 788 (85.4%) respondents in wave 2 who had a child under the age of 13. Data regarding their use and experiences of child care are outlined in Table 20.



**Table 21: Child Care Problems**

	<b>Wave 2 N = 788</b>	<b>Wave 1 N = 1036</b>
Past 12 months child care or lack of child care was such a problem respondent lost job, couldn't take job or go to school or training	331 (42.0%)	446 (43.1%)
Respondents who indicated this as primary problem:		
Costs too much	162 (48.9%)	181 (40.6%)
Couldn't find care for times needed	85 (25.7%)	151 (33.6%)
Care too far from work or home	33 (10.0%)	38 (8.5%)
Caregiver unavailable or unreliable	82 (25.1%)	110 (24.7%)
Worry about child abuse	62 (18.7%)	45 (10.1%)
Worry about unsafe location/environment of facility	68 (20.5%)	67 (15.0%)
Child disabled - no qualified caregiver available	16 (4.8%)	20 (4.5%)
No infant care available	13 (3.9%)	25 (5.6%)
No after school care or care for school age kids	2 (0.6%)	2 (0.4%)
Poor quality - Kids or client are unhappy with place	23 (6.9%)	14 (3.1%)
Child sick too often and caregiver will not take sick	16 (4.8%)	16 (3.6%)
Child's behavior makes keeping care difficult	14 (4.2%)	16 (3.6%)
Child care not authorized soon enough	2 (0.6%)	9 (2.0%)
Payment late and lost provider	2 (0.6%)	1 (0.2%)
Other problems with child care process at DWS	36 (10.9%)	39 (8.7%)
Place wanted kids to go was full	14 (4.2%)	4 (0.9%)
Previous over payment made help not possible	- 0 -	1 (0.2%)
Other	42 (12.7%)	51 (11.4%)

**Housing**

**Table 22: Housing**

<b>Living Situation</b>	<b>Wave 2 N = 923</b>	<b>Wave 1 N = 1144</b>	<b>TL Study N = 1053</b>
Current living situation:			
Rent	564 (61.1%)	608 (53%)	801 (76.1%)
Own	59 (6.4%)	77 (6.7%)	44 (4.2%)
Living with friends	31 (3.4%)	38 (3.3%)	38 (3.6%)
Living with extended family - rent free	129 (14.0%)	165 (14.4%)	150 (14.2%)
Living with extended family - pay rent	125 (13.5%)	222 (19.4%)	***
Live in shelter	2 (0.2%)	7 (0.6%)	6 (0.6%)
Other	13 (1.4%)	27 (2.4%)	14 (1.3%)
Length of time at current residence (median)	9 months	6 months	24 months
Housing situation: problem in past year for getting or keeping job or attending education or training	125 (13.5%)	187 (16.3%)	

\*\*\* - In TL study no distinction was made between renting own place or paying rent to family member

Adequate housing is central to obtaining and retaining employment. The overall housing situation for New FEP study participants did not change significantly between waves 1 and 2 (See Table 22). The living arrangements most commonly used in the wave 2 sample (61.6%) was renting. However, those in the problem situation subgroup were more likely to live with family or friends rather than rent or own. This group was also most likely to report housing problems as preventing employment or education in the past year.

### Respondent Health Care Coverage

Given the high incidence rates of physical and mental health problems in the sample, access to health care coverage was a major concern. Respondents regularly spoke of making employment decisions based on the impact of the decision on access to medicaid or medical coverage both for themselves and their children. As reflected in Table 23, about half the sample went without health insurance at some point in the past year. This figure was slightly lower than last year. At wave 2, Medicaid participation had dropped by 35% and coverage through private insurance increased by only 4.5% leaving nearly a third of the sample uninsured. This lack of insurance was primarily due to a loss of Medicaid eligibility and an inability to pay for premiums for employer sponsored insurance.

**Table 23: Health Care Coverage**

	<b>Wave 2 N = 923</b>	<b>Wave 1 N = 1144</b>
Anytime in past year not covered by health insurance	462 (50.1%)	651 (57.8%)
Past year needed medical care but couldn't get it because couldn't afford it	360 (39.0%)	518 (45.3%)
Currently applying for social security	71 (7.7%)	101 (8.8%)
Primary form of health insurance right now:		
Medicaid	514 (55.7%)	1022 (89.3%)
Private	119 (12.9%)	62 (5.4%)
None	290 (31.4%)	60 (5.2%)
Coverage meets health care needs	454 (49.2%)	845 (78.3%)
Had difficulty in past year accessing health care	75 (8.1%)	126 (11.6%)
Main reason for having no insurance:	<b>N = 290</b>	<b>(N = 60)</b>
Lost medicaid or medical assistance eligibility	147 (50.7%)	36 (60.0%)
Could not afford to pay the premiums	53 (18.3%)	5 (8.3%)
Current employer doesn't offer health plans	25 (8.6%)	2 (3.3%)
Not eligible for health plan at work place	31 (10.7%)	2 (3.3%)
Healthy, don't need health coverage	1 (0.3%)	2 (3.3%)
Other (specify)	25 (8.6%)	13 (21.7%)

The subgroups reflected significantly different experiences with health insurance. As Table 24 shows, those in the problem situation subgroup were most likely to have had gaps in

health insurance coverage with just more than half of the group uninsured at the time of the wave 2 interview.

**Table 24: Health Insurance Coverage by Subgroups**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Earned Income (N = 274)</b>	<b>Problem Situation (N =230 )</b>	<b>Other Income (N = 115)</b>	<b>Long Term (N = 270)</b>	<b>Significance Level</b>
Not covered by health insurance at some point in the past year	51.8%	67.8%	50.4%	31.1%	<.001
Past year needed medical care but didn't get it because couldn't afford it	37.6%	46.5%	41.7%	33.7%	.027
Primary form of health insurance right now:					
Medicaid	47.4%	39.1%	45.2%	81.9%	<.001
Private	21.5%	10.4%	19.1%	4.4%	
None	<b>31.0%</b>	<b>50.4%</b>	<b>35.7%</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	

**Access to Telephone and Transportation Supports**

Telephone access and transportation resources are important elements of engaging with potential employers. As in wave 1, a majority of respondents had telephone access at the time of the interview and access to a telephone had only been a problem for about 10% of the sample in the past year (See Table 25). A higher percentage were relying on cell phones than home phones as payment options, while sometime more expensive overall, can make this choice more inviting.

**Table 25: Telephone Access**

	<b>Wave 2 N = 923</b>	<b>Wave 1 N = 1144</b>	<b>TL N = 1053</b>
Access to a telephone for making and receiving calls:			
Yes, regular access	824 (89.3%)	1053 (92.0%)	878 (83.4%)
Some limited access	62 (6.7%)	62 (5.4%)	72 (6.8%)
No very little or no access	37 (4.0%)	29 (2.5%)	103 (9.8%)
Primary phone	<b>N = 886</b>	<b>N = 1116</b>	<b>N = 950</b>
Own home phone	209 (22.6%)	372 (33.3%)	487 (51.3%)
Own cell phone	566 (61.3%)	602 (53.9%)	322 (33.9%)
Family member's phone	85 (9.2%)	106 (9.5%)	98 (10.35)
Friend or neighbor's phone	16 (1.7%)	21 (1.9%)	34 (3.6%)
Other	12 (1.3%)	15 (1.3%)	9 (0.9%)
Access to a telephone was such a problem couldn't take a job, job search etc.:			
In past year	96 (10.4%)	163 (14.2%)	
In past month	33 (34.4%)	52 (31.9%)	

Access to transportation is an employment factor which can impact individuals differently depending on where a person lives and proximity to resources such as public transportation and child care providers. Overall, findings from wave 2 reflect a slight increase in the access to and use of a personal vehicle. Subgroup divisions again made a significant difference.

More than half of the problem situation subgroup did not have regular access to a car and members of this group were more likely to use public transportation or take rides from friends. Members of the problem situation subgroup were also more likely (39.1%) to report lack of transportation to have been an employment or school barrier in the past year. It might be assumed that urban and rural difference might effect the impact of transportation issues. Comparisons between the more rural and urban regions did not show this to be the case.

**Table 26: Transportation**

	<b>Wave 2 N = 923</b>	<b>Wave 1 N = 1144</b>	<b>TL N = 1053</b>
Has current driver’s license	666 (72.2%)	796 (69.6%)	669 (63.5%)
Has regular use of a car	629 (68.1%)	741 (64.8%)	613 (58.2%)
Condition of current vehicle	<b>N = 629</b>	<b>N = 741</b>	<b>N = 613</b>
Excellent	148 (23.5%)	163 (22.0%)	82 (13.4%)
Good	259 (41.2%)	289 (39.0%)	235 (38.3%)
Fair	161 (25.6%)	202 (27.3%)	196 (31.9%)
Poor	61 (9.7%)	87 (11.7%)	101 (16.4%)
Bus route in the area	782 (84.7%)	936 (81.8%)	838 (79.6%)
Use the bus where available	260 (28.2%)	343 (36.5%)	395 (47.1%)
Main source of transportation			
Own car	601 (65.1%)	647 (56.6%)	522 (49.6%)
Spouse/significant other	20 (2.2%)	23 (2.0%)	30 (2.8%)
Family	118 (12.8%)	198 (17.3%)	148 (14.1%)
Friends	33 (3.6%)	52 (4.5%)	51 (4.8%)
Public transportation	101 (10.9%)	168 (14.7%)	227 (21.6%)
On foot	36 (3.9%)	44 (3.8%)	60 (5.7%)
Other	11 (1.2%)	10 (0.9%)	7 (0.7%)
No source	3 (0.3%)	2 (0.2%)	8 (0.8%)
Transportation such a problem couldn’t take a job, job search etc.:			
In past year	298 (32.3%)	484 (42.3%)	
In past month	105 (35.1%)	230 (47.5%)	

## Employment

Recall that at wave 1 only 19 of the 1144 had never been employed, and 333 (29%) were employed at the time of the wave 1 interview. As the wave 2 show, employment levels increased dramatically between the FEP study interviews.

### Employment History

The majority of wave 2 respondents (80.0%) were employed at some time during the past year. For a small group (5.6%) this employment was less than a month in length but a majority (54.2%) worked half the year or more (See Table 27). For the 175 respondents who had not been employed in the past year, approximately half (81) were part of the long term group. Lack of employment in the past year was most often attributed to physical health problems (30.9%), choosing to stay home with children (18.9%), mental health problems (12.6%), and attending school or training (10.3%).

**Table 27: Employment History: past 12 months**

	<b>Wave 2 N = 923</b>
Employed at all since last interview: (N = 923)	
Yes	748 (81.0%)
No:	175 (19.0%)
Portion of time employed in past year:	
Less than 1/4 of the year	259 (28.1%)
1/4 - less than 1/2 of the year	164 (17.8%)
1/2 - less than 3/4 of the year	190 (20.6%)
3/4 or more of the year	310 (33.6%)
Number of months worked in past year:	
One month or less	42 (5.6%)
12 months	132 (17.6%)
For those <b>not</b> employed in past year main reasons: (N = 175)	
Physical health issues	54 (30.9%)
Prefer to stay home with children	33 (18.9%)
Mental health issues	22 (12.6%)
In school or other training	18 (10.3%)
Other	11 (6.3%)
Other family responsibilities	9 (5.1%)
Child care issues	7 (4.0%)
Transportation problems	6 (3.4%)
Alcohol or other drug issues	5 (2.9%)
Criminal record	3 (1.7%)

## Recently or Currently Employed

For those who had been employed since the last interview, 511 (68.3%) were currently employed. The remaining 237 (31.7%) were employed in the past year but not were not currently employed. Table 28 presents data related to these two employment experiences.

**Table 28: Employment Comparisons - Currently and Recently Employed (N = 748)**

<b>Employment</b>	<b>Currently Employed - W2 N = 511</b>	<b>Recently Employed - W2 N = 237</b>	<b>Currently Employed - W1 N =333</b>
Average hours worked per week: (median)	38.0	38.0	30.0
Hours per week breakdown:			
10 hours a week or less	26 (5.1%)	5 (2.1%)	31 (9.3%)
11 - 20 hours	51 (10.0%)	38 (16.0%)	77 (23.1%)
21 - 30	96 (18.8%)	44 (18.6%)	85 (25.5%)
31 - 40	261 (51.1%)	121 (51.1%)	121 (36.6%)
more than 40	77 (15.1%)	29 (12.2%)	17 (5.1%)
Length of time at job: (median)	5.0	3.0	1.5 months
Less than 3 months	145 (28.4%)	83 (35.2%)	197 (59.3%)
3 - 6 months	176 (34.4%)	107 (45.3%)	74 (22.3%)
7 - 12 months	136 (26.6%)	37 (15.7%)	24 (7.2%)
12 - 36 months	33 (6.5%)	6 (2.5%)	37 (11.1%)
More than 36 months	21 (4.1%)	3 (1.3%)	
Average hourly income			
Median	\$9.00	\$8.25	\$8.15
Range	0.40 - \$150.00	\$1.25 - \$40.00	\$0 .60 - \$50
Weekly income:			
Mean	\$328.28	\$308.36	\$218.82
Median	\$320.00	\$290.00	\$195.75
Range	\$1.60 - \$1240	\$25.00 - \$1303	\$12.50 - \$1250
Job is/was temporary or seasonal	90 (17.6%)	78 (32.9%)	71 (21.3%)
Main source of transportation to work:			
Own car	354 (65.0%)	132 (55.7%)	213 (64.0%)
Family or friends	53 (10.4%)	55 (23.2%)	54 (16.2%)
Public transportation	32 (6.3%)	20 (8.4%)	22 (6.6%)
On foot	27 (5.3%)	17 (7.2%)	14 (4.2%)
Work from home	26 (5.1%)	3 (1.3%)	19 (5.7%)
Travel time to work:			
20 min.	26 (5.1%)	2 (0.8%)	22 (6.6%)
Working from home:			
10 minutes or less:	132 (25.0%)	84 (35.6%)	87 (26.2%)
Degree of opportunity for advancement to a higher position that pays more:			
A great deal of opportunity	158 (30.9%)	39 (16.5%)	86 (25.8%)
Some opportunity	148 (29.0%)	62 (26.3%)	88 (26.4%)
A little opportunity	104 (20.4%)	55 (23.3%)	68 (20.45)
No opportunity	101 (19.8%)	80 (33.9%)	88 (26.4%)

<b>Employment (Con't)</b>	<b>Current Employment - W2 N = 511</b>	<b>Recently Employed - W2 N = 237</b>	<b>Currently Employed - W1 N = 333</b>
How client found out about job:			
A friend /A relative	174 (34.1%)	85 (35.9%)	126 (37.8%)
Help wanted notice in paper or in window	60 (11.7%)	34 (14.3%)	37 (11.1%)
DWS or other government agency	68 (13.3%)	26 (11.0%)	46 (13.8%)
Job placement/career counseling in school	16 (3.1%)	2 (0.8%)	4 (1.2%)
Inside contact at the job site	59 (11.5%)	16 (6.8%)	30 (9.0%)
Walk in to job site to submit application	60 (11.7%)	35 (14.8%)	51 (15.3%)
Staffing agency (Temp. Service)	39 (7.6%)	33 (13.9%)	18 (5.4%)
Online listing	13 (2.5%)	1 (0.4%)	not asked
Other:	22 (4.3%)	5 (2.1%)	23 (6.9%)
Availability of health insurance through employer:			
Immediately	32 (6.3%)	9 (3.8%)	
After a waiting period	262 (51.3%)	108 (45.6%)	
Not at all	214 (41.9%)	117 (49.4%)	
Benefits received at job site:			
Paid sick days	102 (20.0%)	10 (4.2%)	103 (30.9%)
Paid vacation	127 (25.0%)	15 (6.3%)	131 (39.3%)
Health insurance	94 (18.4%)	17 (7.2%)	157 (47.1%)
Retirement program	81 (16.2%)	8 (3.4%)	100 (30.0%)
Feel/felt supported at job by supervisor:			
A lot	383 (75.0%)	100 (42.2%)	237 (71.2%)
A little	98 (19.2%)	91 (38.4%)	17 (5.1%)
Not at All	14 (2.7%)	46 (19.4%)	60 (18.0%)
No such person	16 (3.1%)	- 0 -	19 (5.7%)
Feel/felt supported at job by co-workers:			
A lot	352 (68.9%)	128 (54.0%)	197 (59.3%)
A little	111 (21.7%)	71 (30.0%)	80 (24.1%)
Not at All	9 (1.8%)	24 (10.1%)	8 (2.4%)
No such person	39 (7.6%)	14 (5.9%)	47 (14.2%)
Feel/felt supported in their job by partner:			
A lot	98 (41.4%)	216 (42.3%)	112 (33.7%)
A little	23 (9.7%)	24 (4.7%)	13 (3.9%)
Not at All	13 (5.5%)	13 (2.5%)	9 (2.7%)
No such person	103 (43.5%)	258 (50.5%)	198 (59.6%)

A review of the data in Table 28 shows that those currently employed had more positive employment indicators in several areas. Current employment was linked to more stable (not temporary) employment offering better benefits and higher levels of pay. Those currently employed were more likely to feel supported in their work as well, especially by supervisors and co-workers. Those currently employed were also more likely to see opportunities for advancement to higher levels which pay more. Both groups tended to find employment through

family members and friends but those currently employed were more likely to also rely on inside contacts at the place of employment.

All wave 2 respondents were asked whether or not they had engaged in job searching in the past month. Table 29 presents the results to this question and indicates that a majority of those currently employed who were not job searching were satisfied with their current job. When asked to describe the job that would be *best* for them, more than half (53.4%) of those employed felt the job they held currently was indeed the best one for them. Among those currently unemployed, physical or mental health issues were most common reasons for not job searching.

**Table 29: Reasons for NOT Engaging in Job Search**

	<b>Currently Employed N = 511</b>	<b>Currently Unemployed N = 412</b>
HAS NOT job searched in past month	356 (69.5%)	210 (51.0%)
Main reasons WHY not looked for work:		
Satisfied with current job	313 (87.9%)	- 0 -
Just had baby/will deliver soon	4 (1.1%)	18 (8.6%)
In school or other training	18 (5.1%)	37 (17.6%)
Child care problems	6 (1.7%)	24 (11.4%)
Physical or mental health issue	6 (1.7%)	92 (43.8%)
Family responsibilities	6 (17%)	26 (12.4%)
Prefer to stay home with children	1 (0.3%)	23 (11.0%)
Partner provides support, don't need to work	2 (0.6%)	9 (4.3%)
In jail/incarcerated	- 0 -	9 (4.3%)

Respondents who were actively engaged in job search used a variety of methods to find job openings. As reported in Table 30, the most common method for job search is the traditional looking up jobs in the want ads of the newspaper. But respondents also spoke of going online to find job listings and, in some cases, employers will only take applications online. Respondents who lack computer skills were missing an important link to the job market.

**Table 30: Methods of Job Search**

	<b>Currently Employed N = 511</b>	<b>Currently Unemployed N = 412</b>
HAS job searched in past month	155(30.3%)	202 (49.0%)
Applied for jobs online	38 (24.5%)	61 (30.25)
Go to places with "Help Wanted" sign	41 (26.5%)	73 (36.1%)
Ask around to family and friends	48 (31.0%)	53 (26.2%)
Use job referrals from DWS	45 (29.0%)	66 (32.7%)
Find jobs online and go to place to apply	37 (23.9%)	39 (19.3%)
Want ads in newspaper	66 (42.6%)	87 (43.1%)
Temporary Job Service Agency	8 (5.2%)	22 (10.9%)

Factors discouraging job search are often linked to the reasons a respondent left their most recent job. A respondent who is currently not job searching due to health problems was likely to have left their most recent job for the same reason. Of the 237 respondents who were employed in the past year but were not currently working, physical and mental health problems, child care issues, getting fired and problems with the boss were the most often mentioned reasons for job loss. The reasons for getting fired often included this same set of issues.

**Table 31: Reasons For Leaving Most Recent Job**

	<b>Unemployed but worked in past year N = 237</b>
Why did you leave your most recent job:	
Did not like schedule/shift	10 (4.2%)
Wanted to work more hours	3 (1.3%)
Wanted to work fewer hours	2 (0.8%)
Did not like work/working - too stressful	19 (8.0%)
Benefits not good enough	5 (2.1%)
Salary not good enough	18 (7.6%)
Problems with co-workers	8 (3.4%)
Problems with boss	25 (10.5%)
Maternity leave or pregnancy	13 (5.5%)
Respondent's health/mental problems	40 (16.9%)
Other family member's health problem	16 (6.8%)
Other family or personal problems	10 (4.2%)
Child care problem or couldn't afford care	36 (15.2%)
Wanted to spend more time with children	19 (8.0%)
Transportation problem	16 (6.8%)
Wanted to work closer to home	6 (2.5%)
Respondent moved	15 (6.3%)
Another opportunity took another job	5 (2.1%)
Returned to school or training	14 (5.9%)
Did not need to work	3 (1.3%)
Temporary/short-term assignment ended	21 (8.9%)
Fired	33 (13.9%)
Laid off	18 (6.7%)
Fleeing DV situation	2 (0.8%)
Other (specify)	28 (11.8%)
MOST IMPORTANT reason left most recent job:	
Fired	33 (13.5%)
Respondent's physical health issues	25 (10.5%)
Child care problems	25 (10.5%)
Temporary/short term job ended	19 (8.0%)
Laid Off	17 (8.2%)
Moved	12 (5.1%)
Return to school or training	10 (4.2%)

## Unemployment Causes

The reasons for losing a job sometimes continue to effect regaining employment. As shown in Table 32, the 237 respondents who were employed in the past year but not currently employed were most likely to report child care problems, health issues, mental health issues, transportation problems, and other family responsibilities as the main factors contributing to current unemployment. There was also a group of respondents who were simply between jobs. For example, the person was interviewed after losing their job the week before, but had another job lined up for next week. Technically, the person was currently unemployed but future employment was pending.

**Table 32: Unemployed: Why Not Currently Employed**

<b>Currently Unemployed but has worked in past year</b>	<b>N = 237</b>
Reason why not currently working or never working:	
Need more education	7 (3.0%)
Need more work experience	3 (1.3%)
No jobs available	3 (1.3%)
Criminal record	5 (2.1%)
Transportation problems	35 (14.8%)
Paying for or finding child care	52 (21.9%)
Prefer/need to stay home with children	31 (13.1%)
Pregnancy	16 (6.8%)
Own ill health; disability	41 (17.3%)
Depressed/overwhelmed, mental health	27 (11.4%)
Own drinking/other drug problem	2 (0.8%)
Other family responsibilities	27 (11.4%)
In school or other training	29 (12.2%)
Wages too low	4 (1.7%)
Jobs don't offer health benefits	3 (1.2%)
Between jobs	32 (13.5%)
Housing situation/recent move	13 (5.5%)
Other (Specify):	39 (16.5%)
MOST IMPORTANT reason for not currently working or never working:	
Paying for or finding child care	38 (16.0%)
In school or training	27 (11.4%)
Personal health/disability	26 (11.0%)
Just between jobs	26 (11.0%)
Prefer to stay home with children	24 (10.15)
Other family responsibilities	16 (6.8%)
Transportation problems	16 (6.8%)
Overwhelmed/depressed/mental health	13 (5.5%)

## Employment Experience and Attitudes

As more respondents with less work experience move into employment between wave 1 and wave 2, there was a slight increase in those reporting challenges in matching soft skills related to employment with their experience. Table 31 shows a consistent increase in behaviors which might lead to job loss. The most significant rise was in missing work. Consistently the reason for missing work was related to problems with child care availability or not being able to take sick children to the child care provider.

**Table 33: Employment Attitudes**

	<b>Currently Employed Wave 2 N = 511</b>	<b>Currently Employed Wave 1 N = 333</b>
In the past month, number who have....		
Been late to work by more than 5 minutes	187 (36.7%)	107 (32.1%)
Lost temper for example with rude customers	27 (5.3%)	12 (3.6%)
Failed to correct problem at work	29 (5.7%)	13 (3.9%)
Had problems getting along with a supervisor	39 (7.6%)	14 (4.2%)
Left work earlier than scheduled w/o permission	10 (2.0%)	6 (1.8%)
Missed a day of work for any reason	271 (53.1%)	125 (37.5%)

Attitudes toward employment and developing soft skills related to working (such as timeliness and having a back up plan for child care) are qualities which often develop over time. Respondents who had a stronger work history have had more opportunity to develop these skills.

## Experiences with DWS

The experience of respondents relative to DWS was recorded based on the number of months used by the person between waves 1 and 2, and whether or not the person returned to cash assistance after a period of cash closure. Table 34 shows that only 62 (7.%) of wave 1 recipients left FEP for a month or more and returned. Respondents in each group were asked questions related to their specific experiences with DWS.

**Table 34: Divisions for Type of Exposure to DWS Between Waves 1 and 2**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>N = 889</b>
Short term	Six months or less of assistance and no return	582 (65.5%)
Returner	Returned to DWS after case closure of more than one month	62 (7.0%)
Long term	More than six months of assistance	245 (27.6%)

## Making the Transition off Cash Assistance

Short term recipients and returners were asked whether they experienced any problems moving from using cash assistance to making it on their own. They were also asked to describe their financial situation as they left cash assistance. Of the short term leavers, 205 (36.1%) indicated they had problems transitioning off of cash assistance. Of the returners, 36 (58.15) also had such problems. More than half of each group indicated their financial situation was only fair to poor as they left cash assistance.

Those who experienced financial difficulties were asked to describe what happened to make the experience difficult. Responses were often related to the situation which had initially led to cash closure. Those whose cash closed due to their own employment typically struggled with the adjustment to the payment schedule or the sudden change in other benefits including reductions in food stamps and increases in rent if on housing. As some said:

- *Budgeting of money was hard there was gap between when cash closed and I got the money so we didn't have anything for a while.*
- *Because I was used to having a set amount and I had to change my way of paying bills more over time, balancing that was hard.*
- *Just not having as much money because I made less money than the cash I had been receiving. I felt like the rug had been pulled out from under me before I was financially secure.*
- *I received more money working but I had to adjust to paying for all of my housing and daycare. I had received housing assistance prior to March.*
- *I was making more than I was getting from cash assistance, but I was still behind on some bills so I was doing a little bit of catch up at first as I got off of it.*
- *A lot of stuff got behind when I was on cash assistance. I hadn't been able to afford rent, etc., so I had to get caught up.*

Transitional cash assistance had not been fully implemented at the time many of these work cash closures occurred. Many of the situations described could possibly have been helped by the usage of this benefit.

Another challenge came for those whose cash closed due to the initiation of child support payments. This form of income was sometimes not as consistent as cash assistance.

- *Just trying to make ends meet with all the bills racking up. The father not really paying child support - steadily.*
- *The child support didn't come in regularly. They gave me some but then ORS took a huge chunk and we had nothing for a month. They were worried about getting their portion before us.*

Of those whose cash assistance closed due to a problem situation, nearly half (48.0%) reported their financial situation as "poor" after cash closure. Several were surprised when the cash closed and did not know it was closing until the money was not there. Some respondents in this category described their situation as such:

- *I couldn't pay for the lot space for the school bus, I was living in. There was no way to buy anything-mental health so bad couldn't really work-just did odd jobs.*
- *My partner was working a little but he didn't make enough to pay the rent, he was very angry the cash was closed and took it out on me, we were going to lose our apartment.*
- *I wasn't working at the time my cash was cut and my family and I were without a place to live and couldn't pay bills.*
- *I have no income and cannot work due to my disability. I don't have birth certificates so they are making us reapply.*
- *I wasn't working just had a c-section and recovering. I wouldn't put my newborn in daycare-not a lot of family support-I couldn't work it took 3 months for my incision to heal-I couldn't afford anything.*

Respondents who were not working when their cash assistance closed talked of moving back in with parents, returning to an abusive relationship or losing personal property such as housing or a vehicle as a result of cash closure. In general, this group was ill prepared for the reality of no longer receiving cash assistance.

Those who received cash assistance for six months or less and did not return to FEP were asked whether or not they had contacted DWS about reapplying for cash assistance. Only 133 (23.5%) respondents contacted DWS regarding reopening their FEP case. Of those who did, 75.9% (101) actually submitted an application to reopen their case. When asked why their cash assistance never opened, 21 respondents said they were denied due to lack of paperwork completion, 20 were over the income limit (either with their own or their partners), 13 decided to withdraw their application because the process was too overwhelming, 4 were not sure why the case was denied and 15 were waiting for benefits to start.

### **Returners to Cash Assistance**

As noted above, 62 respondents left cash assistance only to return (after one month or more) at some point between wave 1 and wave 2. When asked to describe what happened that they needed to reapply for cash assistance, respondents spoke of several types of situations leading to a return to FEP. As Table 35 shows, the most common reason for a return to FEP was the loss of employment. Others were never actually financially stable and were attempting to reconnect with FEP after sanctioning or paperwork closures.

**Table 35: Reasons for Return to FEP**

	<b>N = 62</b>
Lost job / left job	25 (40.3%)
Never had enough and still needed help - reapplied	10 (16.1%)
Person providing support left	9 (14.5%)
Moved to another place - needed to become reestablished	7 (11.3%)
Child support / other income source stopped coming	6 (9.7%)
Left job specifically to get medical benefits for self or child	5 (8.1%)

Respondents were asked if they believed DWS could have done anything so that a return to FEP could have been avoided. Only 11 (17.7%) respondents felt more could have been done. This result is similar to results discovered in the previous SRI Returner report. Of those who did feel some intervention would have been helpful, several indicated more help with schooling would have made a difference while several others would have appreciated additional months of cash assistance to help while they stabilized in employment, a benefit now offered under TCA.

### Current DWS Connections

Returners and long term recipients were asked to talk about their recent experiences with DWS programs and workers. Table 36 provides a profile for the types of benefits being received by the returner and long term recipients at the time of the wave 2 interview. Only a small portion (7.5%) or respondents in these groups were no longer receiving any DWS services.

**Table 36: Current DWS Resources**

	<b>N = 322</b>
Food Stamps	256 (79.5%)
Medicaid	281 (87.3%)
Child Care	106 (32.9%)
Help with transportation	7 (2.2%)
Job training/ Skill building	10 (3.1%)
Job referrals	42 (13.0%)
Schooling assistance	47 (14.6%)
Cash assistance	152 (47.2%)
Not receiving any DWS services	24 (7.5%)

### Interaction with DWS Employees

Respondents were asked to reflect on their experiences with both their employment counselor and their eligibility worker (or whomever the respondent has connected with for eligibility services). As detailed in Table 37, the level of familiarity with the DWS workers was similar in the two waves. Wave 2 shows that respondents tended to report slightly less favorable views of their relationships with their workers. In both wave 1 and wave 2 of the study there were respondents who were unfamiliar with their DWS worker. When a respondent could not associate the title with a DWS worker they knew the relationship questions were not asked.

**Table 37: Interaction with DWS Employees**

<b>Rating Relationships</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>Employment Counselor</b>					
Wave 1 - with employment counselor (unknown: 8 - 0.7%)	410 (35.8%)	232 (20.3%)	261 (22.8%)	134 (11.7%)	99 (8.7%)
Wave 2 - with employment counselor (unknown: 4 - 1.2%)	118 (36.6%)	52 (16.1%)	61 (18.9%)	41 (12.7%)	46 (14.3%)
<b>Eligibility Worker</b>					
Wave 1- with eligibility worker (unknown: 162 - 14.2% )	150 (13.1%)	121 (10.6%)	314 (27.4%)	208 (18.2%)	189 (16.5%)
Wave 2- with eligibility worker (unknown: 59 - 18.3% )	42 (13.0%)	22 (6.8%)	76 (23.6%)	64 (19.9%)	59 (18.3%)

The quality of the FEP participant - DWS employment counselor has long been identified as a significant element leading to successful outcomes. In this longitudinal study it is possible to relate the relationship at wave 1 to the outcomes a year later. Table 38 shows that a weaker respondent - employment counselor relationship at wave 1 was significantly related to the problem situation closure subgroup. While the trend was also true with the eligibility worker, it was not as strong.

**Table 38: Correlation between Employment Counselor Relationship and Case Status**

<b>Variables at Wave 1</b>	<b>Earned Income (N = 274)</b>	<b>Problem Situation (N =230 )</b>	<b>Other Income (N = 115)</b>	<b>Long Term (N = 270)</b>	<b>Significance Level</b>
Good to Excellent relationship with employment counselor	227 (82.8%)	157 (68.3%)	102 (88.7%)	221 (81.9%)	<.001
Good to Excellent relationship with eligibility worker	144 (58.8%)	109 (55.6%)	72 (69.9%)	134 (57.3%)	ns

Table 39 provides more detail regarding specific factors which might contribute to a more or less positive relationships with DWS workers. While the changes reported are not large, there was a consistent pattern of increased strain in worker - customer relationships. It is important to remember that the group responding to this set of questions consists of those who have been receiving FEP assistance for most of the past year and those who left and returned. The long term group is comprised by respondents with physical and mental health problems and those in educational programs. All such activities require extensive verification which can be very challenging. Returners come back when their best efforts have not succeeded and they continue struggling to move toward self-sufficiency.

**Table 39: Specific Aspects of Relationships with DWS Employees**

<b>Generally agree with following statements:</b>	<b>Wave 2 N = 321</b>	<b>Wave 1 N = 1144</b>
<b>Employment Counselor</b>		
..treats me with dignity and respect.	274 ( 86.1%)	1007 (88.7%)
..takes the time to explain program rules.	268 (84.3%)	1001 (87.5%)
..only cares about getting the forms filled out.	98 (30.9%)	298 (26.1%)
..asks too many personal questions that are none of his/her business.	55 (17.3%)	173 (15.2%)
..only wants what’s good for me and my kids	260 (82.0%)	936 (81.8%)
...overwhelms me with so many things to do I am likely to fail.	109 (34.4%)	317 (27.7%)
...acts more like an ally (friend) than an enemy.	245 (77.8%)	897 (78.4%)
..did not give me a chance to explain what brought me here and what I need.	73 (23.1%)	240 (20.0%)
<b>Eligibility Worker</b>		
..treats me with dignity and respect.	200 (76.3%)	774 (78.8%)
..takes the time to explain program rules.	172 (65.6%)	674 (68.7%)
..only cares about getting the forms filled out.	128 (49.0%)	441 (45.0%)
..asks too many personal questions that are none of his/her business.	32 (12.2%)	120 (12.3%)
..overwhelms me with so many things to do I am likely to fail.	73 (27.7%)	213 (21.7%)

### **Employment Plan Experiences**

Given that the employment plan is the guiding tool for FEP participation, knowledge of and participation in this plan is vital to successful outcomes for both DWS and customers. Table 40 provides insight into the respondents’ experiences of the development and content of the employment plan. At wave 2 a higher percentage of respondents knew what was on the plan but there were also more respondents who desired to pursue different options and more who felt their views were not taken into consideration in making the employment plan. There also seemed to be more clarity regarding program requirements but less ability to discuss personal employment barriers with the employment counselor.

The finding regarding respondents’ experiences with the employment plan are consistent with the type of programmatic changes which have been introduced in response to the DRA. Interestingly, a slightly higher percentage of respondents felt they would be able to complete the activities on their employment plan, so while they were not as involved with creating the plan it was equally likely to be successful.

**Table 40: Experience with Employment Plan**

	<b>Wave 2 N = 321</b>	<b>Wave 1 N = 1144</b>
Knew what was on current or most recent employment plan.	309 (96.0%)	1032 (90.2%)
There were activities customer wanted to put on plan but could not / would not be included	58 (18.0%)	128 (11.1%)
Remembers being told a certain number of hours in certain activities would be required as part of plan	303 (94.1%)	848 (83.0%)
Believed they would able to complete all the activities on your plan.	243 (75.7%)	821 (72.3%)
Worked together with employment counselor to create plan.	232 (72.3%)	834 (73.4%)
Was mostly or completely able to discuss barriers to working with employment counselor.	211 (66.3%)	911 (77.6%)
Felt like their views were mostly or completely taken into consideration in making the employment plan.	199 (62.0%)	759 (67.0%)
Felt like they mostly or completely understand the employment plan.	272 (84.7%)	938 (82.9%)

**Additional Gains From DWS**

As in the wave 1 study, respondents were asked, “In addition to the food stamps, medicaid and cash assistance type benefits, *what else* do you feel you have *gained* from being connected to DWS?” Responses in wave 2 were very diverse yet covered similar ideas as those found in wave 1. In wave 1 approximately 27% of respondents did not feel they had gained anything other than access to benefits such as food stamps and Medicaid. In wave 2 this increased to 30%. There were also a few who felt the only gains were stress and headaches from being connected to DWS. This number dropped from 6% to 3%. Some respondents continued to acknowledge and appreciate help with schooling, community resources, job referrals and mental health therapy.

In wave 2 there was also a group for whom the new TANF program was designed. These respondents, often recipients with little or no education or work history, expressed appreciation for help in beginning their employment and educational experiences. Comments from these respondents included reference to achieving important first steps.

- *They helped with job searching skills and I have a resume together now.*
- *I learned how to do my resume, file and assertive communication skills.*
- *I gained a lot, my work site experience helped me get more experience. I have a resume now and I didn't know what one was before.*
- *I loved the work-site experience. It was the best experience I've had job wise.*
- *A lot actually. If it wasn't for them I wouldn't have gone back to school to get my high school diploma. I wouldn't know how to do clerical work.*

*- I was able to go to school-if they had not helped me, I would never have gone or I would not have been able to get through so fast.*

Sometimes part of taking that “first step” into the work world involved learning a key life lesson or clearing a hurdle that opened a range of possibilities. As some respondents said:

- They helped me find a great day care plan! That was the best part-it put my mind at ease so I could feel comfortable going back to work.*
- Being able to go to school, to know there is support out there if you need it. I learned that it is okay to get help from others.*
- They showed me the options of going to school and showing me that I didn't have to take just a minimum wage job.*

The value of the customer - employment counselor was very clearly the greatest “gain” experienced by some respondents. Those who had previous positive experiences with DWS workers very much missed these folks when they were gone and another, perhaps not so attentive worker took their place. They noted:

- My counselor was the “bomb.” My counselor would cheer up and help me start thinking about getting a part-time job. She was invaluable!*
- I gained friendships. They have calmed me when I've been panicked; they've been really helpful. They help me to find resources for housing.*
- Help with school and I have learned not all case workers are mean, if you get them brand new they are nice.*
- I was gaining a lot from my first employment counselor who was helping me get through counseling for my phobias and into training but not from my new one.*

As with wave 1, there were a few who were very frustrated by not receiving the type of support they had hoped for or were frustrated that the programs did not meet their needs. Those with more education and work history and those in unique circumstances were particularly frustrated.

- I gained a low self esteem with all the pressure from DWS. All the stuff they wanted me to do they were hounding and hounding me they treat me like a little kid.*
- Not much, I tried to work with them (DWS) but they were not flexible, they would not count self employment even if I kept track of everything.*
- I got frustration-workers give incorrect answers and no one knows what is really available they blame you all over and no one can help you.*
- They helped in general a lot-as long as you do what they want you to do.*

Responses to the question concerning additional gains from being connected to DWS were typically consistent with the types of programs the agency is able to support under the DRA. Those whose needs matched program options were generally more satisfied and felt their needs were met more than those whose needs did not match the options offered as countable activities.

## The “Work - Family - Welfare” Challenge

The challenges of balancing the demands of family, employment and welfare assistance was a common concern among wave 2 respondents. Typically the tension comes between engaging in the activities necessary to provide financial support and being available for a reasonable amount of time to be a good parent. Experiences of this work - family conflict were evaluated through the use of a ten item scale. Both those who were currently employed and those employed recently were asked to respond. Respondents who were not currently employed at the wave 2 interview often spoke of needing time to care for children and “choosing” to find other ways to make ends meet so they could be present as a parent. These feelings are clear in the outcomes from the work - family conflict scale.

**Table 41: Work and Family Conflict**

Indicate problem happens/happened A LOT:	<b>Current Employment N = 511</b>	<b>Most recent employment N = 237</b>
D28a. ...family matters reduce the time you can devote to your job.	81 (15.9%)	49 (20.7%)
D28b. ...family worries or problems distract you from your work.	59 (11.5%)	56 (23.6%)
D28c. ...family activities stop you from getting the amount of sleep you need to do your job well.	104 (20.4%)	47 (19.8%)
D28d. ...family obligations reduce the time you can relax or be by yourself.	194 (38.0%)	88 (37.1%)
D28e. ....your job reduces the amount of time you can spend with your family.	151 (29.5%)	91 (38.4%)
D28f. ....problems at work make you irritable at home.	31 (6.1%)	31 (13.1%)
D28g.... your work involves a lot of time away from home.	129 (25.2%)	72 (30.4%)
D28h....your job takes up so much energy you don't feel up to doing things at home.	90 (17.6%)	64 (27.0%)
D28i.....balancing work and family feels impossible.	47 (9.2%)	47 (19.8%)
D28j....I feel torn between my work and my family.	57 (11.2%)	46 (19.4%)

Another aspect of the work-family-welfare balance relates to attitudes towards welfare use. As shown in wave 1, most welfare recipients do not feel good about receiving assistance and are determined to leave welfare assistance as soon as possible. This desire sometimes comes in conflict with wanting to be more present to their children. Respondents were asked several questions which provide insight into welfare attitudes and how these attitudes combine with work and family. Table 42 suggests that most welfare recipients recognize and appreciate the value of employment to themselves and their families even though working outside the home is not always preferred over being a stay at home parent.

**Table 42: Attitudes Toward Welfare, Working and Family**

<b>Statement regarding attitudes toward welfare, work, family</b>	<b>Generally agree</b>	<b>Generally disagree</b>
My children would benefit from having me employed outside home.	73.7%	26.3%
I would rather have a job outside the home than be a stay at home parent.	52.5%	47.5%
It is good to require people on welfare to find a job.	94.5%	5.5%
When children are young, single parents should not work outside the home.	35.3%	64.7%
Having a welfare program encourages young women to have babies before marriage	10.0%	90.0%
People who are on welfare usually grew up in families who were on welfare.	39.0%	61.0%
Most people are on welfare because of their own bad choices.	36.8%	63.2%
A woman who gets a job to support her children is being a responsible parent.	97.4%	2.8%
My circumstances are different than most people on welfare.	57.8%	42.2%
Welfare is a trap from which few escape.	30.1%	69.9%
Being on welfare is embarrassing to most who get it.	54.8%	45.2%
36 months of cash assistance is plenty of time for most people to get back on their feet and start working again.	81.6%	18.4%
If poor women would only get married, they would be less likely to be poor.	11.4%	88.6%

It is sometimes assumed that perceptions of welfare are developed in childhood based on ones exposure to welfare through growing up in a household which used this public benefit. It is feared that growing up in a household which uses welfare reduces the “welfare stigma” and makes welfare use more acceptable. Findings of this study suggest that a person’s current situation is a stronger determinant of their welfare attitude. For example, those who are in the long term group are most likely to disagree that 36 months is enough time to become self-sufficient and those who left welfare for work are least likely to agree that parents should stay home and not work when their children are young (See Appendix 1: Table A3).

### **Identifying Those Moving Toward Long Term Welfare Receipt**

To some degree, long term welfare receipt represents a unsuccessful case as the purpose of the TANF program is to move welfare recipients into work. It has been suggested that early identification of FEP recipients with the greatest potential of becoming long term recipients could assist in providing more targeted services to meet their needs. A review of the literature relative to long term welfare use under both AFDC and TANF strongly suggested that a core group of variables is associated with greater lengths of time on welfare.

Factors consistently associated with long term welfare use included education level, work history, age, marital status, race, young children in the home, physical health and mental health issues (Bane & Ellwood, 1994; Blank, 1989; Ellwood, 1986; Harris, 1993; Manski & Garfinkel, 1992; Pavetti, 1996). For many years SRI studies have evaluated the characteristics associated with reaching the FEP time limit and found them to be consistent with the characteristics names by other studies of long term welfare recipients, both AFDC and TANF participants (Taylor, Barusch, Vogel-Ferguson, 2000; 2002).

FEP recipients in the wave 1 study who had already started accumulating more months of assistance than others (that is, on their way to long term welfare receipt) were compared with those recipients who had only accumulated a few months of FEP assistance *and* who had closed their case due to their own earned income (that is, successfully). The long term FEP (N = 270) subgroup was evaluated relative to the earned income subgroup (N = 274) across many variables which have been identified as potential distinguishing factors. (See Appendix 1: Table A4 for the complete list).

Of those analyzed, only eight variables produced a significant relationship to the number of months of cash assistance received. These included engagement in education or training ( $p < .001$ ), fair to poor physical health ( $p < .001$ ), fair to poor mental health ( $p < .001$ ), self esteem ( $p < .001$ ), self-efficacy ( $p < .003$ ), age ( $p < .032$ ), the needs of a dependent child ( $p < .045$ ) and a diagnosed or perceived learning disability ( $p < .024$ ).

These variables were evaluated using multivariate analysis. It was determined that only three factors, engagement in education or training, fair to poor physical health, and fair to poor mental health, were strongly associated with accumulating more months on cash assistance.

In two cases the distribution of outcomes were such that the analysis was not statistically significant but the presence of the factor was more associated with the outcome variable. Table 43 displays these differences. For the very small number of recipients who screened positive for alcohol or other drug dependency, alcohol dependency was more associated with the earned income subgroup while drug dependency was more associated with the long term subgroup.

**Table 43: Low Prevalence High Impact Variables**

Variable	Earned income (48.6%)	Long term (51.4%)
Alcohol dependency past year (N = 24)	58.3%	41.7%
Drug dependency in past year (N = 31)	38.7%	61.3%

Evaluating the individual factors potentially associated with long term welfare use and developing a potential model is one way to analyze the given data. Another is to evaluate the impact of multiple co-occurring factors.

## Barriers in Combination

The sheer complexity of everyday life suggests that factors related to welfare usage have impact both as individual pieces of a persons life and reality, and as part of a bigger picture. As one respondent said, “I had it all together. I was working and going to school and had a great day care for my kids, then my car broke down. In the three weeks it took to get it fixed I lost my job and got so far behind in school it was too much to make up. I hope to go back next semester.” Previous research (Taylor et al. 2000, 2002; WES, 1999) has suggested there is often a positive relationship between the number of challenges facing an individual and length of time it takes to move off welfare. The more barriers faced the more likely the person was to work less and become a long term recipient.

To evaluate this theory, sixteen items related to the individual and their family, and six items related to social economic structures and resources were assessed. Table 44 lists these items in the form of barriers to self-sufficiency. All barriers included in this analysis were based on the respondents perception and self report of the issue as a barrier. Some studies have definitions such as “has no car and/or drivers’ license to define a transportation barrier (Danziger, Corcoran, et al., 2000; Ponza, Mechstroth, & Faerber, 2002). Yet an issue such as not having a car can have different implications in urban and rural. Research has shown that a respondents’ perception of a barrier is important relative to employment. A barrier viewed as a wall might be insurmountable, but when the barrier is viewed as a hurdle there is hope (Taylor et al., 2002).

**Table 44: Barriers to self-sufficiency: Personal and Structural**

<b>Barriers: Personal/Family</b>	
Caring for a special needs child	Severe domestic violence - past year
Has a welfare history	Partner / ex-partner interferes with working
Lack of High School Diploma or GED	Dissatisfied with social supports
Has a learning disability or problems reading/writing	Caring for special needs of a dependent family member (other than child)
Attending school or training	Lacks job skills
Has a criminal record (felony)	Has a limited work history
Physical health: fair to poor	Screens positive for alcohol abuse
Mental health: fair to poor	Screens positive for other drug abuse
<b>Barriers: Structural/Resource access</b>	
Housing problems	Lack of transportation
Child care problems	Lack of telephone access
Wages too low	Lack of good jobs available

Analysis of the correlation between the number of structural/resource barriers and personal/family barriers and the number of months on assistance was not significant for the wave 2 sample as a whole. A review of the complete listing of barriers and average months received (See Appendix 1: Tables A5 and A6) shows that while those with no personal/family barriers had received the fewest number of months (just under 3), the number of months received by those with one barrier or more varied randomly from between 4 to just under 6 months of assistance. This result challenges previous findings and suggests that length of time on assistance is no longer significantly influenced by the number of barriers to employment experienced by a welfare recipient.

To further investigate this conclusion, the relationship between the number of barriers and the four wave 2 subgroups (long term, earned income, problem situation and other income closure) was reviewed. This analysis shows that, in general, those in the problem situation group were more similar to the long term group than to the earned income or other income group. This finding was consistent with literature which evaluates the experience of former welfare respondents disconnected from both work and welfare. The barriers which hindered efforts to retain paid employment and lead to sanctioning and termination of welfare benefits (Acs & Loprest, 2004; Turner, Danziger, & Seefeldt, 2006).

### **Self-Reported Barriers**

Respondents were asked one final question, to identify the *greatest* barrier which had prevented them from obtaining a job, keeping a job or being able to earn enough to support their family. There were 38 (4.3%) respondents who indicated there had been no such employment barrier. Among those who reported an employment barrier, the most commonly named barrier was physical health problems (13.3%) and child care (12.8%). The primary barrier for the long term group and the three short term subgroups was different. Physical health problems and participation in education or training were the barriers most commonly linked to the long term group. Lack of child care was the most or second most frequently named barrier in all three short term sub-groups.

### **Summary of Findings Regarding Work Closure and Long Term Welfare Receipt**

Findings based on wave 2 of the New FEP sample reflect the impact of the DRA 2005 on welfare outcomes. The differences between the widely verified predictors of long term welfare receipt (predictors also confirmed in all previous FEP TL studies) and these findings are stunning. As revealed in analysis of wave 2 data, policy guidelines now determine exclusively who remains on the welfare roles for longer lengths of time. The number of personal or social factors which might make employment difficult or temporarily impossible no longer play a role in welfare outcomes unless the factor is recognized as acceptable within the DRA guidelines.

## DISCUSSION

Wave 1 of the New FEP study provided the snapshot of new FEP recipients as they entered cash assistance. Data collection for wave 1 started about 6 months after the requirements of the DRA first went into effect thus the data provided a baseline for new TANF recipients in Utah's cash assistance program under the new TANF policy. While still exploratory and preliminary in nature, data from wave 2 of the New FEP study paints a very different picture.

### Early Impact of the DRA

Since the implementation of PRWORA, welfare reform focused on requiring work for benefits and Utah, along with other states, was creative in developing work readiness programs focused on employment as the goal while still engaging recipients according to their needs. FEP participants were assessed to identify potential factors associated with long term welfare receipt and employment plans were developed with the specific goal of reducing long term receipt through addressing these needs. The DRA generally undermined and ignored the wide variety of programs proven successful during the first ten years of welfare reform, focusing solely on work and work activities in return for benefits (Lower-Basch, 18 May 2007; Tweedie, 2006).

Initial discussions regarding welfare reauthorization included identifying the needs of long term recipients (Welfare Reform: Former TANF., 2002), but researchers from the National Research Council (Moffitt & Ver Ploeg, 2001) and a subsequent 2005 GAO report suggested that much needed to be done on the national level to delineate measures which could be used in all states to make cross state comparisons more effective. A focus on inconsistencies in definitions of work activities and participation measures between states set the tone for reauthorization. This report recommended that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS):

“provide oversight of states’ definition and more guidance on counting hours of work activities....implement a plan for working with states to improve internal controls over the work participation data...provide meaningful and understandable information for national policy makers and for assessing financial penalties [on states] (Welfare Reform: HHS should...2005, p. 24-25).”

HHS expressed concern regarding implementation of the recommendations as congress had intentionally incorporated flexibility into the TANF program to spur creativity and adaptation to individual state needs. Policy makers were more interested in making sure state agencies were not “cheating the system.” The results of this study suggest that the DRA is working just as designed. New long term welfare recipients look exactly like what re-federalized welfare policy under the DRA say they should.

### The New Long Term Welfare Recipient

Reviewing the outcomes from the wave 2 data revealed that only physical health, mental health and participation in education or training activities were associated with the longest welfare stays. All three categories are on the short list of acceptable TANF activities under DRA. The traditional characteristics (lower levels of education, poor work history, lack of job skills, early welfare receipt, young children in the home) associated with long term welfare receipt are not reflected in this group. In essence, the shift from welfare as a program of poverty reduction to welfare as a work program is now complete. To engage successfully with today's welfare system

one must enter the system work ready. Data from this study suggests that those who came to welfare less than work ready were concentrated in the problem situation closure subgroup.

The profile of the problem situation group suggests that the welfare population as a whole has not changed but the traditional long term recipient is no longer able to receive assistance while moving from their current situation to being work ready. The factors which lead to job loss and the need to seek welfare were the same factors which led to the loss of welfare benefits due to non-participation. If child care was a problem for work it was also a problem for getting to a welfare worksite. While some in the problem situation group lacked job readiness skills others were a “problem” because they disagreed with what welfare policy said was best for them and their family.

There were respondents who had goals beyond what was available to them through DWS. They had goals for schooling which would make a career possible, goals for balancing parenting, working and school, goals for helping a child through the trauma of sexual abuse, goals of not just moving off of welfare but out of poverty. This group typically came from the problem situation group, closed due to not following the rules or simply walking away from the program as it was not helpful. Such was the case of one problem situation closure client who said, “I couldn’t go to school, work 30 hours a week, take care of my son and do all the paperwork they wanted me to do. It was ridiculous. I got a little part time job to make up for the cash.”

The changes in the welfare program and philosophy were not felt by all welfare recipients as most who access benefits never become long term recipients. This study confirms this fact as 50% of wave 2 respondents received welfare for 3 months or less between wave 1 and wave 2. Recall, 274 (28%) of wave 2 respondents left because they started working. As the findings in this study and others (Edelhoc & Liu, 2003) suggest, more than half of first time welfare recipients enter the system due to loss of personal employment. Interviews with such persons show that most would prefer to work over receiving welfare assistance (Edin & Lein, 1996; Kalil, Born, Kunz, & Caudill, 2001). However, there is the well documented reality that those who leave welfare for work with lower levels of education are more likely to return to welfare and take longer to reach wages necessary for economic independence (Harris, 1993). The work closures of today could become the returners and eventual long term recipients in years to come. This will be a question for wave 3 of the New FEP Study.

### **The Role of the Case Worker**

Front line case workers are the face of the welfare agency and its policies. Training case workers to appreciate the importance of developing a strong helping relationship with their FEP customers was a focus for DWS during the first 10 years of TANF. Findings in this study and others indicate that welfare recipients often credit caring workers, who focus more on successes and spend less time threatening them with the consequences of failure, for a successful move off welfare (Cheek & Piercy, 2001; Pearlmutter & Bartle, 2000).

During the early TANF years, DWS case workers were provided assessment tools and taught skills for identifying the needs of potential long term recipients. In partnering with customers in developing employment plans, DWS case workers were trained to challenge customers but also listen to their goals and work to create plans which were realistic, starting

where the customer was at and working with them toward self-sufficiency. While these principles are still valued by DWS, the reality of the DRA and federal participation rates has severely strained the case worker - customer relationship.

Under the DRA case workers are under enormous strain as each individual's case load is measured relative to the statewide 50% participation rate requirement. Job performance rating rise and fall based on this number. Case workers often serve as gate keepers with access to social capital unavailable to some welfare recipients, capital which the worker can choose to keep or to share, capital which can be used for good or ill (Livermore & Neustrom, 2003; Portes, 1998).

Case workers have a built-in incentive to assist recipients who are already participating and "count" toward the 50% rate. Making a call to a doctor's office to remind them to return a form needed to keep a welfare case open does not help the caseworkers job performance measure as those exempted due to medical conditions don't "count." Given the low pay rates and challenging demands made of front line workers, high turnover rates have been a consistent problem, especially in the urban areas (Edelhoch & Liu, 2003). The demands of reaching the participation rate and tracking endless verifications will likely exacerbate this problem.

### **Summary of Predicting Long Term Welfare Receipt**

This study takes is a first step in identifying the characteristics associated with long term welfare receipt in this next phase of welfare reform. While preliminary, the results of this study pose an interesting question as to whether the long term welfare recipient will simply disappear. During the data collection period for the first two waves of the New FEP sample (January 2006 thru August 2007) Utah's FEP population dropped from 5261 to 2658 cases, a decline of 49.5%. While Utah's economy was relatively strong during this period, this is a drastic drop.

Will long term welfare receipt disappear? Of course there will be those with serious, documented physical and mental health conditions waiting to receive SSI, but this process seldom lasts three years and policy allows them to remain on assistance. Most welfare recipients have combined work and welfare, only accumulating a few months of assistance before returning to work or increasing hours or wages (Handler, 2003; Harris 1993). This could certainly continue and be another method by which some recipients will become long term recipients, eventually accumulating 36 months and reaching their lifetime limit in Utah.

The group missing from this picture is the traditional long term recipient. The person in need of extended education, skill building, job readiness training, the person with cyclical mental health or physical health issues, the parent with a special needs child. At this point, it appears that the traditional long term recipient will no longer be part of the welfare picture.

### **For Whom Does FEP Work?**

If one only focuses on the plight of the potential long term recipient the picture looks very grim but there are groups for whom FEP is working well. As described above, FEP can work well for those who are disabled enough (physically or mentally) to have doctor verifications supporting their medical claims. It also works for those whose personal education or training

goals match what is able to be supported by the FEP program. There are other groups who find benefits in the FEP program

Those who come to FEP with little employment experience but work ready and with a desired to learn, find guidance for the future as they participate in formative activities. These customers may have been young parents and missed opportunities to focus on education and work activities typical of teenage years. Some customers who have years of experience as a stay at home mom but are uncertain of their value and skills on the employment market also appreciate the directive and structured nature of the program. An understanding employment counselor who can also be a personal support in the crises which likely brought them to this point is invaluable. Work supports such as child care and help with transportation are typically available if they can be accessed.

Another group who benefits from FEP are those who are in a very temporary situation from which they will rapidly move back into employment. The organizational, problem solving and planning skills of these customers will allow them to use short term FEP assistance (even just a month or two) are a spring board back into stability. While cash assistance will no longer continue, these customers may remain connected to food stamps and Medicaid until they are again fully self-sufficient.

### **Conclusion: Wave 3 - The Next Steps for Moving Forward**

In spite of the enormous volume of literature written on the topic of welfare programs, and more recently welfare reform, following welfare recipients over time starting from program entrance is rare. The conclusions from the wave 2 study are quite striking. Testing these findings over time will play a significant role in determining the long term effect of DRA policy.

The New FEP Study is sponsored by Utah's DWS and initially focused on FEP recipients. One may question the value of continuing to follow former FEP recipients as they become more and more removed from their welfare experience. It is hoped that the data from this study will provide insight into the experiences of welfare recipients not only during their tenure on welfare but also as they take the benefits of being connected with FEP and move forward into the community.

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**APPENDIX 1: ADDITIONAL TABLES**

**Table A1: Non-Respondent Comparisons**

Variable	Wave 1 Participants N = 1144	Wave 1 Non- Respondents N = 622	Wave 2 Participants N = 923	Wave 2 Non- Respondents N = 221
Age	28.5	29.5	29.5%	29.5%
Gender				
Female	94.2%	92.0%	94.0%	94.6%
Male	5.8%	8.0%	6.0%	5.4%
Marital Status				
Single never married	42.0%	43.9%	38.9%	
Other	58.0%	56.1%	60.2%	
Number of children avg.	1.7	1.8		
Age oldest child: avg.	5.8	6.9		
Age youngest child: ave.	3.8	4.4		
Education				
High School diploma/GED	70.0%	65.6%	73.5%	
No HSD/GED	30.0%	34.4%	26.5%	
Physical health				
Good to excellent	73.0%	71.5%		
Fair to poor	27.0%	28.5%		
Transportation				
Access to a car	64.8%	68.5%		
No access to a car	35.2%	31.5%		
Region				
Central	46.9%	51.8%	44.6%	48.4%
North	30.9%	26.8%	30.2%	26.7%
Mountainland	11.4%	10.3%	10.6%	11.8%
Eastern	4.6%	2.7%	4.4%	4.1%
Western	6.3%	8.4%	6.4%	7.7%
Out of State	n/a	n/a	3.7%	

\* - Data from 2006 file as non-respondent data was not available in these areas

**Table A2: Distribution of Welfare Months Received by Wave 2 Respondents**

Total Months	Frequency (Percent)	Cumulative Percent
0	129 (14.5%)	14.5%
1	102 (11.5%)	26.0%
2	107 (12.0%)	38.0%
3	88 (9.9%)	47.9%
4	71 (8.0%)	55.9%
5	71 (8.0%)	63.9%
6	51 (5.7%)	69.6%
7	45 (5.1%)	74.7%
8	44 (4.9%)	79.6%
9	33 (3.7%)	83.4%
10	29 (3.3%)	86.4%
11	29 (3.3%)	89.7%
12	90 (10.1%)	100.0%

**Table A3: Welfare Attitude - Wave 2 Sample by Group**

Variable	Earned Income (N = 274)	Problem Situation (N = 230)	Other Income (N = 115)	Long Term (N = 270)	Significance Level
Believe 36 months is enough time to become self-sufficient - wave 2	88.9%	80.3%	86.7%	73.8%	<.001
When children are young single parents should not work outside the home	28.4%	34.5%	38.2%	41.4%	.015
My children would benefit from having me employed outside the home	77.9%	72.7%	60.9%	75.3%	.007
Most people are on welfare because of their own bad choices	40.0%	41.9%	26.8%	33.2%	.019
Would rather stay home and raise my children than work outside home	45.2%	49.6%	61.1%	49.4%	.045

**Table A4: Bivariate Analysis Wave 2 Sample:  
Long Term vs Short Term Earned Income Closure**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Earned income N = 274</b>	<b>Long term N = 270</b>	<b>Significance Level <i>p</i> =</b>
<b>Personal Characteristics</b>			
Age: Mean	29.0	30.5	.039
Gender: Male	5.8%	5.2%	ns
Female	94.2%	94.8%	
Marital status: Single never married	41.6%	38.5%	ns
Other	58.4%	61.5%	
Race/Ethnicity: White	68.9%	71.5%	ns
Persons of color	31.1%	28.5%	
Number of children under 18 in home: avg.	1.7	1.8	ns
Work history: Has worked ¾ of adult life	68.2%	67.4%	ns
Has worked ½ or adult life or less	31.8%	32.6%	
Education level: GED or HSD	78.5%	72.6%	ns
No GED or HSD	21.5%	27.4%	
Participation in education or training activities			<.001
Still in or completed schooling/training	20.4%	43.0%	
Is not or did not complete schooling/training	79.6%	57.0%	
Learning disability: Learning disability	20.8%	28.9%	.029
No learning disability	79.2%	71.1%	
Reading and/or writing skills			ns
No problems reading or writing	88.7%	86.7%	
Reading or writing problems	11.3%	13.3%	
Physical Health: Fair to poor physical health	17.2%	34.1%	<.001
Good to excellent physical health	82.8%	65.9%	
Mental health: Fair to poor physical health	13.9%	28.9%	<.001
Good to excellent physical health	86.1%	71.1%	
Job skills barrier: Job skill barrier reported	24.8%	28.5%	ns
No job skill barrier reported	75.2%	71.5%	
Drug dependency: Drug dependency indicated	4.7%	7.0%	ns
No drug dependency indicated	95.3%	93.0%	
Alcohol dependency: Alcohol dependency indicated	5.1%	3.7%	ns
No alcohol dependency indicated	94.9%	96.3%	

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Earned income N = 274</b>	<b>Long term N = 270</b>	<b>Significance Level <i>p</i> =</b>
Age at first receipt of cash assistance (bi): Age 19 or younger Age 20 or older	23.4% 76.6%	24.8% 75.2%	ns
Self-esteem	20.0	21.4	.001
Self-efficacy	13.9	14.7	.002
<b>Family and Social Interactions</b>			
Caring for needs of a dependent child: No dependent child with special needs Has dependent child with special needs	92.0% 8.0%	86.7% 13.3%	.045
Severe domestic violence - past year: Experienced severe domestic violence Did not experience severe domestic violence	12.0% 88.0%	11.9% 88.1%	ns
Severe domestic violence ever: Experienced severe domestic violence Did not experience severe domestic violence	60.9% 39.1%	61.1% 38.9%	ns
Social Support Survey	73.4	72.1	ns
Social support satisfaction Generally satisfied with social supports Generally dissatisfied with social supports	89.8% 10.2%	89.3% 10.7%	ns
Attendance at a religious service Attended religious service past month Did not attended religious service past month	44.9% 55.1%	48.1% 51.9%	ns
<b>Access to Resources</b>			
Housing problems - barrier*: Housing barrier reported No housing barrier reported	13.1% 86.9%	11.5% 88.5%	ns
Wages too low - barrier* Wages being low has been a barrier Wages being low has not been a barrier	40.9% 59.1%	33.7% 66.3%	ns
Lack of good jobs available - barrier* Lack of good jobs has been a barrier Lack of good jobs has not been a barrier	27.4% 72.6%	23.3% 76.7%	ns
Lack of child care - barrier* Lack of Child care has been a barrier Lack of child care has not been a barrier	35.4% 64.6%	33.7% 66.3%	ns

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Earned income N = 274</b>	<b>Long term N = 270</b>	<b>Significance Level <i>p</i> =</b>
Lack of transportation - barrier* Lack of transportation has been a barrier Lack of transportation has not been a barrier	27.0% 73.0%	33.0% 67.0%	ns
Lack to telephone access - barrier* Lack of telephone access has been a barrier Lack of telephone access has not been a barrier	8.8% 91.2%	10.4% 89.6%	ns
<b>Family Background / Childhood Experiences</b>			
Living situation growing up: Two parent home Other	67.9% 32.1%	61.9% 38.1%	ns
Father's education level: Had high school diploma or GED Did not have high school diploma or GED	67.9% 32.1%	65.2% 34.8%	ns
Mother's education level: Had high school diploma or GED Did not have high school diploma or GED	74.1% 25.9%	74.4% 25.6%	ns
Mother's age at birth of her first child Mother was 19 or younger Mother was older than 19	51.5% 48.5%	52.2% 47.8%	ns
Physical abuse as a child Was physically abused as child Was not physically abused as child	47.5% 52.5%	45.9% 54.1%	ns
Sexual abuse as a child Was sexually abused as child Was not sexually abused as child	42.3% 57.7%	42.6% 57.4%	ns
<b>Welfare Experience and Attitudes</b>			
Welfare history Does have a welfare history Does not have a welfare history	55.1% 44.9%	60.4% 39.6%	ns
Feelings about being on welfare first time applied for assistance Generally bad Neutral or generally OK	73.4% 26.6%	67.8% 32.2%	ns
Welfare is a trap from which few escape Generally agree Generally disagree	32.7% 67.3%	28.9% 71.1%	ns

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Earned income N = 274</b>	<b>Long term N = 270</b>	<b>Significance Level p =</b>
My children would benefit from having me employed outside home. Generally agree Generally disagree	77.9% 22.1%	75.3% 24.7%	ns
I would rather have a job outside the home than be a stay at home parent. Generally agree Generally disagree	53.5% 46.5%	53.2% 46.8%	ns
When children are young, single parents should not work outside the home. Generally agree Generally disagree	28.4% 71.6%	41.4% 58.6%	.002
My circumstances are different than most people on welfare. Generally agree Generally disagree	55.5% 44.5%	60.5% 39.5%	ns
Being on welfare is embarrassing to most who get it. Generally agree Generally disagree	56.3% 43.7%	60.3% 39.7%	ns
36 months of welfare is plenty of time for most people to get back on their feet & start working. Generally agree Generally disagree	88.9% 11.1%	73.8% 26.2%	<.001
If poor women would only get married, they would be less likely to be poor. Generally agree Generally disagree	11.3% 88.7%	11.7% 88.3%	ns
People who are on welfare usually grew up in families who were on welfare. Generally agree Generally disagree	42.9% 57.1%	33.0% 67.0%	.019

**Table A5: Number of structural barriers related to months on assistance**

<b>Number of barriers</b>	<b>Average number of months</b>	<b>Size of sample</b>
0	5.11	233
1	4.33	240
2	5.05	209
3	4.14	110
4	4.75	72
5	4.13	23
6	2.50	2
Total	4.71	889

**Table A6: Number of personal/family barriers related to months on assistance**

<b>Number of barriers</b>	<b>Average number of months</b>	<b>Size of sample</b>
0	2.98	52
1	4.01	141
2	4.75	165
3	5.16	199
4	4.89	131
5	4.34	85
6	5.40	62
7	5.91	33
8+	5.29	21
Total	4.70	889