
JOB SEARCH ASSISTANCE STRATEGIES (JSA) EVALUATION

INSTRUMENT 1

Discussion Guide for National Policy Experts and Researchers

Introductory Script

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The Job Search Assistance Strategies (JSA) Evaluation is an evaluation designed to rigorously test the relative impacts of various job search assistance activities on moving TANF recipients to employment. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families is funding this study. We are interested in State and local TANF agencies that are providing a range of JSA activities to support the employment of their clients, including one-on-one services, group services, self-administered services, and job development.

We are beginning a field assessment and site selection phase of the project to understand what JSA services State and local TANF agencies provide, what combinations of services they provide, and how they provide them. We are also interested in learning more about what State and local TANF administrators and staff think are the most effective methods to move TANF clients to employment. Your participation in the study will help ACF understand the most important JSA strategies that should be tested around the country within the context of current TANF policies and requirements. We have two main purposes for gathering your feedback. First we want to understand better your views on what States and localities are doing to provide JSA services, as well as what you think effective JSA services look like. Second, we aim to recruit sites and test strategies that are of high interest to the field. We want your feedback on particular JSA services or combination of services that should be experimentally tested using random assignment methods. In addition to any strategies or promising approaches you may know of, please be sure to let us know of existing programs that might be appropriate demonstration sites. This information collection has been reviewed and approved by the Office of Management and Budget with OMB #: 0970-XXXX which expires on XX/XX/2015.

This interview takes about 60 minutes, and your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, or end the interview at any time. We have systems in place to protect your identity and keep your responses private. In writing up our findings from these interviews, we never attribute anything to a specific respondent. The research staff participating in this study have signed notices that they will keep all information gleaned through these interviews private to the extent permitted by law.

Individual (s) Interviewed: (names and titles)

Sponsoring Organization:

Date of Communication:

Module A: Purpose of Job Search Assistance

A1. When you think about job search assistance strategies for the TANF population generally, are there groups or types of TANF clients that feel may benefit most from these services? Why this/these groups?

Probe: long-term TANF recipients, people approaching the time limit, former TANF families,

families neither working nor receiving welfare assistance

- A2. Obtaining employment is typically the overall objective for job search assistance services. That is, the point of providing these services is to help individuals obtain employment. However, some TANF programs have different philosophies that guide the JSA services that they provide. For example, a program may encourage clients to take any job as quickly as possible, while others may focus on finding a job that is a good fit for the client. Thinking about the JSA services that you know of or think are most effective, would you say that it fits one of these approaches?

Probes: Take a job as quickly as possible? Find the perfect fitting job? Can you say anything about how and why this is the case?

- A3. Thinking about the job search assistance services you are aware of, can you tell me your thoughts on which JSA approaches may be most effective for TANF clients, including any specific combinations of approaches?

Probe: Why (or not) do you believe that these services may be effective? Are you aware of any evaluations of services?

- A4. Please describe the problems and or challenges you see providing JSA services?

Probes: What issues do you think may impact efforts to improve these programs? Are there any emerging issues, trends, or problems you see in the near future?

- A5. Please describe current research needs in the area of JSA services.

Probes: Given the challenges and programs we have discussed, where do you see the greatest need for improved information? Concerning program effectiveness; that is, what works and doesn't? Concerning how to implement and operate strong programs and program approaches? With regard to understanding the target population's needs and experiences better? Are there any other topics where improved information would be useful? Which gaps can experimental research best "fill in?"

Module B: Identifying JSA Programs/Services to Test

- B1. When you think of promising or innovative JSA services or packages of services that you know of, what comes to mind?

Probes: Looking at these strategies...

- a. *What approaches or programs are you hearing about or involved with that you see are especially worthwhile considering/implementing? Are there any interventions (within the larger strategies that seem particularly promising?*
- b. *What kinds of interventions or policies seem to be "hot topics" now-for you and others concerned about employment issues (e.g. practitioners, advocates, policymakers, researchers, general public)?*
- c. *How do philosophical views on the purpose of JSA affect these services?*
- d. *Please think about some of the policies, programs, or JSA service delivery strategies that you have heard may be promising, but haven't yet been implemented. What are some of the reasons that they have not yet been implemented? Do you think that they can be surmounted? Is there any information that would be helpful?*

- B2. For JSA services, what do you consider a successful outcome to be? How successful do you think these programs or types of strategies are?
- B3. Are you aware of reports or papers about these programs/strategies? How can I obtain reports or studies of these programs?
- B4. What might you like to know about JSA services that you do not now know—such as how to mix or sequence services?
- B5. What outcomes do you think we should use to measure the effectiveness of JSA services? At what intervals should we measure these outcomes?
- B6. Are there any particular programs or strategies that you think are interesting, but for which there is currently insufficient information about whether they work well to support a decision to implement them?
- B7. Can you recommend any people we should talk to or programs that we should see that would provide additional information about JSA strategies that may be of interest to program administrators and policy makers? Are there any sites that you think would be particularly strong candidates for the evaluation?