

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Labor have contracted with MDRC to evaluate innovative subsidized and transitional employment models targeting TANF recipients, noncustodial parents, former prisoners, and other low-income parents. The goal is to better understand what kinds of employment programs are most effective at helping people with these kinds of disadvantages gain and hold regular employment.

As part of our research, we are speaking with program staff members, referral partners, employers, and community stakeholders (in child support, parole and probation, etc) who work with STED/ETJD participants to learn about their experiences with the program and working with subsidized workers through the program. We have attached here an interview guide with a number of questions we would like to ask. It should take about an hour to complete. Your responses to all questions here will be kept completely private; the research staff has been trained in protecting private information and your name will not appear in any written reports we produce. Your responses to these questions are also completely voluntary; you are not required to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. All of the study results will be reported for groups of individuals; no results will be analyzed or reported for individuals.

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB control number for this collection is 0970-XXXX and it expires XX/XX/XXXX.

Thanks in advance for your time helping us with this valuable research. If you have any questions or would like any more information about the project, please contact Dan Bloom, the project director, at 212-340-8611 or at dan.bloom@mdrc.org.

Interview Guide: Referral Partners

Subsidized and Transitional Employment Demonstration (STED)
Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration (ETJD)

1. Please describe your current relationship with the program.
2. How long have you worked with [lead agency]? What was the nature of your relationship before the study began? How has it changed?

Referrals and enrollment

3. How does the referral process work?
4. What is your role in determining eligibility and appropriateness for services? When/how are these decisions made?
5. Please describe what type of client you would be likely to refer to the program. What kind of client would you be unlikely to refer?

6. How selective do you feel you have been with regard to the people that you are referring to the program? (*Probe for job readiness, harder to serve population, etc*).
7. What materials, if any, do you use to market the program?
8. Since the study began, have you faced any challenges with the referral and recruitment process? If so, what are those challenges? How have you tried to overcome them? Are these strategies working?

Random Assignment/Evaluation

9. What role do you have in the random assignment notification?
10. What services do those assigned to the control group receive? Are control group participants being referred to other programs?
11. How do you track the control group members?

Other

12. Are there additional services available in your community to assist clients with specific needs? What are these programs? What is your relationship with these programs?
13. [*Ask staff to provide a summary of the organizations a control group member could access.*] What are these programs? How long have they existed?
14. How has the program compared with your expectations prior to beginning random assignment? Any surprises or unexpected challenges? If so, do you have plans to address these challenges?

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Interview Guide: Referral Partners (Parole and Corrections Officers)
Subsidized and Transitional Employment Demonstration (STED)
Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration (ETJD)

Collaboration

1. What is the nature of the contact between you and [staff from Program Name]?
2. Has the relationship changed since the beginning of the project when the funding was awarded? If yes, how and why?
3. What kinds of barriers to collaboration have been experienced with the various partners? How have you tried to overcome these barriers? Have these strategies working?
4. What are the gaps in services for the population you serve?

Relationships with the Criminal Justice System

5. What is the relationship between the organization providing the TJ and the state and local criminal justice system, including parole agencies? (Cover issues related to funding, referrals, reporting, etc.)
6. To what extent is the criminal justice system aware of this initiative and supportive of it? To what extent is the criminal justice system providing direct referrals to the project?
7. To what extent does [Program Name] report information back to the criminal justice system agencies? If so, what do they report back?

The Criminal Justice Context

8. What is the context of the state and local criminal justice system? To what extent would you say the DOC is interested in providing employment programming and help to assist former prisoners?
9. What other initiatives are operating or in development, and how might this affect the TJ demonstration?
10. What types of laws and regulations exist around parole violations that could affect operations of the demonstration?
11. How quickly do parole agencies violate people? Do they follow a graduated sanctions policy, or are they quick to send someone back to prison?
12. How much do parole agencies have an interest in providing “services” to clients rather than just providing “supervision”?

Corrections Questions

13. How did you find out about [Program Name]? Why did you decide to participate?
14. What are the characteristics of people you consider appropriate to refer to [program name]? What types of people would you consider inappropriate for the program?
15. Have you referred people who did not show up at the program? How did you find out? What happened?
16. To what extent does the DOC provide employment programming and help to assist former prisoners? (*probe for the extent to which parole provides “services” to clients as opposed to “supervision”*)
17. Without mentioning names, can you tell me whether any of your clients in this program have been sanctioned? For what? Do you know whether their employer found out? What did you do about it?

18. More generally, can you tell me about your agencies policies for responding to violations of conditions of supervision? Compared to other parole agencies you might be familiar with, how quickly does your agency respond to violations of supervision? How quickly do you send someone back to prison? Do you follow a graduated sanctions policy?
19. What types of laws and regulations exist around parole violations that could affect operations of the demonstration?