

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 366 804

CE 065 708

AUTHOR Kemple, James J.; Haimson, Joshua  
 TITLE Florida's Project Independence. Program Implementation, Participation Patterns, and First-Year Impacts.  
 INSTITUTION Manpower Demonstration Research Corp., New York, N.Y.  
 SPONS AGENCY Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C.; Florida State Dept. of Health and Rehabilitative Services, Tallahassee.; Ford Foundation, New York, N.Y.  
 PUB DATE Jan 94  
 NOTE 224p.  
 PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)  
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC09 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; \*Employment Services; Federal Legislation; \*Job Placement; \*Job Training; \*One Parent Family; \*Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Program Implementation; State Programs; Wages; \*Welfare Recipients  
 IDENTIFIERS Florida; \*Project Independence

ABSTRACT

In 1987, Florida anticipated the federal Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Program with Project Independence, a statewide welfare-to-work program. It was structured to increase employment among Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) recipients as quickly as possible, primarily through job search activities. An evaluation was begun in 9 counties randomly selected from among the state's 25 largest in terms of AFDC caseloads; the research sample consisted of more than 18,000 single parents. The organizational capacity of local programs differed in several important dimensions, including number and characteristics of staff, caseload sizes, service availability and quality, and child care availability. The project achieved substantial compliance with its participation mandate--75 percent of those required to participate in the program attended orientation. Fifty-six percent of those who attended orientation went on to participate in a job search, education, or training activity. The project increased first-year earnings by nearly 7 percent and reduced first-year AFDC payments by nearly 7 percent. The program's effects were concentrated among single parents with school-age children; their earnings increased by 11 percent. Single parents with younger children (aged 3-5) experienced a 5 percent reduction in welfare payments but no significant increase in earnings. (Appendixes include supplemental tables and 18 references.) (YLB)

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# Program Implementation, Participation Patterns, and First-Year Impacts

James J. Kemple  
Joshua Haimson

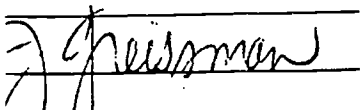
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**FLORIDA'S PROJECT INDEPENDENCE:  
PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION,  
PARTICIPATION PATTERNS, AND  
FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS**

James J. Kemple  
Joshua Haimson

Manpower Demonstration  
Research Corporation

January 1994

The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation's evaluation of Florida's Project Independence Program is funded by a contract with Florida's State Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services and with support from the Ford Foundation and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The Metropolitan Life Foundation contributed to the publication of the report.

Dissemination of MDRC reports is also supported by our Public Policy Outreach funders:

Ford Foundation  
The Ambrose Monell Foundation  
Alcoa Foundation  
Exxon Corporation  
Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, Inc.

The findings and conclusions in this report do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of the funders.

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Kemple, James J.

Florida's Project Independence : program implementation, participation patterns, and first-year impacts / James J. Kemple, Joshua Haimson.

p. cm.

"January 1994."

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Welfare recipients—Employment—Florida. 2. Welfare recipients—Training of—Florida. 3. Welfare recipients—Education—Florida. I. Haimson, Joshua. II. Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. III. Title.

HV98.F5K46 1993

362.5'8'09759—dc20

93-38877

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Project Independence evaluation is the product of a four-year partnership between MDRC and the Florida State Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS).

The study owes a special debt to the hundreds of Public Assistance Specialists whose capable handling of the random assignment procedures – in addition to their many other responsibilities – established the foundation on which the remainder of the study has been built. They were supported by their unit supervisors and district Economic Services Program Administrators. The district Project Independence Program Administrators deserve acknowledgment for their ongoing support for the evaluation and for ensuring that the MDRC research team had access to their staff in order to obtain key information about the program. These individuals include: Barbara Coles, Isabell Davis, Greg Frohnappel, Bob Janssen, Judy Jones, Terry Keeter, Dan Miller, Herb Moore, and Martha Pepper. The study also benefited from the assistance and cooperation of the many (too numerous to mention by name) Project Independence unit supervisors, employment counselors, employment specialists, and support staff who permitted us to interview them, observe their programs, and collect critical information for this report.

At HRS, a number of people played critical roles. Don Winstead provided wise guidance and strong support for the evaluation and offered useful comments on an earlier draft of this report. Dan Goss worked with the counties to assure the implementation of the research design, coordinated data collection, and reviewed this report. V. Sheffield Kenyon, Thomas Arnold, Calvin Melton, James Clark, Reginald Smith, and Albertine McDaniel made important contributions to the study's success. Bill Hudgens was instrumental in helping MDRC gain access to the various data sources used in the report. Tracy Sumner, Sue Ellen Adams, and Judy Moon – now with the Department of Labor and Employment Security (LES) -- provided helpful insights into the operational details of Project Independence and offered useful comments on earlier drafts of the report. Members of the Project Independence Evaluation Advisory Committee – Ken Baer, Bob Barrios, Budd Bell, Cyndi Craig, Rowe Hinton, Cindy Huddleston, Bill Nugent, Margarita Romo, Phil Reeves, Deborah Sims, Sandy Steen, and Marcia Weider – offered thoughtful insights and suggestions. We would also like to acknowledge the support of HRS Secretaries H. James Towey, Robert Williams, and Gregory Coler.

We would also like to acknowledge Billy Davis and Jerry Arnold at the Department of Public Assistance Fraud (DPAF) for their professionalism and perseverance in facilitating MDRC's access to

automated AFDC, Food Stamps, and Unemployment Insurance records. Joe Franklin at HRS provided valuable information about the FLORIDA System.

At MDRC, many staff made important contributions to the evaluation. In particular, the report benefited from exceptional work by Electra Small, who coordinated the data processing and analysis, Corinne Helman, who provided research assistance on all aspects of the project and in the preparation of this report, and Christopher Bost, who assisted on the impact analysis. Judith Gueron, Gordon Berlin, and Barbara Goldman were senior reviewers of this report and provided overall guidance. Stephen Freedman, James Riccio, Daniel Friedlander, and David Long participated in developing the evaluation design and procedures and also reviewed the manuscript. Cindy Guy played a major role in developing the survey instrument and conducting field research.

Marilyn Price was MDRC's primary liaison with HRS administration and staff in Florida. Florida-based consultants Angela Brooks Nichols, Christine Frasca, Andrew Melnyk, and Paul Fronstin assisted in the implementation research effort.

Karen Paget, Director of MDRC's Information Services Department, managed the collection and processing of the data and provided valuable guidance. Joel Gordon also played a key role in this effort. Adria Gallup-Black was MDRC's data liaison with HRS and DPAF and developed all the data files for this report. Mohammad Amzad programmed the administrative data. Anita Kraus, Gaston Murray, and Juanita Vega-Chetcuti programmed the other data.

We wish to acknowledge the useful comments and insights of members of MDRC's Welfare Studies Committee: Robert Solow (Chairman), Henry Aaron, Rebecca M. Blank, Gary Burtless, Linda Datcher-Loury, Mark Greenberg, Frank Levy, Richard J. Murnane, Richard P. Nathan, and Audrey Rowe.

Judith Greissman edited the report, and Suzanne Wagner edited the tables and figures. They were assisted by Michael Wilde, Patt Pontevolpe, and Stephanie Cowell. Leah Curtin coordinated the production of the tables and figures.

The Authors

## PREFACE

This is the first report on MDRC's evaluation of Florida's Project Independence, a study funded by Florida's State Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, the Ford Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Project Independence is Florida's statewide program intended to move people from welfare to work. Unlike a number of other states' programs that also operate under the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) title of the Family Support Act of 1988, Florida's program (during the period of the study) emphasized relatively low-cost job placement services for the majority of participants, while still providing considerable amounts of education and training.

The findings on Project Independence are particularly valuable because Florida is one of a small number of states that have sponsored large-scale, rigorous, random assignment evaluations of their JOBS program's effectiveness. In addition, the study counties in Florida were chosen through a randomized process, so that the results would provide a credible estimate of statewide impacts. Given the challenge of implementing such a study in local public assistance offices, the staff in Florida showed unusual commitment and determination in making this evaluation succeed.

The result at this point is a reliable estimate of the short-term effects of a JOBS program in a large and diverse state. The final report will extend the follow-up and also compare program benefits and costs.

This report offers important lessons at a time of intensifying debate over welfare reform in Florida, in other states, and in Washington. It adds to an emerging body of evidence indicating that states can operate JOBS programs that impose a serious participation mandate, and that this will increase employment and earnings and reduce reliance on public assistance. Prior studies of the effects of programs on single parents who were receiving welfare focused almost exclusively on mothers of school-age children. For that group, this study finds encouraging results, which track those of other programs that eventually showed long-term cost effectiveness. This study breaks new ground in reporting results for mothers with younger children. Here, the findings appear to be less encouraging, and the authors provide evidence on the possible explanation.

The short-term effects presented in this report also track some of the limitations identified through studies of other programs. Project Independence has resulted in improved outcomes, but the changes are not dramatic. Many people remained on welfare or in poverty at the end of the first year of follow-up. Longer-term findings will be important in assessing whether achievements increase, but the initial evidence suggests the importance of building and improving on this strong base. This task becomes



particularly urgent as Florida and other states begin to implement more far-reaching reforms for which JOBS' success is a prerequisite.

The positive results presented in the study suggest that Project Independence is having an effect. As such, Florida has in place a critical building block for further reforms.

Judith M. Gueron  
President

## CONTENTS

	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b> .....	iii
<b>PREFACE</b> .....	v
<b>TABLES AND FIGURES</b> .....	ix
<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	xiv
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	xv
 <b>CHAPTER</b>	
 <b>1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	 1
I. The Project Independence Program Model .....	4
II. The Project Independence Evaluation Design .....	7
III. The Significance of the Project Independence Evaluation .....	11
IV. An Overview of This Report .....	12
 <b>2 RESEARCH DESIGN, SAMPLES, AND DATA SOURCES</b> .....	 14
I. The Research Counties .....	14
II. The Random Assignment Procedures .....	17
III. Background Characteristics of the Full Sample for This Report .....	21
IV. Background Characteristics of the Key Subgroups for This Report .....	25
V. The Data Sources Used in This Report .....	27
 <b>3 PROJECT INDEPENDENCE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND SERVICES</b> ..	 34
I. The Organizational Structure of Project Independence .....	34
II. Project Independence Staffing .....	36
III. Caseload Size, Monitoring, and Organizational Climate .....	37
IV. Project Independence Services .....	41
V. Child Care Availability .....	46
 <b>4 THE PROGRAM GROUP FLOW THROUGH PROJECT INDEPENDENCE</b> .....	 51
I. Getting to Project Independence Orientation .....	55
II. Project Independence Orientation .....	61
III. Participation in Post-Orientation Activities .....	64
IV. The Duration of Project Independence Registration and Participation .....	67

CHAPTER	PAGE
<b>5 PARTICIPATION PATTERNS FOR SELECTED SUBGROUPS . . . . .</b>	<b>72</b>
I. Participation Patterns for Subgroups Defined by the Age of the Youngest Child . . . . .	72
II. Participation Patterns for Subgroups Defined by the Project Independence Job-Readiness Criteria . . . . .	76
III. Participation Patterns for Subgroups Defined by Previous AFDC Receipt . . . . .	79
IV. Participation Patterns Across the Research Counties . . . . .	81
V. Explaining County Variation in Participation Patterns: A Preliminary Exploration . . . . .	84
 <b>6 THE FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS OF PROJECT INDEPENDENCE . . . . .</b>	 <b>88</b>
I. Interpreting Impacts . . . . .	89
II. The Behavior of the Control Group: The Benchmark for Measuring Impacts . . . . .	92
III. First-Year Impacts for the Full Sample . . . . .	94
IV. Overall 18-Month Impacts for the Early Cohort . . . . .	102
V. Impacts by the Age of the Youngest Child . . . . .	104
VI. Impacts for Other Key Subgroups . . . . .	110
VII. First-Year Impacts by County . . . . .	115
VIII. A Comparison with the First-Year Impacts Generated by California's GAIN Program . . . . .	117
 <b>APPENDICES</b>	
Appendix A Supplemental Tables for Chapter 2 . . . . .	123
Appendix B Supplemental Table for Chapters 3 and 4 . . . . .	133
Appendix C Supplemental Tables for Chapter 5 . . . . .	143
Appendix D Supplemental Tables for Chapter 6 . . . . .	151
 <b>REFERENCES . . . . .</b>	 <b>155</b>
 <b>SELECTED MDRC PUBLICATIONS . . . . .</b>	 <b>157</b>

## TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLE		PAGE
1	Project Independence First-Year Participation Patterns . . . . .	xxiv
2	First-Year Impacts on Employment, Earnings, AFDC Receipt, and AFDC Payments for the Full Sample . . . . .	xxix
3	First-Year Impacts on Earnings and AFDC Payments for Selected Subgroups Based on Characteristics at the Time of Random Assignment . . . . .	xxxii
4	A Comparison of First-Year Impacts for Project Independence and California's GAIN Program, for Single Parents Whose Youngest Child Was Age Six or Older . . . . .	xxxv
2.1	Selected Characteristics of the Nine Counties in the Project Independence Evaluation . . . . .	15
2.2	Selected Characteristics of the Full Sample and of Subgroups Defined by Age of Youngest Child, at the Time of Random Assignment . . . . .	22
2.3	Data Sources and Samples for the Project Independence Evaluation . . . . .	28
3.1	Organizational Capacities of Project Independence Programs in the Research Counties . . . . .	38
3.2	Availability and Quality of Services in the Research Counties . . . . .	42
3.3	Availability of Child Care in the Research Counties . . . . .	48
4.1	Selected Referral and Participation Enforcement Strategies and the Service Emphasis in the Research Counties . . . . .	57
4.2	Rates of Participation in Project Independence Activities Within 12 Months After Random Assignment for All Program Group Members, Orientation Attenders, and Participants . . . . .	65
4.3	Length of Time That Program Group Members Were Registered for Project Independence Within 12 Months After Random Assignment . . . . .	68

TABLE	PAGE
4.4 Length of Time That Program Group Members Participated in Selected Activities Within 12 Months After Random Assignment . . . . .	69
5.1 Project Independence First-Year Participation Patterns for All Program Group Members and for Subgroups Defined by Age of Youngest Child . . . . .	74
5.2 Project Independence First-Year Participation Patterns for All Program Group Members and for Subgroups Defined by Job-Readiness Status . . . . .	77
5.3 Project Independence First-Year Participation Patterns for All Program Group Members and for Subgroups Defined by Prior AFDC Receipt . . . . .	80
5.4 Project Independence First-Year Participation Patterns, by County . . . . .	82
5.5 Selected Measures of County Environments, First-Year Participation Patterns, Program Organizational Capacity, and Case Management Practices . . . . .	85
6.1 First-Year Impacts on Employment, Earnings, AFDC Receipt, and AFDC Payments for the Full Sample . . . . .	95
6.2 First-Year Impacts on the Distribution of Earnings for the Full Sample . . . . .	99
6.3 First-Year Impacts on Combined Employment and Welfare Receipt Status for the Full Sample . . . . .	101
6.4 First-Year Impacts on Employment, Earnings, AFDC Receipt, and AFDC Payments for Subgroups Defined by Age of Youngest Child . . . . .	105
6.5 First-Year Impacts on Earnings and AFDC Payments for Subgroups Defined by Random Assignment Cohort and Age of Youngest Child . . . . .	109
6.6 First-Year Impacts on Earnings and AFDC Payments for Subgroups Defined by Job-Readiness Status . . . . .	111
6.7 First-Year Impacts on Earnings and AFDC Payments for Subgroups Defined by Prior AFDC Receipt . . . . .	114
6.8 First-Year Impacts on Earnings and AFDC Payments, by County . . . . .	116



TABLE	PAGE
6.9 A Comparison of First-Year Impacts for Project Independence and California's GAIN Program, for Sample Members Whose Youngest Child Was Age Six or Older . . . . .	118
A.1 Selected Characteristics of AFDC Applicants and of Applicant Subgroups Defined by Research Status, at the Time of Random Assignment . . . . .	124
A.2 Selected Characteristics of AFDC Recipients and of Recipient Subgroups Defined by Research Status, at the Time of Random Assignment . . . . .	126
A.3 Selected Characteristics of the Full Sample and of Subgroups Defined by Job-Readiness Status, at the Time of Random Assignment . . . . .	128
A.4 Selected Characteristics of the Full Sample and of Subgroups Defined by Prior AFDC Receipt, at the Time of Random Assignment . . . . .	130
B.1 Items Used to Create Scales for the Staff Survey and Cronbach's Alpha for the Scales . . . . .	134
B.2 Selected Referral and Participation Enforcement Strategies and the Service Emphasis, by County . . . . .	140
C.1 Project Independence First-Year Participation Patterns for All Program Group Members and for Subgroups Defined by Age of Youngest Child and Random Assignment Cohort . . . . .	142
C.2 Project Independence First-Year Participation Patterns for All Program Group Members and for Subgroups Defined by Job-Readiness Status . . . . .	144
C.3 Project Independence First-Year Participation Patterns for All Program Group Members and for Subgroups Defined by Prior AFDC Receipt . . . . .	146
D.1 First-Year Impacts on the Distribution of Earnings for Subgroups Defined by Age of Youngest Child . . . . .	150
D.2 First-Year Impacts on Earnings and AFDC Payments for Subgroups Defined by Job-Readiness Status . . . . .	151
D.3 First-Year Impacts on Earnings and AFDC Payments for Subgroups Defined by Prior AFDC Receipt . . . . .	152

FIGURE		PAGE
1	Simplified Depiction of the Project Independence Program Model . . . . .	xviii
2	The Flow Through the Project Independence Model for 100 Typical Program Group Members . . . . .	xxii
1.1	Simplified Depiction of the Project Independence Program Model . . . . .	5
1.2	The Nine Research Counties in the Project Independence Evaluation (with Each County's Largest City Shown in Parentheses) . . . . .	8
2.1	Overview of Random Assignment Procedures for the Project Independence Evaluation . . . . .	19
4.1	The Flow Through the Project Independence Model for 100 Typical Program Group Members Within 12 Months After Random Assignment . . . . .	52
4.2	Month-by-Month AFDC and Project Independence Status for the Program Group Within 12 Months After Random Assignment . . . . .	71
6.1	Quarterly Earnings and AFDC Payments for Control Group Members . . . . .	93
6.2	Quarterly Earnings and AFDC Payments for the Full Sample . . . . .	96
6.3	Quarterly Employment and AFDC Receipt Rates for the Full Sample . . . . .	97
6.4	Impacts on Quarterly Earnings and AFDC Payments for the Full Sample and Early Cohort . . . . .	103

## ABBREVIATIONS

ABE	adult basic education
AFDC	Aid to Families with Dependent Children
APS	Assistance Payments System
BIF	Background Information Form
CETA	Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (1973)
ESL	English as a Second Language
FLORIDA	Florida On-Line Recipient Integrated Data Access System
FSA	Family Support Act (1988)
GAIN	Greater Avenues for Independence Program (California)
GED	General Educational Development certification (high school equivalency)
HRS	Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services
JOBS	Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program
JTPA	Job Training Partnership Act (1982)
LEA	local education agency
LES	Department of Labor and Employment Security
MDRC	Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation
PAS	Public Assistance Specialist
RAR	Random Assignment Record
SWIM	Saturation Work Initiative Model (San Diego)
UI	Unemployment Insurance



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1987, Project Independence has operated as Florida's statewide welfare-to-work program, which aims to increase the employment and foster the self-sufficiency of applicants for and recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the major federal/state cash welfare program. Florida was among a handful of states that anticipated federal welfare reform legislation – the Family Support Act of 1988 and its centerpiece, the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) Program – by strengthening the link between AFDC receipt and obligations, opportunities, and supports for parents of poor families to obtain employment. With minor changes, Project Independence became Florida's JOBS program in 1989.

This report presents findings on Project Independence's operations and implementation, as well as its initial effects on employment, earnings, and AFDC receipt. It is the first of two reports from an evaluation by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) under contract to the Florida State Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services and with support from the Ford Foundation and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The study is being conducted in nine counties that were selected randomly from among the state's 25 largest in terms of AFDC caseloads. The research sample consists of more than 18,000 single parents (most of them mothers) in those nine counties. Specifically, it includes those who were applying for AFDC or who were being assessed for continuing AFDC eligibility between July 1990 and August 1991, and who were required to participate in Project Independence (certain categories of individuals, such as those with children under the age of three, were exempt). The results in this report reflect the program as it operated during this period (it has since been modified) and are limited to the first year after these individuals became part of the research sample.

The evaluation is of broad national interest because it assesses the effectiveness of a particular JOBS approach: one that emphasized immediate entry into the labor force for the majority of its participants and that required ongoing participation for most of the state's AFDC population, including those with children age three and older. Importantly, this report presents the first findings to date on the effectiveness of a mandatory JOBS program for single parents with preschoolage children. Project Independence operates under a wide range of local circumstances across Florida – a state with the nation's seventh largest AFDC population. Like most states' JOBS programs, Project Independence is state-administered and attempts to promote a relatively uniform set of goals and operating procedures, while allowing local program offices some discretion to adapt these to their circumstances. For this

reason, the random selection of counties for the study is important because it will enhance the extent to which the findings can be generalized to the state as a whole.

### Highlights of the Findings

Project Independence achieved substantial compliance with its participation mandate. Seventy-seven percent of those required to participate in the program attended orientation. Among those who did not attend orientation or a program activity, many found work on their own or were subject to the program's "sanctioning" procedures, which were designed to impose an AFDC grant reduction if individuals did not provide an acceptable reason for not meeting participation requirements.

Fifty-six percent of those who attended orientation went on to participate in a job search, education, or training activity — a rate similar to those found in other welfare-to-work programs. Individual job search and group job club were the most common activities, with 42 percent of those who attended orientation participating. About half that number participated in education or training activities. Parents with preschoolage children and those whose youngest child was age six or older received similar services once they began participating in the program. However, a smaller percentage of parents with preschoolage children participated in program activities after orientation. Finally, although overall participation rates were high, individuals were engaged in activities for an average of less than two months during the follow-up period.

Overall, Project Independence's short-term effects on labor market and AFDC outcomes were positive. Project Independence increased first-year employment rates and earnings and reduced first-year AFDC receipt rates and payments. At the end of the first year of follow-up, just over 64 percent of those who were referred to the program were receiving AFDC compared to just under 69 percent of a control group that did not have access to the program — a 4 percentage point difference. The program produced first-year earnings gains (again, compared to the control group) averaging \$157 per person referred to the program. (This average includes individuals who did not work, worked part-time, or worked for only part of the year.) The earnings gains were concentrated among two groups: (1) individuals defined by the program as "job-ready" and therefore targeted to participate in individual job search (rather than basic education or training) as their first program activity, and (2) single parents whose youngest child was age six or older. The first-year results for the latter group are similar to those found for single parents with schoolage children in studies of a number of pre-JOBS programs and in the evaluation of California's

Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) Program – the most recent evaluation of a JOBS program with comparable data.

These early results should be interpreted with caution. Studies of other welfare-to-work programs have found that impacts changed after the first year of follow-up, and increases or decreases in impacts may occur for Project Independence. This may be particularly true for those engaged in education and training activities, which last longer than job search and may take more time to produce impacts. The final report on Project Independence – scheduled for late 1994 – will present longer-term results and will compare the program's costs with its benefits from the perspectives of participants, government budgets, and society as a whole.

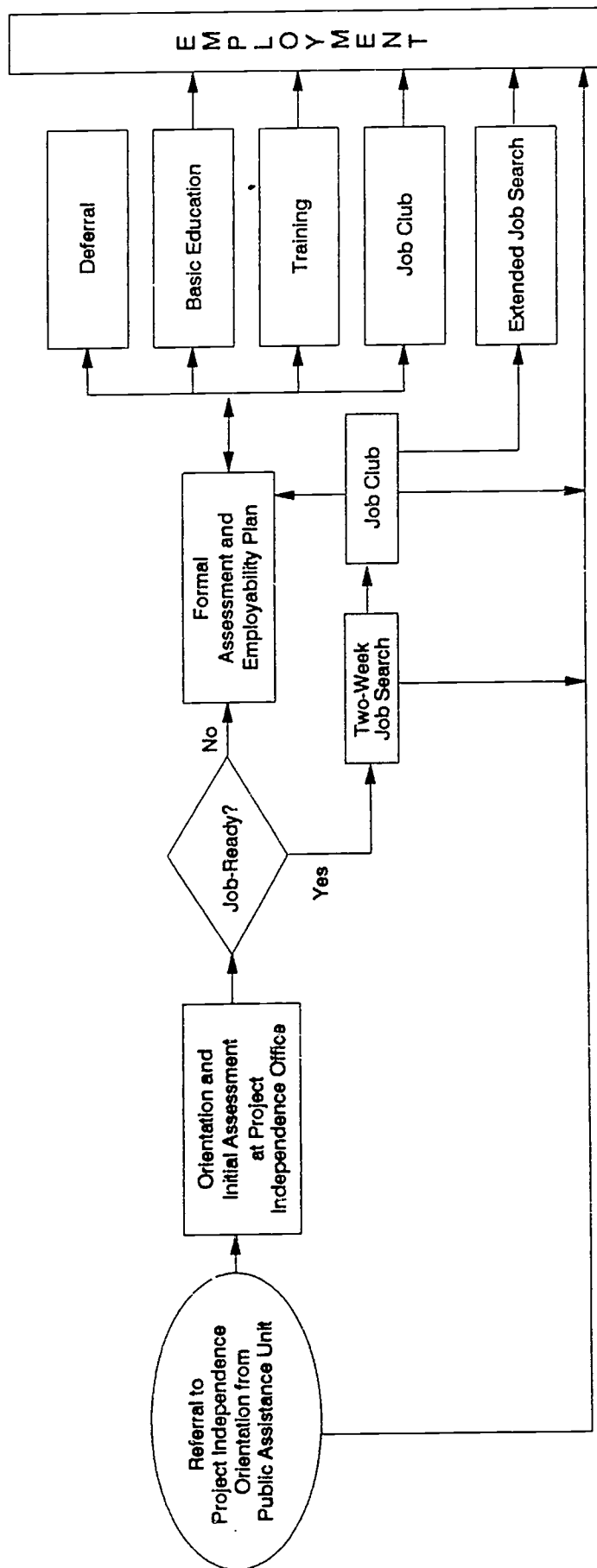
### **The Project Independence Program Model**

Figure 1 is a simplified depiction of the Project Independence program model. All AFDC applicants and recipients are scheduled to attend Project Independence orientation unless they meet official exemption criteria (e.g., they have a child younger than age three or a chronic illness or disability that would make it impossible to participate). During orientation, program staff assign individuals to one of two service tracks based on their educational attainment level and recent employment history. At the same time, staff assist individuals in obtaining support services needed to make participation in Project Independence or employment possible.

The first service track begins with a two-week individual job search and is targeted for those who are "job-ready" according to Project Independence criteria. During the period when the research sample became part of the study (July 1990 through August 1991), the program took an expansive view of job-readiness: The job-readiness criteria – completion of at least the tenth grade or employment in at least 12 of the previous 36 months – meant that a large majority of those required to participate in the program were considered to be job-ready. These criteria, combined with an emphasis on case managers' meeting specific job placement standards, reflected Project Independence's employment-focused approach to self-sufficiency.

The initial job search component requires participants to make contact with at least 12 employers to apply for a job. Those who do not find employment are then assigned to a group job club – a two-to three-week course on how to look for a job, prepare a resume, fill out applications, and present oneself in an interview. Participants who remain unemployed after completing job club are usually referred for a formal assessment, in which they discuss their career interests with a case manager, develop an

FIGURE 1  
SIMPLIFIED DEPICTION OF THE PROJECT INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM MODEL



Employability Plan, and are assigned to education or training activities, which are provided by local adult schools, community colleges, and proprietary institutions.

The second service track begins with a formal assessment followed, in most cases, by a referral to basic education or training activities. During the period when the research sample became part of the study, this service track was targeted for a narrowly defined group of participants designated "not job-ready" (i.e., they had not completed tenth grade and had worked in fewer than 12 of the previous 36 months). Beginning in October 1991, the "not job-ready" criteria were expanded to include those who did not have a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate and had worked in fewer than 12 of the previous 24 months. An important rationale for this change was the belief that those with no high school diploma or GED required further education before being able to secure stable employment. This report presents preliminary evidence about whether, in fact, these individuals benefited from the program as it operated prior to the change in the job-readiness criteria.

Project Independence also provides support services -- such as child care, tuition assistance for training or community college classes, transportation, tools, and uniforms -- considered necessary for participants to engage in program activities or to secure employment. Beginning in January 1991, however, budget constraints forced HRS to restrict the availability of child care for Project Independence participants. This is significant for the evaluation because individuals for whom Project Independence was mandatory could be excused from the participation requirements if needed child care services could not be provided.

### **The Project Independence Evaluation**

Techniques of randomization were used both to select the counties and to assign individuals within the selected counties to one of the two groups into which the research sample was divided (as discussed below). Nine counties were randomly selected from among the state's 25 largest in terms of AFDC caseloads. The nine counties are: Bay (Panama City), Broward (Fort Lauderdale), Dade (Miami), Duval (Jacksonville), Hillsborough (Tampa), Lee (Fort Myers), Orange (Orlando), Pinellas (St. Petersburg), and Volusia (Daytona Beach). Together, they account for 58 percent of the state's AFDC caseload and include Florida's eight largest cities as well as some suburban and rural areas. (Predominantly rural counties with extremely small AFDC caseloads were excluded from the study.) The method used to select the counties enhances the evaluation's capacity to produce results that can be generalized to at least 90 percent of the state's AFDC caseload that became mandatory for Project Independence during the period under study.

Randomization was also used for the research sample as the basis for determining the program's effectiveness — specifically, its effects on employment, earnings, AFDC receipt (i.e., months of receipt), and AFDC payments. From July 1990 through August 1991, 18,237 single-parent applicants for and recipients of AFDC in the nine research counties were randomly assigned either to a "program group," which was eligible to receive Project Independence services and was subject to the participation mandate, or to a "control group," which did not have access to the program and was not subject to the mandate. This type of random assignment research design is widely regarded as the most reliable method available for determining the results of programs such as Project Independence. Control group members were given a list of alternative employment and training services in the community. They remained eligible for subsidized child care and tuition assistance for training or community college classes under the same priorities and guidelines as Project Independence participants. Their eligibility for entitlement benefits in addition to AFDC — such as Food Stamps and Medicaid — was unaffected.

Because the two groups were created by chance, using a lottery-like process, there was only one systematic difference between them: Only those in the program group could be involved in Project Independence. As a result, the control group provides information on the levels of employment, earnings, welfare receipt, and welfare payments that the program group would have reached if it had not had access to Project Independence and had not been required to participate. Therefore, a comparison of the two groups' behavior over time provides the most reliable estimate of the *difference* that Project Independence's services and mandates made in the program group's subsequent labor market and welfare outcomes. These differences are referred to as the program's "impacts."

Two features of the research design are particularly important to interpreting the impact results. First, random assignment occurred at the Public Assistance Units after AFDC applicants and recipients were determined to be mandatory for Project Independence participation but *before* they were referred to and attended a formal program orientation. On the one hand, this ensures that the study's impact findings will capture the effects produced by all aspects of the program, including those that may motivate individuals to seek employment and discontinue their AFDC grants or applications in order to avoid the participation requirement. On the other hand, many individuals in the research sample did not go on to attend orientation or participate in job search, education, or training activities. Thus, if these services have effects, the program's overall impacts may appear smaller than they would have been if the research sample had included only those who attended orientation or received services. This also means that caution is necessary when comparing these results with findings from evaluations using a different point of random assignment.

Second, 88 percent of the research sample is made up of individuals who were applying or reapplying for AFDC (rather than already receiving it) at the time they were determined to be mandatory for Project Independence. Because the program had been operating for nearly three years prior to the start of the study, most of those who were already receiving AFDC were already in the program and therefore not appropriate for random assignment procedures. Thus, the research sample reflects the *flow* of mandatory individuals into a mature, ongoing welfare-to-work program rather than the full caseload of mandatory individuals who were either being referred to or were already participating in the program. This does mean, however, that the findings on program participation and program effects are influenced most heavily by the behavior of AFDC applicants and reapplicants, who tend to be somewhat less disadvantaged than ongoing AFDC recipients. For this reason, also, caution should be exercised in comparing the results from this evaluation to those from other studies whose research samples include a larger proportion of recipients.

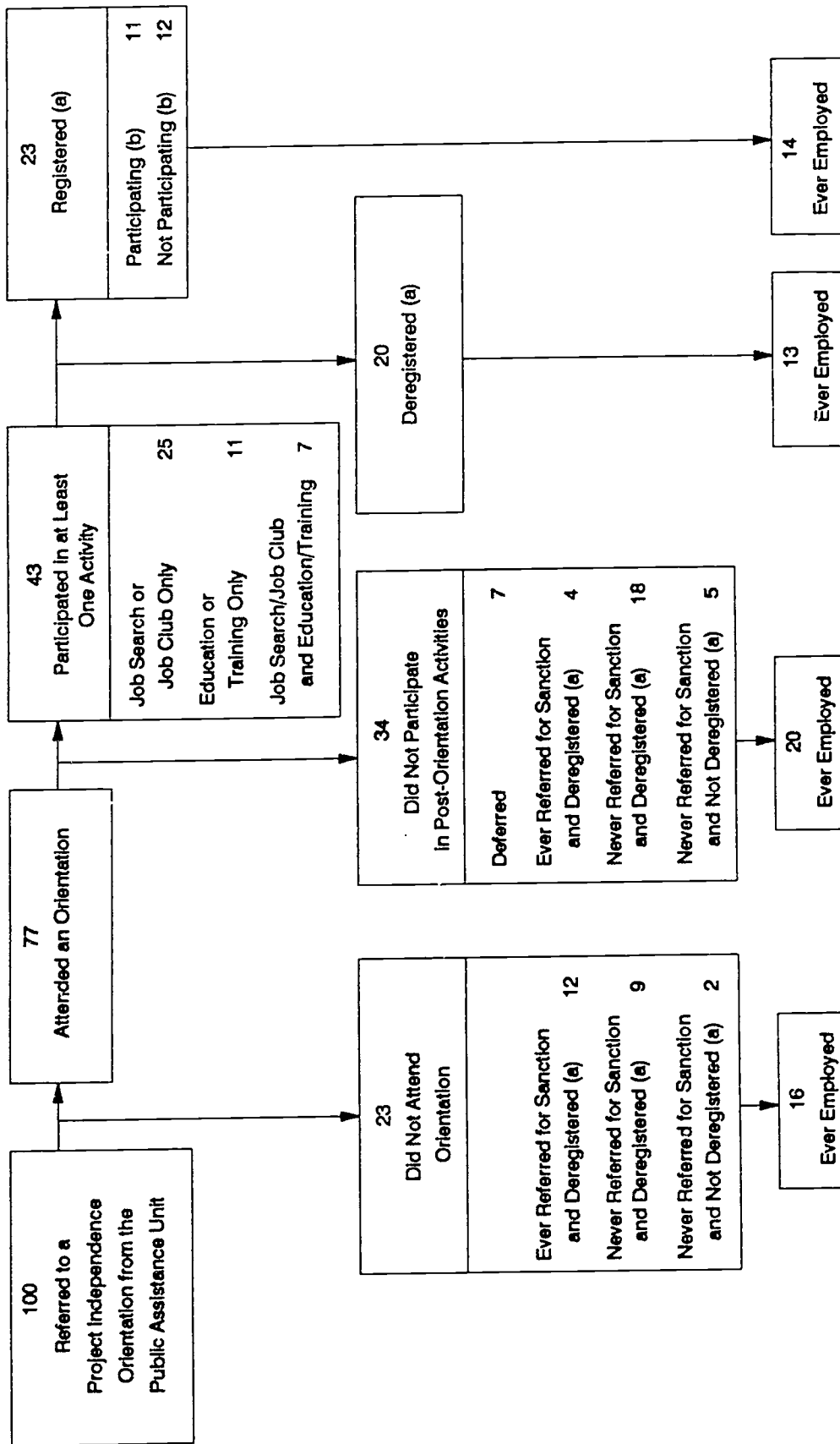
**Did Project Independence implement its participation mandate, and how substantial was participation in the program?**

- **Project Independence achieved a high degree of compliance with its participation mandate at the initial stage of the model. Approximately three-quarters of those referred to the program attended orientation, and most of those who did not attend were subject to formal enforcement procedures or found work on their own.**

Figure 2 illustrates the flow of 100 typical members of the research sample's program group through Project Independence within the 12 months following their random assignment. It shows that 77 percent of all program group members attended orientation. The figure also indicates that approximately half of those who did not attend orientation (12 of 23 typical program group members) were referred for an AFDC grant reduction (also known as a "sanction") because of not having provided an acceptable reason for missing orientation. (Project Independence records confirmed actual grant reductions for about 10 percent of those referred for a sanction. Many of those whose AFDC grant was not reduced may have provided an acceptable — "good cause" — reason for not attending orientation.) In all, more than 90 percent of those who did not attend orientation (21 of 23 typical program group members) were "deregistered" from the program (i.e., their Project Independence case was closed) at the end of the follow-up period. Approximately 70 percent of those who did not attend orientation (16 of 23 typical program group members) were employed at some point during the follow-up period. In short, very few



**FIGURE 2**  
**THE FLOW THROUGH THE PROJECT INDEPENDENCE MODEL**  
**FOR 100 TYPICAL PROGRAM GROUP MEMBERS**



NOTES: (a) "Registered" refers to the finding that an individual's case was open at the end of the 12-month follow-up period.  
 "Deregistered" refers to the finding that an individual's case was closed at the end of the 12-month follow-up period.

(b) "Participating" refers to the finding that an individual was actively participating in a job search, job club, basic education, training, or community college activity at the end of the 12-month follow-up period.



of those referred to Project Independence avoided the initial participation mandate without being monitored by staff or legitimately excused from the program.

- **More than half of those who attended orientation participated in a Project Independence job search, job club, education, or training activity.**

Figure 2 shows that 43 percent of all program group members (56 percent of those who attended orientation) participated in at least one post-orientation activity (individual job search, job club, basic education, training, or community college courses). These are similar to the rates found in studies of pre-JOBS mandatory welfare-to-work initiatives and California's GAIN program.

The other studies have also shown that participation in program activities is always substantially below 100 percent. In the case of Project Independence, most nonparticipants (7 of 34) were excused from the participation mandate temporarily (i.e., "deferred"), were referred for a sanction (4 of 34), or were deregistered from the program (22 of 34), in most cases for justifiable reasons under the program's rules (e.g., they stopped receiving AFDC or became exempt because of health reasons). It is also noteworthy that nearly 60 percent of those who attended orientation but did not participate further (20 of 34) were employed at some point during the follow-up period. In short, very few nonparticipants were unaccounted for.

- **Those referred to Project Independence spent, on average, less than one-quarter of the time they were registered for the program participating in program activities. However, many of those who began an education or training activity stayed in it for three to six months.**

Table 1 shows that program group members participated in activities for an average of one and a half of the nearly eight months in which they were registered for the program during the follow-up period. This suggests that Project Independence was only modestly successful in implementing an ongoing participation mandate (i.e., some individuals remained registered for the program but were not engaged in activities). However, those who started a job search or job club activity were active in it for an average of just under two months. Those who started a basic education activity (i.e., adult basic education, GED preparation, or English as a second language) remained in it for an average of three months, and those in training or community college activities participated for an average of six and a half months. This suggests that, for those who participated in education or training activities, the full effect of Project Independence may not be realized until well after the first year of follow-up.

- **Staff found it difficult to ensure that the ongoing participation requirement would be as tightly enforced during later stages of the program as it had been during the initial (orientation) stage.**

TABLE 1  
PROJECT INDEPENDENCE FIRST-YEAR PARTICIPATION PATTERNS

Sample and Participation Measure	All Program Group Members	Subgroups, by Age of Youngest Child		Subgroups, by Readiness Status	
		Ages 3 to 5	Age 6 or Older	Job-Ready	Not Job-Ready
<u>All program group members</u>					
Attended orientation (%)	77.2	75.7	80.1	77.1	83.4
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (%)	42.9	39.0	47.7 **	43.7	40.6
Ever participated in any job search or job club activity (%)	32.3	31.3	35.3	33.3	27.5
Ever participated in any education or training activity (%)	17.6	16.2	18.2	16.7	24.2
Sanctioning					
Referred for sanction (%)	24.2	29.7	19.7 ***	26.0	14.9 *
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	3.1	2.9	3.0	3.4	1.4
Average number of months registered/participating	7.8/1.6	8.1/1.6	7.5**/1.5	7.7/1.6	8.2/1.1
<u>Program group members who attended orientation</u>					
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (%)	55.5	51.5	59.6 *	56.7	48.7
Ever participated in any job search or job club activity (%)	41.8	41.3	44.0	43.2	33.0
Ever participated in any education or training activity (%)	22.8	21.4	22.7	21.6	29.0

NOTES: Sample members are defined as "job-ready" if they had completed at least 10th grade or were employed for at least 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. Sample members are defined as "not job-ready" if they had not completed 10th grade and were employed for less than 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. These definitions are based on the criteria used by Project Independence during the random assignment period. A chi-square test or two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between subgroups defined by the age of the youngest child and between subgroups defined by job-readiness status. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

Increasing AFDC caseloads and budget constraints resulted in caseloads typically growing to more than 200 persons per case manager during the study period, according to an MDRC survey of Project Independence staff. Only about 30 percent of case managers reported that participants were monitored "closely" in their unit. This does not mean that many people remained registered for Project Independence and avoided participation without penalty; in fact, very few did. At the same time, case managers reported that they found it very difficult to respond quickly to participation problems once they became evident.

#### What types of activity were used most heavily?

- **Reflecting the employment emphasis of the Project Independence model, job search and job club were the most commonly used activities.**

Table 1 indicates that 32 percent of the research sample's program group (42 percent of those who attended orientation) participated in individual job search or job club activities. This relatively high rate is consistent with the fact that a large majority of those in the program group met the definition of "job-ready" and thus would have been initially targeted for these services. In addition, Table 1 shows that 28 percent of those defined as not job-ready also participated in these activities (although usually not as their first activity). This provides evidence that the focus on labor force attachment extended to both the job-ready and not job-ready members of the caseload.

- **The program's emphasis on job search services was complemented by efforts to ensure that education and training were provided to those who needed them.**

Table 1 shows that 18 percent of the program group members (23 percent of those who attended orientation) participated in an education or training activity. Table 1 also shows that such participation was somewhat higher among those defined as not job-ready (24 percent) than among those defined as job-ready (17 percent). However, the latter figure is notable and may reflect, in part, staff discretion in applying the job-readiness criteria. Most staff confirmed in a survey that they would refer job-ready participants to education or training activities as a first activity if they felt it was needed. Also, 7 percent of all program group members (6 percent of those defined as job-ready and 11 percent of those defined as not job-ready) participated in both job search or job club *and* education or training activities. This indicates that Project Independence staff made an effort with some participants to both meet their educational needs and encourage their entry into the labor force.

### How did registrants and staff view the assistance and services provided by Project Independence?

- **On average, staff and participants viewed Project Independence and its services positively.**

Responses to MDRC's survey of a portion of the program group members suggest that, for the most part, Project Independence participants had a favorable impression of the program. More than half (52 percent) rated as "very high" the degree to which staff were helpful to them in dealing with problems that could interfere with their participation in the program, the program's likelihood of improving their chances for being employed in the long run, and the probability that they would recommend the program to a friend. On average, participants in Project Independence's job club and education and training activities viewed those activities positively, rating the teachers and instructors as helpful, their classmates as supportive, and the content of what they were learning as valuable.

These findings are consistent with ratings by staff: Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of those surveyed thought that these services were very worthwhile for participants.

- **Most of those referred to Project Independence were aware of the participation mandate, and more than half believed it was "fair."**

Eighty-one percent of those surveyed were aware that their AFDC check could be reduced if they did not participate in Project Independence without a good cause. Fifty-eight percent said it would be "fair" or "very fair" to impose financial sanctions on AFDC recipients who failed to cooperate with the participation mandate.

### To what extent did Project Independence participants receive subsidized child care?

- **Overall, 19 percent of those who reported attending Project Independence orientation and who had a child age 12 or younger reported receiving subsidized child care at least once during the follow-up period. Most participants were satisfied with their child care arrangements.**

Among program group members who had a child age 12 or younger and who reported attending orientation, 19 percent of survey respondents reported receiving subsidized child care during the 12-month follow-up period. The survey also asked program group members about their use of child care while participating in their most recent Project Independence activity. Eleven percent of the respondents indicated that they relied on Project Independence-subsidized child care, and more than half (55 percent) reported that they relied on family or friends and did not have to pay for the care. The remainder (33 percent) said they paid for child care out of their own pockets.

Regardless of the child care arrangements they used while participating in their most recent activity, 87 percent of the respondents reported that they were very satisfied with the convenience, safety, cost, and availability of those arrangements.

**To what extent did participation patterns differ for groups defined by the age of their youngest child?**

- **On most of the measures of program participation, those with preschoolage children were engaged in Project Independence at about the same level as those whose youngest child was age six or older.**

Table 1 shows that more than 75 percent of both groups attended orientation and that more than half of those from both groups who attended orientation participated in at least one activity. Among those who attended orientation, 60 percent of those whose youngest child was age six or older participated in at least one activity compared to 52 percent of those with preschoolage children. Once they began participating in the program, however, the two groups received similar services and remained in these activities for similar lengths of time.

- **Child care problems may have interfered with participation in Project Independence, particularly for those with preschoolage children during the period when the availability of subsidized child care was reduced.**

Thirty percent of the survey respondents reported that they had had to miss time in their most recent Project Independence activity because of some type of child care problem. This was true for 32 percent of those with preschoolage children and 23 percent of those with older children.

There is also some evidence to suggest that reductions in child care availability may be associated with some of the differences in participation patterns that emerged over time between the two groups. For example, their participation patterns were similar prior to January 1991, when HRS began to reduce the availability of child care for program participants because of budget constraints. However, after that point, those with preschoolage children were less likely to attend orientation and participate in activities than those whose youngest child was age six or older. For example, from the earlier to the later period, the orientation attendance rate among those with preschoolage children declined (from 80 percent to 72 percent), while it increased slightly for those with older children (from 78 percent to 83 percent). Also, the rate of participation in other activities remained constant (at 39 percent) for those with preschoolage children, while it increased more dramatically (from 43 percent to 57 percent) for those whose youngest child was age six or older.

### Did Project Independence produce impacts in the first year of follow-up?

- **Project Independence increased the first-year earnings of those in the program group by an average of almost 7 percent and increased overall employment rates by just over 5 percent.**

During the year after random assignment, program group members – including those who did not work at all – earned an average of \$2,540,<sup>1</sup> which is \$157 (6.6 percent) more than the control group average of \$2,383 (see Table 2). A total of 55 percent of all program group members were employed at some point during that year, which is nearly 3 percentage points (5 percent) higher than the control group's employment rate. As indicated by the asterisks in Table 2, these results were statistically significant, meaning that one can have a high level confidence that they were due to the program rather than to statistical chance.

- **Project Independence decreased the first-year AFDC payments for those in the program group by an average of almost 7 percent and decreased the percentage of program group members receiving AFDC at the end of the follow-up period by just over 6 percent.**

During the year after random assignment, program group members received an average of \$2,174 in AFDC payments, which is \$157 (6.7 percent) less than the control group average of \$2,331 (see Table 2). During the last quarter of the follow-up period (quarter 5), 64 percent of the program group members received AFDC payments, which is 4 percentage points (6 percent) lower than the rate for the control group. These results were also statistically significant (see Table 2).

### Did impacts persist after the first year of follow-up?

- **Project Independence produced impacts on earnings and AFDC payments through 18 months of follow-up for the portion of the research sample that entered the study early on.**

For program group members who entered the study early on (and for whom, consequently, follow-up data longer than one year are available), Project Independence increased average 18-month earnings by \$392 (an 11 percent increase over the control group average 18-month earnings of \$3,604). This is substantially higher than the earnings impact for this early group in the first year alone (\$234). Project Independence also reduced average 18-month AFDC payments by \$193 (a 6 percent decrease from the

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<sup>1</sup>When these earnings are averaged over those program group members who were actually employed (including those who worked only part-time or for part of the year), they are considerably higher: \$4,593 per worker.

TABLE 2

FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS ON EMPLOYMENT, EARNINGS, AFDC RECEIPT, AND AFDC PAYMENTS  
FOR THE FULL SAMPLE

Outcome and Follow-up Period	Program Group	Control Group	Difference	Percentage Change
Ever employed (%)				
Quarter 2	36.5	33.8	2.7 ***	8.0%
Quarter 3	37.2	34.7	2.5 ***	7.2%
Quarter 4	36.6	34.9	1.7 **	4.8%
Quarter 5	36.5	34.3	2.2 ***	6.4%
Total (quarters 2-5)	55.3	52.5	2.8 ***	5.3%
Average total earnings (\$)				
Quarter 2	507	484	23	4.8%
Quarter 3	642	579	63 ***	10.9%
Quarter 4	678	648	30	4.7%
Quarter 5	713	673	40 *	5.9%
Total (quarters 2-5)	2,540	2,383	157 **	6.6%
Ever received any AFDC payments (%)				
Quarter 2	79.6	81.7	-2.1 ***	-2.6%
Quarter 3	72.2	76.3	-4.1 ***	-5.4%
Quarter 4	66.7	71.6	-4.9 ***	-6.8%
Quarter 5	64.3	68.6	-4.3 ***	-6.3%
Total (quarters 2-5)	85.1	86.7	-1.6 ***	-1.8%
Average total AFDC payments received (\$)				
Quarter 2	619	648	-29 ***	-4.4%
Quarter 3	535	580	-44 ***	-7.7%
Quarter 4	513	560	-47 ***	-8.4%
Quarter 5	507	543	-37 ***	-6.7%
Total (quarters 2-5)	2,174	2,331	-157 ***	-6.7%
Sample size (total = 18,233)	13,509	4,724		

NOTES: Dollar averages include zero values for sample members not employed and for sample members not receiving welfare. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics of sample members. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

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control group's average 18-month AFDC payments of \$3,235). This is also higher than the first-year AFDC payments impact (\$136) for this group.

**What were Project Independence's first-year effects for parents of preschoolage children and for those with schoolage children?**

- **Project Independence produced AFDC savings for single parents with preschoolage children as well as for those with no preschoolage children. However, the increases in first-year earnings were concentrated among those with no preschoolage children.**

These findings on program impacts for parents of preschoolage children are the first available for a mandatory JOBS program. Table 3 shows that Project Independence produced similar and statistically significant reductions in first-year AFDC payments for program group members with children between the ages of three and five (\$134) and for those whose youngest child was age six or older at the time of random assignment (\$175). The impacts on average first-year earnings were only \$74 (not statistically significant) for those with preschoolage children compared to \$280 (statistically significant) for those with older children. Overall, however, the differences in earnings and AFDC payments impacts between the two groups were not statistically significant. This means that, although there were differences, they were not large enough to be interpreted as a reliable estimate of the program's relative effectiveness for these two groups.

**What were Project Independence's first-year effects for those the program defined as job-ready and for those it defined as not job-ready?**

- **Project Independence's first-year impacts on earnings and AFDC payments were concentrated among those defined as job-ready.**

Table 3 shows that Project Independence produced first-year earnings gains (\$207) and AFDC payments reductions (\$176) for those defined as job-ready under the criteria used by the program when the research sample was identified: possession of a high school diploma or GED and employment in at least 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. There were no statistically significant first-year impacts on earnings or AFDC payments for those defined as not job-ready. However, the differences in first-year impacts on earnings and AFDC payments between the two groups were not statistically significant. This means that differences in first-year impacts were not large enough to be interpreted as a reliable estimate of the program's relative effectiveness for these two subgroups. In addition, although not shown in Table 3, the program did not produce first-year impacts for those who were defined as job-



**TABLE 3**  
**FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS ON EARNINGS AND AFDC PAYMENTS**  
**FOR SELECTED SUBGROUPS BASED ON CHARACTERISTICS AT THE TIME OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT**

Subgroup and Follow-up Period	Average Earnings			Average AFDC Payments Received				
	Program Group (\$)	Control Group (\$)	Difference (\$)	Percentage Change	Program Group (\$)	Control Group (\$)	Difference (\$)	Percentage Change
<b>Youngest child, 3 to 5 years old</b>								
Quarter 5	644	619	25	4.0%	563	588	-25 **	-4.3%
Total (quarters 2-5)	2,266	2,192	74	3.4%	2,379	2,513	-134 ***	-5.3%
<b>Youngest child, age 6 or older</b>								
Quarter 5	772	699	73 **	10.4%	463	511	-48 ***	-9.4%
Total (quarters 2-5)	2,777	2,497	280 ***	11.2%	2,034	2,209	-175 ***	-7.9%
<b>Job-ready (a)</b>								
Quarter 5	775	719	56 **	7.8%	492	538	-46 ***	-8.6%
Total (quarters 2-5)	2,762	2,555	207 ***	8.1%	2,119	2,295	-176 ***	-7.7%
<b>Not job-ready (a)</b>								
Quarter 5	282	288	-6	-2.1%	566	586	-20	-3.4%
Total (quarters 2-5)	1,027	1,015	12	1.2%	2,446	2,552	-106	-4.2%
<b>First-time applicant for AFDC</b>								
Quarter 5	845	842	3	0.4%	412	452	-40 ***	-8.8%
Total (quarters 2-5)	2,957	2,898	59	2.0%	1,818	1,974	-156 ***	-7.9%
<b>Received AFDC less than 2 years (b)</b>								
Quarter 5	676	642	34	5.3%	528	572	-44 ***	-7.7%
Total (quarters 2-5)	2,505	2,355	150	6.4%	2,240	2,449	-209 ***	-8.5%
<b>Received AFDC 2 years or more (b)</b>								
Quarter 5	553	431	122 ***	28.3%	620	669	-49 ***	-7.3%
Total (quarters 2-5)	1,966	1,548	418 ***	27.0%	2,618	2,795	-177 ***	-6.3%

NOTES: Dollar averages include zero values for sample members not employed and for sample members not receiving welfare. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics of sample members. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

(a) Sample members are defined as "job-ready" if they had completed at least 10th grade or were employed for at least 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. Sample members are defined as "not job-ready" if they had not completed 10th grade and were employed for less than 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. These definitions are based on the criteria used by Project Independence during the random assignment period.

(b) This subgroup includes both applicants and recipients, and refers to the total number of months accumulated from one or more spells on an individual's own or spouse's AFDC case. It does not include AFDC receipt under a parent's name.



ready under the program's original job-readiness criteria, but who did not have a high school diploma or GED (and thus would be considered not job-ready under the revised criteria).

Caution should be used in drawing policy implications and operational lessons from the first-year results for the not job-ready group because many of these individuals participated in education or training activities, the effects of which may not be realized until after the first year of follow-up. The job-ready group with no high school diploma or GED may also experience impacts later.

#### **What were Project Independence's first-year effects on groups with different histories of AFDC receipt?**

- **Project Independence produced relatively large increases in first-year earnings, and a reduction in first-year AFDC payments, for those who had previously received AFDC for two years or more. The program produced reductions in first-year AFDC payments for first-time applicants and for applicants and recipients who had previously received AFDC for less than two years, but it did not produce first-year earnings impacts for these two groups.**

Table 3 shows that Project Independence produced statistically significant reductions in first-year AFDC payments for all three groups defined by their previous receipt of AFDC: first-time AFDC applicants (\$156), applicants and recipients who had received AFDC for a total of less than two years (\$209), and applicants and recipients who had received AFDC for a total of two years or more (\$177). However, the program produced statistically significant impacts on average first-year earnings (\$418, which represents a 27 percent increase over the control group average) only for those who had previously received AFDC for two years or more. The differences in first-year earnings impacts among the three groups were statistically significant, indicating that the program was substantially more effective in increasing earnings for those who received AFDC for two years or more than it was for first-time applicants or those with less than two years of prior receipt.

#### **Were the first-year impacts concentrated in particular counties?**

- **Earnings gains and welfare savings were widespread across the research counties, although the estimated impacts varied in magnitude.**

Impacts on first-year earnings were positive for all the counties except Duval, although they were statistically significant only for Orange and Broward. Although not statistically significant, the first-year impacts on earnings for Lee and Bay (the counties with the smallest research samples) were fairly large (and larger than those for Broward).

Project Independence produced reductions in first-year AFDC payments for all nine research counties, and these were statistically significant for Broward, Dade, Duval, Hillsborough, Lee, and Orange. Broward, Lee, and Orange achieved the largest AFDC reductions. Earnings gains exceeded AFDC payments reductions in all counties except Duval and Hillsborough.

While the estimated impacts did appear to vary across the counties, the overall differences in first-year impacts across counties were not statistically significant and were not large enough to be interpreted as reflecting the relative effectiveness of the programs. In fact, relative consistency in effects across the counties shows that the overall impacts were not being driven by the performance of any single county or even by a small group of counties. This may be a reflection, in part, of the centralized administration of the program, which tended to create greater consistency in the program philosophy and operating procedures than might be found in a county-administered system. However, since the counties and programs did differ along several dimensions (e.g., labor market conditions, service emphasis, and relationships with local service providers and employers), larger differences in effects may emerge as longer-term follow-up data become available.

#### **How did the first-year impacts of Project Independence compare to those of other JOBS programs?**

- **Project Independence's impact on first-year earnings for those whose youngest child was age six or older was similar in magnitude to the first-year earnings impact produced by California's JOBS program for the same group, while its impact on first-year AFDC payments was smaller.**

To provide a context for gauging the magnitude of Project Independence's first-year impacts, it is useful to compare them with those generated by other JOBS programs. Another important random assignment evaluation of a JOBS program for which there are comparable data is the study of California's Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) Program.<sup>2</sup> However, several important differences in the research designs used, research samples, program models, and environments of the two states suggest caution. First, as noted earlier, random assignment for the Project Independence evaluation took place at the point of AFDC application or assessment of continuing AFDC eligibility, whereas in the GAIN evaluation, random assignment took place at orientation. Second, the Project Independence research sample includes a much higher proportion of AFDC applicants and reapplicants than does the GAIN

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<sup>2</sup>For the most recent findings from the evaluation of GAIN, see Daniel Friedlander, James Riccio, and Stephen Freedman, *GAIN: Two-Year Impacts in Six Counties* (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1993). The comparison presented here focuses only on the group the two studies have in common at this point: single parents whose youngest child was six years old or older at the time they entered the study.

research sample, suggesting that the Project Independence sample may be somewhat more "advantaged," on average, than the GAIN sample. Third, during the study period, Project Independence emphasized services intended to move program registrants rapidly into employment. GAIN, in contrast, mandated basic education for a large share of its registrants. Finally, Florida and California differ in their AFDC grant levels and labor market characteristics, which means that the Project Independence and GAIN participants faced very different incentives and opportunities to supplement or replace welfare with earnings.

Table 4 shows that Project Independence and GAIN produced quite similar increases in first-year earnings for single-parent AFDC applicants and recipients whose youngest child was age six or older: \$280 for Project Independence compared to \$266 for GAIN.<sup>3</sup> The percentage increase for Project Independence (11.2 percent) was somewhat smaller than GAIN's (16.2 percent), in part because the Project Independence control group had substantially higher first-year earnings (\$2,497) than did the GAIN control group (\$1,642).

Project Independence's impact on reducing first-year AFDC payments (\$175) was smaller than GAIN's (\$283), but the percentage decrease for Project Independence (7.9 percent) was larger than GAIN's (4.5 percent). This results, in part, from the fact that the Florida AFDC grant levels – and, thus, the average first-year AFDC payments for the Project Independence control group (\$2,209) – were substantially smaller than the California AFDC grant levels – and, thus, the average first-year AFDC payments for the GAIN control group (\$6,247).

Because of the differences in research designs and samples, program models, and environments noted above, Table 4 should not be used to judge the relative effectiveness of the two states' programs. It does, however, provide a general indication that two large state JOBS programs both produced positive first-year results. Moreover, in California, impacts increased after the first year, and there is some evidence that the first-year gains for Project Independence may persist into the future as well.

\* \* \*

In summary, Project Independence successfully implemented its participation mandate and produced earnings gains and AFDC savings over the first year of follow-up. However, it is too soon to say

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<sup>3</sup>There was considerable variation among the six counties participating in the evaluation of GAIN, with Riverside having consistently large impacts and Tulare having virtually no statistically significant impacts (see Friedlander, Riccio, and Freedman, 1993).

**TABLE 4**  
**A COMPARISON OF FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS**  
**FOR PROJECT INDEPENDENCE AND CALIFORNIA'S GAIN PROGRAM,**  
**FOR SINGLE PARENTS WHOSE YOUNGEST CHILD WAS AGE SIX OR OLDER**

Program and Outcome	Program Group (\$)	Control Group (\$)	Difference (\$)	Percentage Change
<b><u>Project Independence</u></b>				
Average first-year earnings	2,777	2,497	280 ***	11.2%
Average first-year AFDC payments received	2,034	2,209	-175 ***	-7.9%
<b><u>GAIN</u></b>				
Average first-year earnings	1,908	1,642	266 ***	16.2%
Average first-year AFDC payments received	5,964	6,247	-283 ***	-4.5%

NOTES: In Project Independence, random assignment occurred at the Assistance Payments Unit, prior to orientation. The impact estimates for Project Independence reflect the average of the impacts for the nine research counties, which were weighted by the size of their research sample.

In GAIN, random assignment occurred at orientation. The impact estimates for GAIN reflect the average of the impacts for the six research counties, which were weighted equally.

Dollar averages include zero values for sample members not employed and for sample members not receiving welfare. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics of sample members. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

whether the relatively modest first-year results will translate into larger impacts in the future. Longer-term follow-up will be essential to assess this and to determine whether future effects will extend to the groups that did not experience effects from the program in the first year. Thus, policymakers and administrators should be cautious in drawing conclusions from this report about the relative effectiveness of Project Independence for different groups or about the full payoff of the program.

The final report from this evaluation will present Project Independence's impacts over a longer follow-up period and will reexamine the relative effectiveness of the program for the key groups discussed in the present report. It will also draw upon a survey of research sample members to examine the program's effects on other outcomes (such as educational attainment and the quality of jobs people obtain), estimate its benefits and costs, and explore the role of other factors that may contribute to Project Independence's effectiveness in moving AFDC recipients into jobs and toward self-sufficiency.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Project Independence, Florida's statewide welfare-to-work program, aims to increase the employment and foster the self-sufficiency of applicants for and recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the largest federal/state cash welfare program. It was created by the Florida Employment Opportunity Act of 1987, which mandates that all single-parent AFDC applicants and recipients whose youngest child is at least three years old participate in Project Independence unless they meet specified exemption criteria.<sup>1</sup> Failure to comply with this participation mandate without an acceptable reason may result in an AFDC grant reduction. Florida was among a handful of states that anticipated the federal Family Support Act of 1988 (FSA) and its centerpiece, the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) Program, by linking cash assistance for poor families to opportunities and incentives for parents to join the labor force, and thereby reduce long-term receipt of AFDC.<sup>2</sup> As a result, Project Independence has operated as Florida's JOBS program since 1989 with relatively minor modifications to its targeting practices and service offerings.

Project Independence prescribes one of two service sequences for participants, based on an assessment of their educational attainment levels and employment history. One sequence begins with individual job search in an effort to encourage capable participants to secure employment as quickly as possible. The other sequence begins with a more extensive assessment of participants' educational needs and often results in referral to education or training activities. During the period when the individuals studied for this report entered the program (July 1990 through August 1991), Project Independence referred to the first sequence a large share of those for whom the program was mandatory, reserving education services for those with very limited work experience and formal schooling and for those in the first sequence who were unable to find a job.<sup>3</sup> The Project Independence approach studied in this report,

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<sup>1</sup>Exempt individuals include those who are age 60 or older, working 30 or more hours per week at the minimum wage, pregnant and in their second or third trimester of pregnancy, permanently ill or incapacitated, or required in the home to care for a physically or mentally impaired household member. Project Independence also serves AFDC applicants and recipients who are exempt from the program but who wish to volunteer, as well as unemployed parents in two-parent households who are required to participate. As discussed in Chapter 2, this report focuses exclusively on single-parent heads of households who were required to participate during the period under study; they constituted a majority of the population the program served.

<sup>2</sup>Under the FSA, all states are required to operate a JOBS program. JOBS is the principal source of federal funding for state welfare-to-work programs.

<sup>3</sup>Beginning late in 1991, after the research sample was identified, Project Independence modified the criteria by which participants were targeted for services, making education and training accessible to more of the mandatory (continued...)



which emphasized job search, contrasts with California's Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) Program, for example, which also uses a two-sequence model, but emphasizes basic education for a majority of those mandated to participate in GAIN.

The Florida Employment Opportunity Act of 1987 required the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS) – the state agency responsible for administering Project Independence – to conduct an evaluation of the program. This legislation called for the use of a random assignment research design to obtain reliable measures of the effects of the program on employment, earnings, and AFDC payments. (Random assignment studies are widely viewed as providing the most reliable estimates of a program's effects.)

This is the first of two reports by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), which is evaluating Project Independence under contract to HRS and with support from the Ford Foundation and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in fulfillment of this requirement. The report focuses on analyzing program service delivery strategies, participation patterns, and effects on employment, earnings, and AFDC receipt during the first year following each person in the study's application (or reapplication) for AFDC eligibility or, in the case of current recipients, redetermination for continuing AFDC eligibility. The second report, scheduled for 1994, will present results that reflect a longer follow-up period and will compare the costs of operating Project Independence with its benefits from the perspectives of participants, government budgets, and society as a whole.

The Project Independence evaluation is being conducted in nine of Florida's 67 counties – Bay, Broward, Dade, Duval, Hillsborough, Lee, Orange, Pinellas, and Volusia – which were chosen randomly from the state's 25 largest counties in terms of AFDC caseloads and were required by HRS to participate.<sup>4</sup> The nine counties included, at the time they were selected, 58 percent of Florida's AFDC caseload and 55 percent of the state's total population. The random selection of counties enhances the study's capacity to generalize results to the state as a whole – specifically, to the portion of the entire single-parent AFDC caseload that became mandatory for Project Independence during the period under study. At the same time, the diversity of the selected counties – reflecting much of the state's diversity in population characteristics, labor market and economic conditions, and local operation of the program

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<sup>3</sup>(...continued)

caseload. Thus, there are some individuals in the research sample who were determined to be appropriate for job search at the time they entered the program but who, if they were to enter the program now, would be eligible for education and training services as their first activity. This report provides information about whether the original program model was effective for this group of individuals, thus providing some insight into the efficacy of the change in the service targeting criteria.

<sup>4</sup>Eleven of Florida's 67 counties do not operate Project Independence programs.



— allows the report to shed light on the relative effectiveness of Project Independence under a variety of local circumstances.

The research sample (i.e., the people studied) includes more than 18,000 AFDC applicants and recipients for whom Project Independence was mandatory. They became part of the sample at the time of their AFDC application or redetermination appointment, at which time they first learned, in a general way, about the requirements and opportunities associated with receiving AFDC and participating in Project Independence. In other words, people became part of the research sample *before* they attended Project Independence orientation — their first point of actual contact with the program. For this reason, the evaluation can capture all the effects of Project Independence, including those derived from clients' efforts to seek employment or discontinue AFDC receipt in order to avoid the participation obligation. However, since some individuals in the research sample did not make contact with the program (but are still counted as part of the sample), overall rates of participation in Project Independence activities and program impacts may appear somewhat lower than those found in other evaluations.<sup>5</sup> Thus, caution is necessary when comparing the findings from the Project Independence evaluation with those from evaluations using a different design.

In a first-year report such as this, the results must be viewed as preliminary, and care should be taken in drawing policy or program lessons. More than one-third of the Project Independence registrants were in the program at the end of the 12-month follow-up period covered in this report, and approximately one-third of those registrants were participating in a Project Independence activity at the end of the follow-up period. Thus, program-produced increases in employment and decreases in AFDC receipt, if there are any, may not be fully captured within such a short time frame. Also, the first-year results may not capture longer-term increases in employment stability and earnings, which may accrue from short-term services such as individual job search or job clubs if these services enable participants to move from initially low-paying jobs to higher-paying ones. Previous evaluations of welfare-to-work programs indicate that program effects increase in the second year of follow-up. These limitations are relevant to an assessment of the overall results and to an assessment of the program's relative effectiveness for different subgroups, some of which were more likely to participate in longer-term services.

The remainder of this chapter provides a context for interpreting the first-year findings by

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<sup>5</sup>Other studies, including the evaluation of GAIN, drew the research sample after those individuals had made contact with the program. For information on evaluations of pre-JOBS programs, see Gueron and Pauly, 1991; for information on the GAIN evaluation, see Riccio and Friedlander, 1992, and Friedlander, Riccio, and Freedman, 1993.

describing in greater detail the Project Independence program model and the research design used in the evaluation and then highlighting the significance of the evaluation.

## I. The Project Independence Program Model

Figure 1.1 illustrates the basic flow through the Project Independence program model of AFDC applicants and recipients for whom Project Independence was mandatory. The Project Independence treatment begins at the HRS Public Assistance Unit (also known in other states as the Income Maintenance office) when an AFDC applicant or recipient is determined to be mandatory for Project Independence participation. At that time, all such applicants and recipients are informed by the Public Assistance Specialist (PAS) that they are required to meet Project Independence participation requirements and are scheduled to attend a Project Independence orientation appointment within the next 30 days. (In some cases, the referral to orientation takes place before AFDC eligibility has been determined.) All such people are required to attend orientation. If a person who is mandated to participate fails to attend orientation and fails to provide an acceptable reason, a Project Independence case manager can initiate procedures that may result in a reduction of her<sup>6</sup> AFDC grant.<sup>7</sup>

During orientation, Project Independence staff provide a more detailed explanation of the participation requirements and describe the opportunities Project Independence offers to help registrants get jobs and leave AFDC. It is also during orientation that participants are referred to one of two service tracks based on an initial assessment of their educational attainment levels and recent work experience. Those assessed to be "job-ready" are first referred to a two-week up-front (individual) job search; if they are unable to secure employment, they are then referred to job-readiness skills training classes (job club). During the period when individuals for the research sample were identified (July 1990 through August 1991), Project Independence established the initial assessment criteria whereby it categorized most of its caseload as "job-ready" and designated them for this service sequence.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, the criteria used

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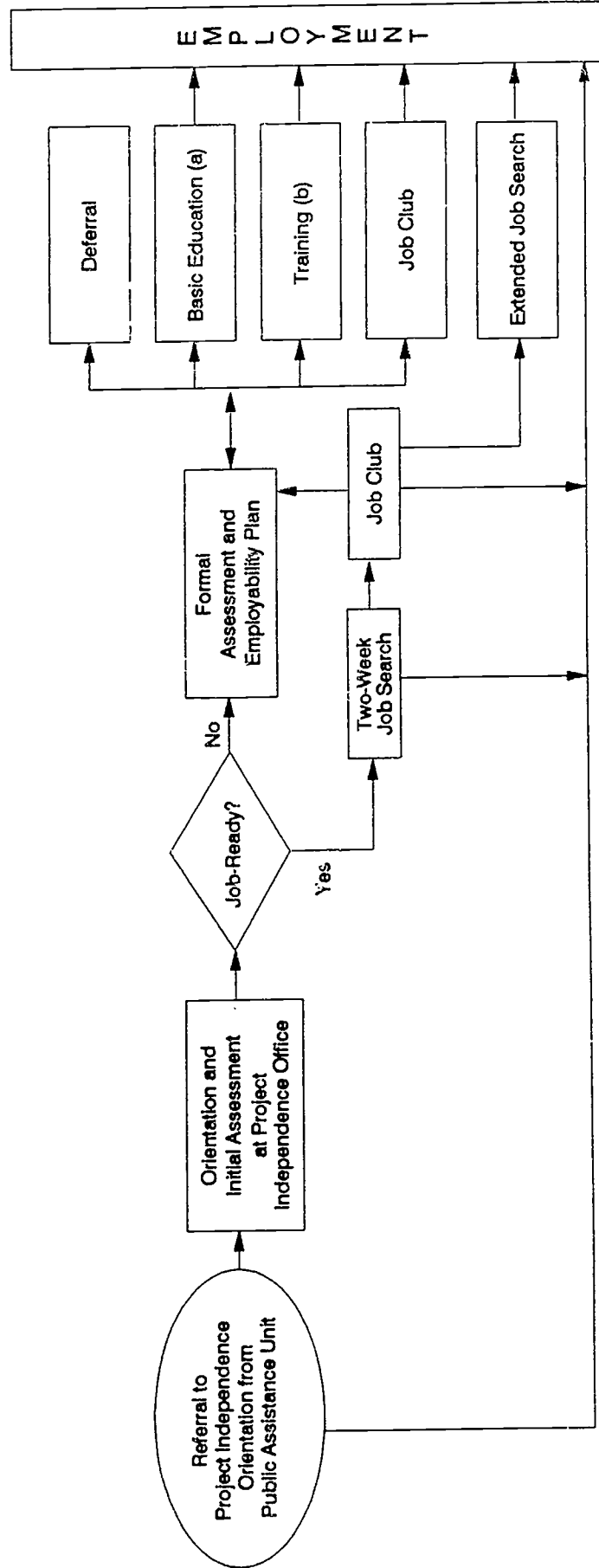
<sup>6</sup>Since more than 95 percent of the single parents in Florida who receive AFDC are women, feminine pronouns are used throughout this report.

<sup>7</sup>Formal enforcement procedures leading to a grant reduction for failure to comply with Project Independence rules are called "sanctioning procedures," and sanctioning procedures can be initiated at any point in the program if an individual fails to attend a required appointment or activity.

<sup>8</sup>During the period when research sample members were identified, individuals were determined to be "job-ready" if they had completed at least the tenth grade or had worked in at least 12 of the previous 36 months, and to be "not job-ready" if they met neither of these criteria. Although the basic program flow model has remained unchanged since Project Independence was first implemented, HRS has modified the criteria by which individual participants were assessed for initial services. Beginning in October 1991, the job-readiness criteria became having a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate or working in at least 12 of the

(continued...)

FIGURE 1.1  
SIMPLIFIED DEPICTION OF THE PROJECT INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM MODEL



- 5 -

SOURCE: Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services Project Independence Manual.

NOTES: (a) Basic education activities include high school, GED preparation, adult basic education, and English as a second language.

(b) Training includes classroom-based vocational or occupational skills training, on-the-job training, customized training,

employment preparation, community college, and work experience activities.

in California's GAIN program result in a majority of its caseload's being categorized as "not job-ready" (in GAIN's parlance, as "in need of basic education") and a heavy emphasis on basic education.

Figure 1.1 shows that Project Independence participants assessed as not job-ready (and job-ready participants who do not secure employment through up-front job search or job club) are referred to a more formal assessment of their educational needs and work experiences. During this formal assessment, the participant and the case manager develop an Employability Plan, based on a mutually agreed-upon set of employment goals. These plans usually prescribe education or training assignments, but often include job search activities instead of or in addition to education or training. Participants who remain unemployed after completing their education or training assignments – and, usually, an extended individual job search – are, in most instances, reassigned to formal assessment to determine additional activities. Some registrants are already in education or training activities at the time they attend orientation. These individuals are usually referred for formal assessment and may be allowed to continue in their present activity if the case manager determines that it is appropriate to the participant's employment goal and is consistent with the Employability Plan.

Project Independence provides child care, transportation, tools, and uniforms participants may need to engage in program activities or to secure employment. Beginning in January 1991, however, budget constraints forced HRS to restrict the availability of child care for Project Independence participants. This is significant because mandatory registrants with children ages three to five can be excused from the participation requirements if needed child care services cannot be provided and alternative child care arrangements cannot be made. Thus, the evaluation examines differences in program participation and effects for sample members identified while child care resources were widely available and those identified after the restrictions began to go into effect.

Until July 1992, HRS had responsibility for policy development, planning, administration, staffing, and operational oversight for Project Independence at the state and district levels.<sup>9</sup> Project Independence staff provided case management, conducted job clubs and other job search activities, and developed linkages with other state agencies, local education authorities, community-based organizations, Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs, and local employers, which provide most of Project Independence's employment, education, and training activities.

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<sup>8</sup>(...continued)

previous 24 months. In general, this modification enables a higher percentage of the mandatory caseload to choose education or training activities as their initial service.

<sup>9</sup>In July 1992, HRS subcontracted responsibility for staffing and operating Project Independence at the district level to the Department of Labor and Employment Security (LES). However, HRS has retained overall administrative responsibility for the program and serves as its primary policymaking agency.

## II. The Project Independence Evaluation Design

The research design for the Project Independence evaluation was conceived with four broad objectives: (1) to produce findings that can be generalized to the state's full JOBS-mandatory AFDC caseload of single parents; (2) to reliably measure Project Independence's effects on employment, earnings, and AFDC receipt compared to what would have been the case if individuals had not had access to the program; (3) to capture program effects that accrued from any knowledge of or involvement with Project Independence beginning with an individual's AFDC application or redetermination; and (4) to measure the program's effects for key subgroups of JOBS-mandatory AFDC applicants and recipients — notably, mothers of preschoolage children. The research design features that address each of these objectives are discussed briefly below.

First, as noted above, the research design called for nine counties to be selected randomly from the 25 counties with the largest AFDC caseloads; the selected counties were to be required by the state to participate in the study.<sup>10</sup> The random selection of counties enables the evaluation to produce findings on program participation patterns and effects that can be generalized to single-parent AFDC applicants and recipients who became mandatory for Project Independence during the period under study.<sup>11</sup> The nine counties that were selected are listed here (along with the largest city in each) and are also shown in Figure 1.2:

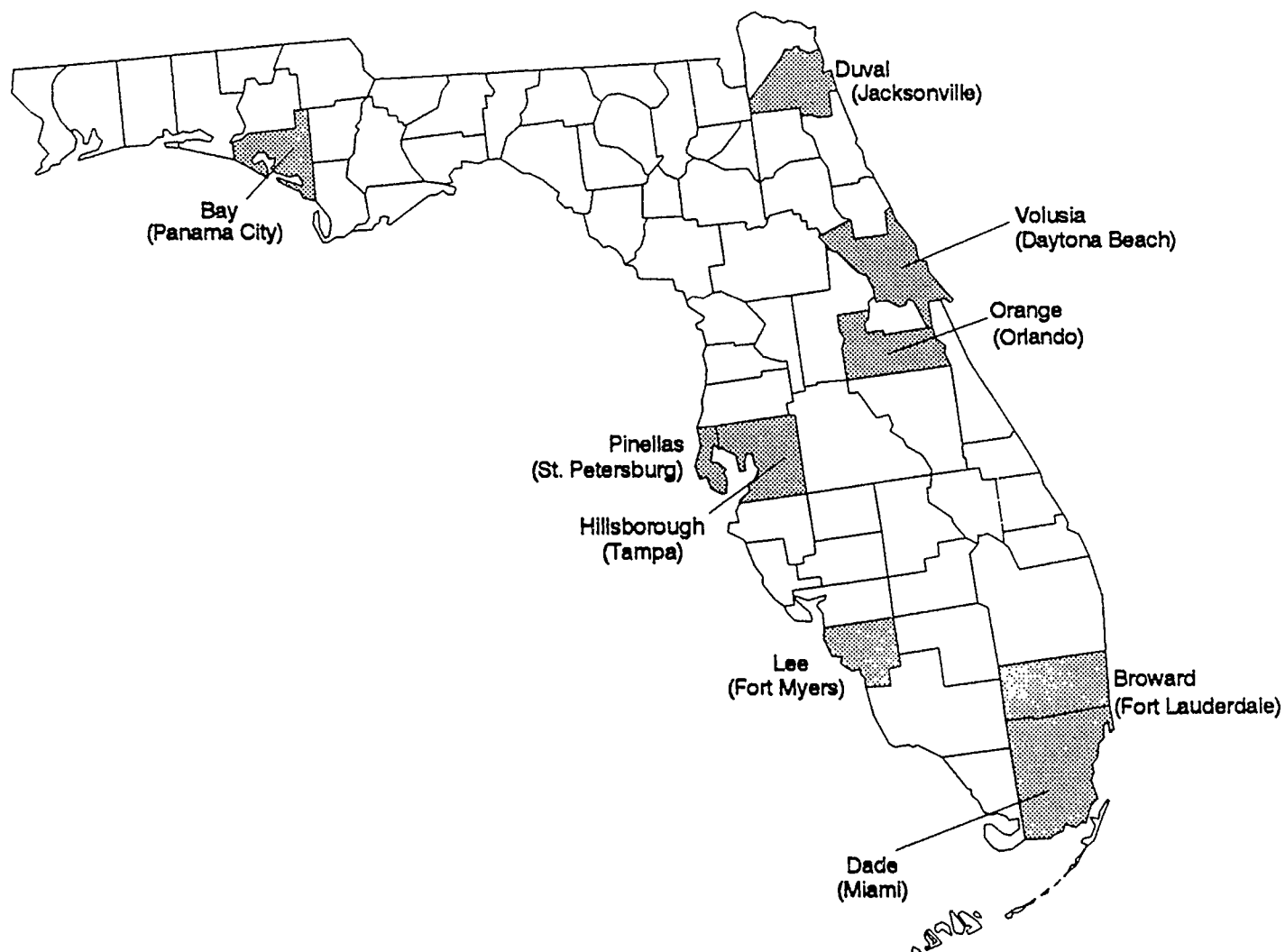
Bay (Panama City)  
Broward (Fort Lauderdale)  
Dade (Miami)  
Duval (Jacksonville)  
Hillsborough (Tampa)  
Lee (Fort Myers)  
Orange (Orlando)  
Pinellas (St. Petersburg)  
Volusia (Daytona Beach)

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<sup>10</sup>The 25 counties from which the nine research counties were selected represented approximately 90 percent of the state's AFDC caseload. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, the process that was used to randomly select counties was designed to ensure a large enough research sample for the analysis and to make it highly likely that several of the large urban counties, with large AFDC caseloads, would be selected along with some counties with smaller caseloads.

<sup>11</sup>In most multi-site evaluations of social programs, the counties, sites, or programs volunteer to be included and might also be selected using other criteria, e.g., the quality of their services or the character of their local conditions.

**FIGURE 1.2**  
**THE NINE RESEARCH COUNTIES IN**  
**THE PROJECT INDEPENDENCE EVALUATION**  
**(WITH EACH COUNTY'S LARGEST CITY SHOWN IN PARENTHESES)**



Together these counties included 58 percent of the state's AFDC caseload as of July 1990. They also include Florida's eight largest cities as well as suburban and rural areas. The specific procedures for selecting counties and the characteristics of the counties are discussed in Chapter 2.

Second, the evaluation used the random assignment of eligible individuals to create program and control groups of AFDC applicants and recipients for whom Project Independence was mandatory. There is now extensive evidence indicating that this is the most reliable approach to assessing the effects of programs such as Project Independence.<sup>12</sup> Research on welfare dynamics has shown that there is normally a substantial amount of turnover within the caseload, with many welfare recipients leaving welfare without any program assistance.<sup>13</sup> Thus, without a random assignment research design, it is especially difficult to determine the extent to which a program increases (or decreases) the rate at which welfare recipients take jobs and leave the rolls *above and beyond* what they would have done on their own.

Use of a randomly generated control group provides the best information on what would have happened to eligible clients in the absence of the program. Since the program and control groups were created randomly, the two groups do not differ systematically on both measurable and unmeasurable characteristics. Thus, any subsequent differences found between the two groups can be attributed to the Project Independence treatment to which program group members were exposed and control group members not exposed. The program effects, or *impacts*, presented in this report are the *differences*, over the post-random assignment period, between program and control group members' employment, earnings, and AFDC receipt.

Third, the random assignment procedures (described in detail in Chapter 2) were implemented at the HRS Public Assistance Units after AFDC applicants and recipients had been determined to be mandatory for Project Independence but before they were actually referred to a formal program orientation. This allows the evaluation to capture all aspects of the Project Independence treatment beginning with an individual's first contact with AFDC as an applicant or a recipient seeking

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<sup>12</sup>For example, a panel convened by the National Academy of Sciences (see Betsey, Hollister, and Papageorgiou, 1985) and an advisory panel to the U.S. Department of Labor (see Job Training Longitudinal Survey Research Advisory Panel, 1985) highlighted the problematic results of numerous evaluations of employment and training programs funded under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) that used alternative — i.e., non-random assignment — approaches and urged greater use of classical, random assignment field studies. See also Dickenson, Johnson, and West, 1987; LaLonde, 1986; LaLonde and Maynard, 1987; and Fraker and Maynard, 1987. For an alternative view of random assignment field studies relative to non-random assignment methods of program evaluation, see Heckman, Hotz, and Dabos, 1987.

<sup>13</sup>See Bane and Ellwood, 1983.



redetermination. During the period from July 1990 through August 1991,<sup>14</sup> AFDC applicants and recipients who were mandatory for Project Independence participation in the nine research counties were randomly assigned to one of two groups:<sup>15</sup>

- A **program group**, who had access to Project Independence's services and was subject to its participation requirements and to possible AFDC grant reductions because of noncompliance with program rules.
- A **control group**, who, for a period of two years following random assignment, could not participate in Project Independence (or, consequently, be subject to possible AFDC grant reductions for noncompliance), nor receive its case management or employment and training services.<sup>16</sup>

The Project Independence random assignment design will capture program effects missed in other studies of welfare-to-work programs — in which random assignment was conducted after program participants attended orientation. However, this also means that the Project Independence research sample includes in the program group individuals who did not attend orientation and may not have been affected by the program directly. Therefore, the rates of participation in post-orientation activities and the estimated average effects of the program may be lower than they would have been if random assignment had taken place after individuals attended orientation.

Fourth, the research sample for the Project Independence evaluation consists of 18,237 AFDC applicants and recipients for whom Project Independence was mandatory. Of these, 4,724 (26 percent) were randomly assigned to the control group and 13,513 (74 percent) were randomly assigned to the program group. This sample is large enough to permit the analysis to reliably detect overall program effects on employment, earnings, and AFDC receipt (assuming that these effects will be at least as large as those typically found in previous evaluations of welfare-to-work programs). The research was also designed to ensure that one particular subgroup would be represented in large enough numbers to permit

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<sup>14</sup>The specific random assignment period varied by county and is discussed in Chapter 2.

<sup>15</sup>Exempt applicants and recipients, as well as individuals who were participating (or had recently participated) in Project Independence, were excluded from the random assignment process. In 1990, Project Independence began its program for unemployed parents in two-parent households that were receiving AFDC, and these individuals were also excluded from random assignment.

<sup>16</sup>Being a member of the evaluation's control group did not affect a person's eligibility for entitlements such as AFDC, Medicaid, and Food Stamps. In addition, the status of child care assistance as an "entitlement" for welfare recipients engaged in education and training services has been vigorously debated in Florida and other states. For purposes of the Project Independence evaluation, it was felt that if members of the control group decided to pursue employment and training services on their own, they were eligible to receive equivalent HRS-funded child care, as well as tuition assistance at community colleges, under the same guidelines and priorities as Project Independence participants. Control group members were also given a list of other, non-Project Independence employment and training services in the community.



the program's effects on them to be estimated reliably. This subgroup was mothers of children between the ages of three and five. Because most prior studies of welfare-to-work programs have focused on mothers of schoolage children, there is very little evidence on the size of the effects that can be expected for mothers of younger children. However, the research sample of 7,211 individuals in this subgroup (40 percent of the full sample) should be adequate to reliably detect program effects (assuming those effects are similar in magnitude to those found for AFDC applicants and recipients with schoolage children in previous evaluations).

It should also be noted that the Project Independence research sample has a substantially lower proportion of people who were already receiving AFDC at the time of random assignment (and, consequently, a substantially higher proportion of applicants) than was the case in other evaluations of welfare-to-work programs. This is because random assignment for this evaluation was initiated approximately three years after Project Independence began operating in the research counties. As a result, a large proportion of the ongoing AFDC recipients who appeared for their AFDC redetermination appointments during the random assignment period were already registered for Project Independence. In order to avoid having to discontinue Project Independence services for those who might have been randomly assigned to the control group, only ongoing recipients who were newly mandatory for Project Independence (e.g., because their youngest child had turned three) and who were not currently registered for the program were randomly assigned. This report's overall findings on program participation and program effects are influenced most heavily by the behavior of applicants and reapplicants, who make up 88 percent of the research sample. Thus, the research sample reflects the flow of newly mandatory individuals into a mature, ongoing welfare-to-work program. However, caution should be exercised in comparing the results to those of other studies whose research samples include more of a mix of applicants and recipients.

### **III. The Significance of the Project Independence Evaluation**

The Project Independence evaluation adds to knowledge about JOBS beyond what has been learned from other studies of welfare-to-work programs, including the ongoing evaluation of California's GAIN program, another important random assignment evaluation of a JOBS program for which there are comparable data. (Both Florida and California were among several states that anticipated JOBS.) Because the Project Independence evaluation began three years after Project Independence was initiated and more than a year after it became Florida's JOBS program, its findings will reflect the results of a fully implemented JOBS program. Florida is also among the majority of states whose AFDC and JOBS

programs are state-administered. As noted earlier, the procedures for randomly selecting counties for the evaluation enhances the generalizability of the findings to the statewide program for newly mandatory applicants and recipients. Finally, the findings on program participation and program effects for single parents with preschoolage children will be among the first available for a JOBS program. (To date, the GAIN evaluation has focused on single parents with children age six or older and on unemployed heads of two-parent households.)

The Project Independence and GAIN evaluations complement each other in many ways, providing important lessons for other states and for federal policy related to JOBS. For example, as noted earlier, Project Independence's heavy emphasis on job search activities (at least during the period when the research sample first entered the program) contrasts with GAIN's emphasis on basic education for a large proportion of its program registrants. In 1991, Project Independence led the nation's JOBS programs with 50 percent of its participants in job search activities, whereas GAIN was one of four programs with more than 50 percent of its JOBS participants in basic education.<sup>17</sup> Results from the two evaluations will provide information about the consequences of choices that states have made about the mix and targeting of JOBS services. Florida and California also differ in their AFDC grant levels, with Florida ranking in the lower part of the range and California ranking near the top.<sup>18</sup> Results from the two evaluations will shed light on the different types of incentives JOBS participants faced in supplementing and replacing welfare with earnings.

#### **IV. An Overview of This Report**

The next chapter more fully describes the research design, samples, and data sources used in this report. It also presents the background characteristics of the full research sample and several of the key subgroups used in the analysis. Chapter 3 explores Project Independence's organizational capacity and services.

Chapter 4 traces the flow of program group members through the Project Independence program model. It focuses on a variety of participation measures including rates of attending orientation, rates of participation in employment and training activities, length of participation, and rates of referrals for sanctioning. It also discusses several key dimensions of program implementation and explores the potential relationship between these dimensions and the participation patterns. Chapter 5 examines the

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<sup>17</sup>See Greenberg, 1992.

<sup>18</sup>In January 1991, the basic AFDC grant in Florida for a family of three was \$294; 14 states had lower grant levels. In that same month, the basic AFDC grant for a family of three in California was \$607; only Alaska had a higher grant level.

participation patterns for key subgroups and for each of the nine research counties.

Chapter 6 analyzes the first-year effects of the Project Independence treatment on sample members' employment, earnings, and AFDC receipt. It focuses first on overall impacts for the full research sample and then on differences among selected subgroups and the research counties.

## CHAPTER 2

### RESEARCH DESIGN, SAMPLES, AND DATA SOURCES

This chapter begins by describing in further detail the research design used in the evaluation, focusing on the process by which the counties were randomly selected, the characteristics of the counties, and the procedures used for randomly assigning individuals to the program and control groups. It then discusses the background characteristics of the full research sample and selected subgroups. The chapter concludes by identifying the data sources used in the analysis as well as the subsamples for which these data were collected and the time periods to which the data apply.

#### **I. The Research Counties**

As noted in Chapter 1, the research design called for a group of counties to be chosen randomly for the evaluation. The specific procedures used were designed to accomplish two key objectives. First, the total AFDC caseload across the selected counties had to be large enough to yield a sufficient research sample for the analysis. As a result, counties with very small numbers of on-board cases that were mandatory for Project Independence – approximately 400 or fewer as of the beginning of 1990 – were excluded from the selection process because it would not have been practical to conduct and monitor random assignment in sites that would have added so few cases to the research sample. Twenty-five of Florida's 67 counties – representing 90 percent of the AFDC caseload in the state in 1990 – had caseloads larger than the cut-off number. Second, both large and small counties were to be included. To accomplish this objective, the probability of each of these 25 counties' being selected was made proportional to that county's share of the statewide AFDC caseload. This made it highly likely that several of the large urban counties would be selected, given their large numbers of AFDC cases. The 25 counties were also stratified into groups, based on caseload size, and the selection process was designed to ensure that at least one county in each group would be selected. This ensured that some counties with smaller caseloads would be included.

Demographic and economic characteristics of the nine selected counties, and the state as a whole, are summarized in Table 2.1. (Figure 1.2 shows the counties' locations.) As noted in Chapter 1, the counties encompassed 58 percent of the statewide AFDC caseload in July 1990. They include Florida's eight largest cities – Jacksonville (Duval), Miami (Dade), Tampa (Hillsborough), St. Petersburg (Pinellas), Hialeah (Dade), Orlando (Orange), Fort Lauderdale (Broward), and Hollywood (Broward) – as well as both suburban and rural areas. The proportion of the research sample represented by each

TABLE 2.1

**SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NINE COUNTIES  
IN THE PROJECT INDEPENDENCE EVALUATION**

Characteristic	Total for										
	Florida	9 Counties	Bay	Broward	Dade	Duval	Hillsborough	Lee Orange	Pinellas	Volusia	
<b><u>Research characteristics</u></b>											
Research sample size	n/a	18,237	459	2,240	6,021	2,017	2,415	687	1,749	1,739	910
Percent of the total 9-county research sample	n/a	100.0	2.5	12.3	33.0	11.1	13.2	3.8	9.6	9.5	5.0
<b><u>AFDC characteristics</u></b>											
Size of the AFDC caseload, July 1990	138,963	81,046	1,382	8,538	30,128	10,430	10,690	2,269	7,237	7,322	3,050
Percent of the total 9-county AFDC caseload, July 1990	n/a	100.0	1.7	10.5	37.2	12.9	13.2	2.8	8.9	9.0	3.8
AFDC caseload growth, July 1990-July 1991 (%)	24.0	19.9	16.6	42.9	22.6	17.3	24.6	30.0	28.9	17.1	25.3
<b><u>Population characteristics</u></b>											
Population, 1990	12,937,926	7,061,576	126,994	1,255,488	1,937,094	672,971	834,054	335,113	677,491	851,659	370,712
Percent of the 9-county population, 1990	n/a	100.0	1.8	17.8	27.4	9.5	11.8	4.7	9.6	12.1	5.2
Population growth, 1990-91 (%)	2.0	1.5	1.2	1.8	1.3	1.3	1.1	2.5	3.5	0.4	1.6
Percent of the population, 1990											
African-American	13.1	15.0	10.7	14.9	19.1	24.1	12.8	6.4	14.8	7.6	8.9
Hispanic	12.2	18.5	1.8	8.6	49.2	2.6	12.8	4.5	9.6	2.4	4.0
Population living in rural areas, 1990 (%)	15.2	4.4	15.2	1.1	1.2	1.2	10.8	13.8	7.0	0.4	16.1
Poverty rate, 1989 (%)	9.0	9.6	11.2	7.1	14.2	9.8	9.5	6.1	7.8	6.2	7.9

(continued)

TABLE 2.1 (continued)

Characteristic	Total for the										
	Florida	9 Counties	Bay	Broward	Dade	Duval	Hillsborough	Lee	Orange	Pinellas	Volusia
<b>Labor market characteristics</b>											
Unemployment rate, 1991 (%)	7.3	7.2	8.0	7.4	8.7	6.6	6.0	6.4	6.6	6.2	6.9
Change in unemployment, 1990-91 (%)	1.4	1.5	-0.5	1.9	2.0	1.0	1.2	2.0	1.1	1.3	1.3
Employment growth, 1990-91 (%)	-0.4	-0.6	6.1	0.0	-1.1	1.1	-1.1	-2.1	-1.1	-1.1	-0.4
Percent of all workers employed in the service sector, 1990	30.9	31.8	25.6	32.9	32.1	25.7	31.8	28.8	35.9	33.1	31.1
Growth in service-sector employment, 1989-90 (%)	4.6	4.1	5.6	4.6	1.7	3.5	6.9	3.7	6.7	3.5	2.5

SOURCES: AFDC characteristics are from statistical data for each county published by Policy Development Economic Services Budget and Analysis, provided to MDRC by the state of Florida; data on the population living in rural areas and on ethnicity are from the 1990 U.S. Census of Population; other population characteristics and labor market characteristics are from the 1990, 1991, 1992, and 1993 Florida County Comparisons.

NOTE: Where data are not applicable, "n/a" is used.

county (the second row of Table 2.1) is similar to the proportion of the nine-county AFDC caseload represented by each county (the fourth row of Table 2.1).

As shown in the first two columns of Table 2.1, the nine counties as a group are similar to Florida as a whole on a number of characteristics -- e.g., poverty rates, unemployment rates, and percentage employed in the service sector (the most likely source of employment for welfare recipients).<sup>1</sup> However, the nine counties have a smaller percentage of their population living in rural areas because, as noted above, counties with very small AFDC caseloads are not represented in the study. The nine counties also include a larger percentage of Hispanics than does the state overall because Dade County includes more than 60 percent of the state's Hispanic population.

Table 2.1 also indicates that the nine research counties represent a diverse range of demographic and economic conditions. Dade County is the largest of the state's 67 counties in terms of both population and AFDC caseload, whereas Bay County, the smallest in the study, ranks twenty-fourth in population and twenty-second in the size of its AFDC caseload. The poverty rates in 1989 ranged from 14 percent in Dade to 6 percent in Lee and Pinellas, and unemployment rates in 1991 ranged from almost 9 percent in Dade to approximately 6 percent in Hillsborough, Lee, and Pinellas. The percentage of workers employed in the service sector in 1990 ranged from a high of 36 percent in Orange to a low of 26 percent in Duval.

In summary, the information in Table 2.1 suggests that the counties in the evaluation are representative of the state in terms of both their average characteristics and their diversity. This condition enhances the evaluation's capacity to produce results that can be generalized to the state's AFDC caseload that became mandatory for Project Independence during the period under study -- or at least to the approximately 90 percent of this AFDC caseload represented by the 25 counties from which the nine were selected.

## II. The Random Assignment Procedures

As discussed in Chapter 1, random assignment of individuals to program and control groups was used to ensure that the analysis of program effects produced the most reliable estimates of Project Independence's impacts on employment, earnings, and AFDC receipt. The timing of random assignment was designed to ensure that these impacts would be measured from the point at which sample members first learned about the obligations and opportunities to participate in the program. This section describes

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<sup>1</sup>The data presented in Table 2.1 reflect the best available measures of conditions in Florida during the random assignment period (July 1990 through August 1991).

the specific random assignment procedures used in the research counties.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the random assignment research design. Random assignment of Project Independence-mandatory cases to the two research groups (i.e., the program and control groups) was conducted at the Public Assistance Unit on a case-by-case basis as individuals applied for AFDC or attended an AFDC eligibility redetermination session. As Figure 2.1 shows, a Background Information Form (BIF) was completed and random assignment was conducted *after* it was determined that an individual was required to participate in Project Independence, but *before* that person was referred to Project Independence orientation. This ensured that all mandatory cases would enter the research sample at the same point in their application or redetermination process and that the behavior of control group members would be influenced by the program as little as possible.

The random assignment process included the following six steps:

**1. Determining an individual's status as mandatory or not.** When an individual appeared for an AFDC application or redetermination interview, the Public Assistance Specialist (PAS) determined whether she was exempt from Project Independence participation requirements (e.g., because she had a child under three years old, was age 60 or older, was working 30 or more hours per week, was in the second or third trimester of pregnancy, or was permanently ill or incapacitated). Applicants and recipients who were not exempt — and hence were Project Independence "mandatories" — continued with the process, while exempt clients did not.<sup>2</sup>

**2. Providing information on the program and the research.** The PAS then provided a brief description of Project Independence and an overview of the evaluation, including the random assignment process.

**3. Collecting background information.** Next, the one-page BIF about the individual was completed. Also collected was information about how the person could be contacted (to assist MDRC in later locating her for a follow-up survey).

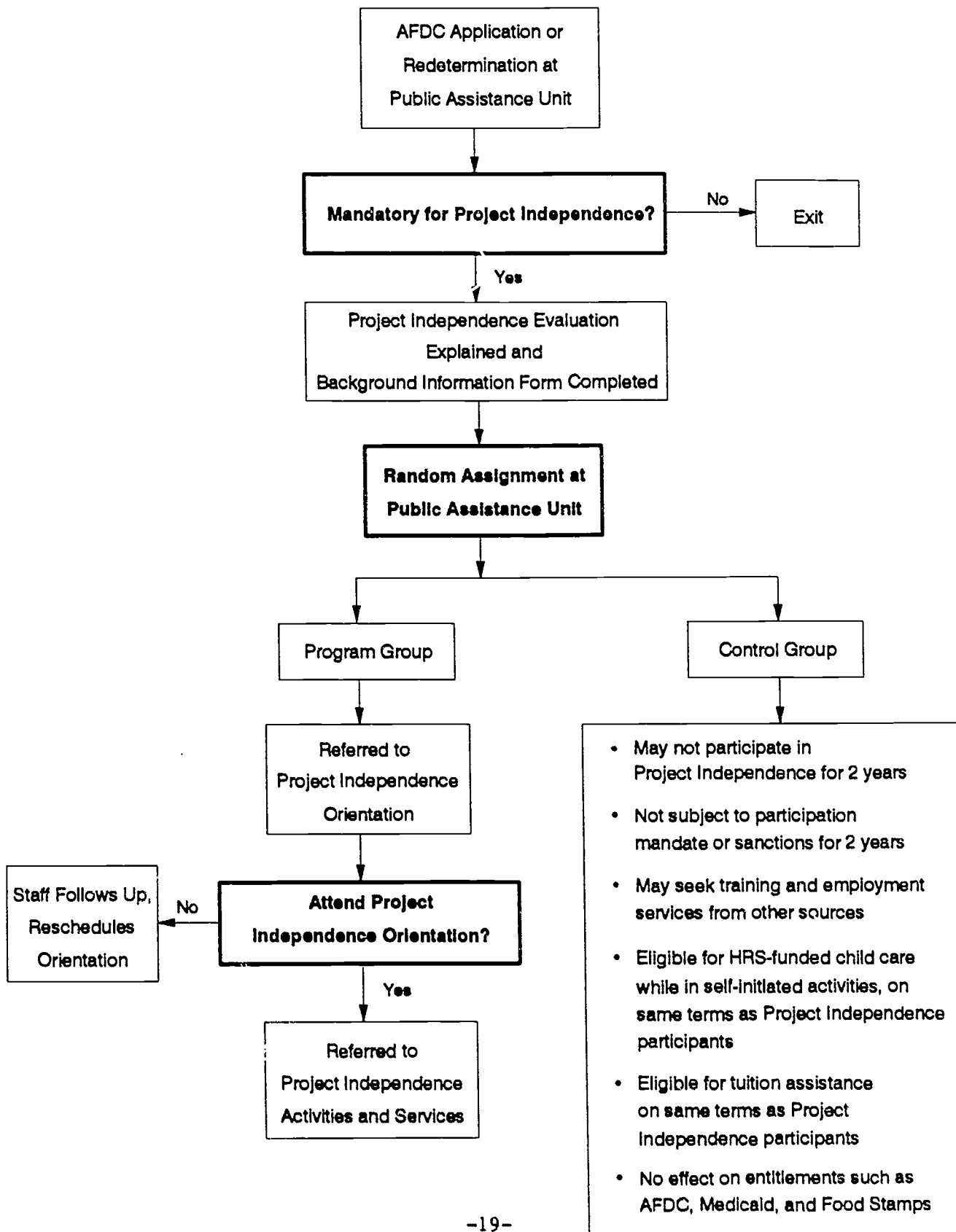
**4. Making the random assignment phone call.** The PAS then telephoned MDRC (using a toll-free number) to obtain the person's randomly assigned research status. During the call, the PAS read a few key items from the BIF to an MDRC random assignment clerk, who keyed these items into the MDRC computer system. After verifying the keyed items, the random assignment clerk informed the PAS of the individual's research status (i.e., program group or control group).

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<sup>2</sup>Anyone who was under 18, an unemployed head of a two-parent-household AFDC case, or had recently been in Project Independence was not randomly assigned (i.e., was not included in the study) even if she or he was mandatory for the program. (In general, "recent" meant within the prior 45 days. However, some individuals who had been in the program at an undetermined time in the past were also excluded from the study.)



**FIGURE 2.1**  
**OVERVIEW OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT PROCEDURES**  
**FOR THE PROJECT INDEPENDENCE EVALUATION**



**5. Informing clients of their status.** After the random assignment call was completed, those individuals assigned to the program group were scheduled for a Project Independence orientation session. Individuals assigned to the control group were informed of their status and told that they would not be required to participate in Project Independence for two years. They were also told that they were eligible for child care and tuition assistance under the same guidelines and priorities as Project Independence participants. This information was provided to control group members both orally and in writing. Those assigned to the control group were given a list of alternative services available to them in the community. Control group members were informed that they had access to a fair hearing process if they wished to file a formal grievance about their status. Finally, control group members were informed that public assistance to which they were entitled, such as Food Stamps, Medicaid, and AFDC, would not be affected by their status in the evaluation.

**6. Processing the BIF.** After random assignment was completed and verified, the PAS recorded on the BIF which of the two research groups the person had been assigned to. For all sample members, one copy of the BIF (and a sheet noting how the person could be contacted) was sent to MDRC; a second copy was sent to Project Independence staff; and a third was maintained in the client's AFDC casefile.

Individuals were randomly assigned only once and retained their research status for two years. In order to prevent multiple random assignments of the same individuals, the random assignment system was designed to conduct an automated search through the entire research sample data base to determine whether each person had been through the random assignment process previously. If so, the MDRC clerk informed the PAS of the existing research status, the date on which the assignment had taken place, and the location (county and office) in which the person had originally been assigned. Also, an individual's research status was recorded in her AFDC and Project Independence records to reduce the likelihood that controls would enroll in Project Independence within the two-year period (either as volunteers or in non-research counties).

Although the random assignment period lasted from July 1990 through August 1991, random assignment started and ended at different times for some counties. Bay, Broward, Dade, and Volusia were the first counties to begin random assignment (in July 1990), while Duval did not begin until October 1990. With the exception of Lee (which ended random assignment in May 1991), all counties continued random assignment through July 1991. Duval, Orange, and Volusia conducted a few random assignments in August 1991. All counties conducted random assignment for at least nine full months.

As noted earlier, the full research sample for this report includes 18,237 AFDC applicants and recipients from the nine research counties who were determined to be mandatory for Project Independence

from July 1990 through August 1991.<sup>3</sup> This group encompasses all of the AFDC applicants who were determined to be mandatory, and most of the ongoing AFDC recipients who were determined to be newly mandatory, during this period.

A total of 13,513 individuals (74 percent of the research sample) were randomly assigned to the program group and, therefore, were referred to Project Independence orientation and were subject to the program's participation requirements. A total of 4,724 individuals (26 percent of the research sample) were assigned to the control group and were not required to participate in Project Independence activities.

Appendix Table A.1 presents the demographic characteristics of the applicants in the program and control groups; Appendix Table A.2 presents this information for the recipients.<sup>4</sup> These tables indicate that the random assignment process produced two equivalent research groups (as is its purpose), with only a few statistically significant demographic differences between the program and control groups.

### **III. Background Characteristics of the Full Sample for This Report**

The "full sample" column of Table 2.2 presents the percentage distributions of the full research sample for selected demographic characteristics.<sup>5</sup> These characteristics are likely to contribute to differences in program participation patterns as well as program impacts and costs. For example, as noted in Chapter 1, educational background and employment history matter because initial service referrals in Project Independence were based on an assessment of "job-readiness," defined in terms of the highest grade an individual had completed in school and the number of months she had worked in the prior three years. Table 2.2 shows that 82 percent of the research sample would have been defined as "job-ready" under the Project Independence criteria used at the time of their random assignment — i.e., they had completed at least the tenth grade or had been employed in at least 12 of the previous 36

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<sup>3</sup>More than half of the applicants in the sample had received AFDC previously under their own or their spouse's case.

<sup>4</sup>These background characteristics are presented in separate tables because the applicants and recipients were randomly assigned using different program-to-control-group ratios. Applicants were assigned at a ratio of three program group members for each control group member. In the early part of the random assignment period — from July through December 1990 — recipients were also assigned using a 3:1 ratio, but thereafter (from January through August 1991), their ratio was lowered to 2:1 to increase the number of recipients in the control group and, thus, the statistical reliability of the impact estimates for recipients. The use of separate tables for applicants and recipients in Appendix A provides the opportunity to determine whether there were differences in measurable characteristics between the program and control groups other than the change in the random assignment ratio for recipients.

<sup>5</sup>As discussed later in the chapter, BIFs could not be obtained for all sample members, and some items from the BIFs that were obtained are missing for some sample members. Table 2.2 presents percentages of the sample who are missing data on selected characteristics.

**TABLE 2.2**  
**SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FULL SAMPLE AND**  
**OF SUBGROUPS DEFINED BY AGE OF YOUNGEST CHILD,**  
**AT THE TIME OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT**

Characteristic and Subgroup	Sample Size	Full Sample	Subgroups, by Age of Youngest Child	
			Ages 3 to 5	Age 6 or Older
<b>Ethnicity (%)</b>				
White, non-Hispanic	6,118	33.5	35.4	34.9
Black, non-Hispanic	6,878	37.7	40.6	37.3 ***
Hispanic	4,044	22.2	20.7	24.8 ***
Other	207	1.1	1.2	1.2
Data not available	990	5.4	2.2	1.9
<b>Primary language (%)</b>				
English	13,887	76.1	81.6	77.1 ***
Spanish	3,232	17.7	15.8	20.3 ***
Other	303	1.7	1.7	1.7
Data not available	815	4.5	1.0	0.9
<b>Average age (years)</b>	18,237	32.1	28.6	35.0 ***
<b>Number of children (%)</b>				
1 child	7,860	43.1	38.9	49.7 ***
2 children	5,575	30.6	33.2	32.5
3 or more children	3,797	20.8	27.9	17.8 ***
Data not available	1,005	5.5	0.0	0.0
<b>Age of youngest child (%)</b>				
Ages 3 to 5	7,211	39.5	100.0	0.0
Ages 6 or older	9,316	51.1	0.0	100.0
Data not available	1,710	9.4	0.0	0.0
<b>Total prior AFDC receipt (a) (%)</b>				
First-time applicant	7,120	39.0	36.7	42.9 ***
Applicant with less than 2 years (b)	4,373	24.0	25.3	24.9
Recipient with less than 2 years (c)	790	4.3	6.2	2.7 ***
Applicant with 2 years or more (d)	3,593	19.7	18.9	22.3 ***
Recipient with 2 years or more (e)	1,029	5.6	9.0	3.2 ***
Data not available	1,332	7.3	3.9	4.0
<b>Education (%)</b>				
High school diploma or GED	9,437	51.7	52.8	54.3 **
No high school diploma or GED	7,543	41.4	43.4	42.8
Data not available	1,257	6.9	3.9	2.9 ***
<b>Any earnings during the prior year (%)</b>	18,237	61.1	60.9	61.1
<b>Job-readiness status (f) (%)</b>				
Job-ready	14,936	81.9	84.0	85.8 ***
Not job-ready	1,816	10.0	10.6	10.2
Data not available	1,485	8.1	5.4	4.0 ***
<b>Research sample status (%)</b>				
Program group	13,513	74.1	73.8	74.4
Control group	4,724	25.9	26.2	25.6
<b>Random assignment cohort (%)</b>				
Early cohort (July-December 1990)	7,511	41.2	43.6	40.9 ***
Late cohort (January-August 1991)	10,726	58.8	56.4	59.1 ***
<b>Sample size</b>		18,237	7,211	9,316

(continued)

TABLE 2.2 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Background Information Forms and Florida Unemployment Insurance records.

NOTES: Sample sizes for subgroups defined by the age of the youngest child do not add to the full sample size because of missing data. Therefore, the weighted average of the percentages of the subgroups within a characteristic does not equal the percentage for the full sample.

Distributions may not add to 100.0 percent because of rounding.

A chi-square test or two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between subgroups defined by the age of the youngest child.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

(a) This refers to the total number of months accumulated from one or more spells on an individual's own or spouse's AFDC case. It does not include AFDC receipt under a parent's name.

(b) This subgroup is referred to in the report as "short-term" applicants.

(c) This subgroup is referred to in the report as "short-term" recipients.

(d) This subgroup is referred to in the report as "long-term" applicants.

(e) This subgroup is referred to in the report as "long-term" recipients.

(f) Sample members are defined as "job-ready" if they had completed at least 10th grade or were employed for at least 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. Sample members are defined as "not job-ready" if they had not completed 10th grade and were employed for less than 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. These definitions are based on the criteria used by Project Independence during the random assignment period.

months.<sup>6</sup> In addition, 61 percent of the sample had some earnings in the year prior to random assignment, and 52 percent had received a high school diploma or GED.

Past research indicates that the effects of welfare-to-work programs tend to depend, in part, on an individual's prior history of AFDC receipt.<sup>7</sup> Table 2.2 indicates that 39 percent of the research sample were applying for AFDC for the first time.<sup>8</sup> An additional 24 percent of the sample were not receiving AFDC at the time of random assignment (i.e., they too were applicants) but had received it for less than two years prior to random assignment, and 20 percent were not receiving AFDC but had received it for two years or more prior to random assignment. Table 2.2 indicates that only 10 percent of the research sample were receiving AFDC at the time of random assignment (4 percent had received it for a total of less than two years and 6 percent had received it for two years or more). As noted above, this is because individuals who had been in Project Independence recently were not included in the sample. During the random assignment period, MDRC staff found that most ongoing recipients who were being redetermined for AFDC eligibility were already registered for Project Independence.

As discussed in Chapter 1, this report will provide some of the first participation and impact findings for JOBS-mandatory AFDC applicants and recipients with children between the ages of three and five. Program participation rates and impacts may not be the same for this group as for mothers of schoolage children because the former are very likely to need child care if they are to participate in program activities or become employed. Table 2.2 shows that 40 percent of the sample members reported having children between the ages of three and five, while just over half (51 percent) had a youngest child age six or older. In addition, 43 percent of the sample had only one child, and 21 percent had three or more children.

Chapter 6 presents findings on program effects for an early cohort of sample members (those who were randomly assigned before January 1991) for whom at least 18 months of follow-up data are available. As mentioned in Chapter 1, January 1991 also marks the point at which HRS was forced to begin restricting the availability of child care services for Project Independence participants. (Chapter 3 presents a more detailed discussion of this issue.) For these reasons, the analysis compares the experiences of research sample members who were randomly assigned prior to January 1991 with those

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<sup>6</sup>This definition is used throughout the report as the basis for making job-readiness subgroup distinctions. However, Project Independence guidelines permitted staff to make exceptions to the formal job-readiness criteria. It is also important to note that, based on the revised Project Independence job-readiness criteria, which were instituted in October 1991 (approximately three months after random assignment ended), 69 percent of the research sample would have been defined as job-ready, and 23 percent would have been defined as not job-ready.

<sup>7</sup>See, e.g., Friedlander, 1988, and Hamilton and Friedlander, 1989.

<sup>8</sup>Information on prior AFDC receipt was reported on the BIF in terms of the *total* number of months the individual had received AFDC under her own or her spouse's name, regardless of the number or duration of spells of AFDC receipt this represented. It does not include AFDC received under her parent's name.

of sample members who became part of the study after that point. Table 2.2 indicates that the former constituted 41 percent of the sample, and the latter, 59 percent.

#### **IV. Background Characteristics of the Key Subgroups for This Report**

An important part of the analysis in this report is an examination of participation patterns and impacts for key subgroups of the full sample. Specifically, the report focuses on three sets of subgroups defined by (1) the age of the youngest child, (2) Project Independence job-readiness status, and (3) prior AFDC receipt. These subgroups are likely to vary in the degree and nature of their involvement with Project Independence and in their likelihood of being able to secure employment and leave AFDC without the aid of Project Independence. The characteristics of these subgroups are discussed below and should be considered when comparing subgroup participation and impact results.

##### **A. Characteristics of Subgroups Defined by the Age of the Youngest Child**

Table 2.2 reveals several important distinctions between sample members whose youngest child was between the ages of three and five (i.e., preschoolage) and those whose youngest child was six or older at the time of random assignment.<sup>9</sup> Sample members with preschoolage children were an average of six and a half years younger than those whose youngest child was six or older, but they were more likely to have three or more children (28 percent compared to 18 percent of those with children age six or older). Also, those with preschoolage children were more likely to be ongoing AFDC recipients (rather than applicants) at the time of random assignment.

##### **B. Characteristics of Subgroups Defined by Project Independence Job-Readiness Status**

Appendix Table A.3 presents selected background characteristics of the two subgroups defined as job-ready or not job-ready according to the Project Independence job-readiness criteria in effect during the random assignment period: completion of at least the tenth grade or employment in at least 12 of the previous 36 months.<sup>10</sup> These two groups also differed in other important respects. For example,

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<sup>9</sup>For a total of 1,710 sample members (9 percent of the full research sample), information about the age of the youngest child is missing either because the information was not provided on the BIF or because the BIF itself was missing. As a result, the sum of the sample sizes for the age of youngest child subgroups (7,211 + 9,316 = 16,527) does not equal the total sample size of 18,237. Also, the percentages reported for subgroups defined by the age of the youngest child in Table 2.2 reflect the percentages of those for whom this information was not missing.

<sup>10</sup>For a total of 1,257 sample members (7 percent of the full research sample), information about the highest grade completed in school and employment experience was not available, so their job-readiness status could not be ascertained. Therefore, as in Table 2.2, the sum of the sample sizes for the subgroups does not equal the total sample size of 18,237. The percentages reported for these subgroups in Appendix Table A.3 reflect the percentages of those for whom this information was not missing.



members of the not job-ready subgroup were much more likely to be Hispanic (42 percent) and to speak Spanish as their primary language (37 percent) than were those defined as job-ready (20 percent of whom were Hispanic and 16 percent of whom spoke Spanish as their primary language). This indicates that limited English proficiency may have constituted another important barrier to employment among many not job-ready subgroup members.

Members of the not job-ready subgroup were also more likely to have preschoolage children and to have three or more children, suggesting that they may have had more prominent child care needs than did the job-ready subgroup. Finally, those in the not job-ready subgroup were more likely to be ongoing AFDC recipients and to have received AFDC for two years or more than were those defined as job-ready.

As previously discussed, Project Independence modified its job-readiness criteria in October 1991. Specifically, those who had no high school diploma or GED or had worked in fewer than 12 of the previous 24 months would now be defined as not job-ready. Because this occurred approximately three months after the random assignment period ended, it is not likely to have affected the initial service referrals of program group members who attended a Project Independence orientation. However, an important question for the evaluation is whether the original program model was effective for the group that, under the modified job-readiness criteria, would have had the option of participating initially in education and training activities. This group consists mainly of members of the job-ready subgroup of the research sample who did not have high school diplomas.<sup>11</sup> Appendix Table A.3 indicates that 35 percent of the job-ready subgroup did not have a high school diploma and, therefore, would have been defined as not job-ready under the modified criteria.

### **C. Characteristics of Subgroups Defined by Prior AFDC Receipt**

One goal of the evaluation is to examine the program participation patterns and program effects for people with varying histories of AFDC receipt. For that analysis, the full sample was divided into three subgroups, defined by how long sample members had received AFDC prior to random assignment: those who had never previously been on their own or their spouse's AFDC case (referred to in this report as "first-time applicants"); those who had previously been on their own or their spouse's AFDC case for a total of less than two years prior to random assignment (i.e., "short-term" applicants and recipients); and those who had previously been on their own or their spouse's AFDC case for a total of two years

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<sup>11</sup>It is not possible to accurately identify sample members' job-readiness status under the revised criteria because the MDRC BIF asked only for information about employment in the previous 36 months (not the previous 24 months).



or more prior to random assignment (i.e., "long-term" applicants and recipients).<sup>12</sup> Appendix Table A.4 presents selected background characteristics of these three subgroups.<sup>13</sup>

These subgroups differed on several other background characteristics. For example, the first-time applicants were more likely to be Hispanic and to speak Spanish as their primary language than was either of the other two subgroups. As noted above, limited proficiency in English may have constituted an important barrier to employment. However, first-time applicants were the least likely to have three or more children and the least likely to have preschool-age children. They were also the most likely to be job-ready and to have a high school diploma or GED at the time of random assignment. This suggests that first-time applicants faced the fewest barriers to employment and, therefore, were the most likely to have been able to get a job and leave AFDC without the help of Project Independence.

Long-term applicants and recipients were the most likely to have three or more children, the least likely to be job-ready, and the least likely to have a high school diploma or GED. Each of these factors may have constituted an important barrier to employment.

## V. The Data Sources Used in This Report

The Project Independence evaluation draws upon a variety of data sources including Background Information Forms (BIFs) on research sample members, which, as noted above, were filled out at the time of random assignment; program participation information collected from participants' casefiles; a survey of Project Independence staff and a survey of a subsample of program group members; AFDC and Unemployment Insurance (UI) administrative records collected from the state; and on-site observations and personal interviews with staff. In some cases, data were collected for the entire research sample; in other cases, only for a subsample. This section of the chapter describes the data sources used in this report, the groups of sample members for whom each type of data was collected, and the time period covered by each data source (see Table 2.3).

### A. Background Information Forms (BIFs)

MDRC, in collaboration with HRS Public Assistance Specialists (PASs), designed a BIF to collect

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<sup>12</sup>Prior receipt of AFDC was not necessarily continuous and not necessarily recent. Also, the subgroup of long-term applicants and recipients used in this report may differ from those used in other MDRC reports. For example, the long-term group has often included only those who were receiving AFDC at the time of random assignment and had received AFDC for two or more years. See Friedlander, 1988; Hamilton and Friedlander, 1989.

<sup>13</sup>For a total of 1,332 sample members, information about prior AFDC receipt is missing. Therefore, as in Table 2.2, the sum of the sample sizes for the subgroups does not equal the total sample size of 18,237. Also, the percentages reported for these subgroups in Appendix Table A.4 reflect the percentages of those for whom this information was not missing.

TABLE 2.3

DATA SOURCES AND SAMPLES FOR THE PROJECT INDEPENDENCE EVALUATION

Data Source	Sample for Whom Data Were Collected	Number of Sample Members	Period Covered by Data
Background Information Forms (BIFs)	All program and control group members	Full sample 18,237 Program group 13,513 Control group 4,724	Data reported at random assignment
MDRC's survey of a subsample of program group members	1,134 members (8 percent) of the program group who were randomly selected from Public Assistance Units serving the largest urban centers of the 9 research counties; interviews were completed for 81 percent of those selected	Program group subsample (a) 916	12 months following random assignment
Project Independence casefiles	756 members (67 percent) of the survey subsample (see above); casefile data were collected for 85 percent of those selected	Program group subsample (a) 639	12 months following random assignment
Unemployment Insurance earnings records	All program and control group members	Full sample 18,237 Program group 13,513 Control group 4,724	5 calendar quarters prior to random assignment and 5 calendar quarters including and following that of random assignment; 7 calendar quarters including and following that of random assignment for an early cohort of the research sample
AFDC payments records	All program and control group members	Full sample 18,237 Program group 13,513 Control group 4,724	8 calendar quarters prior to random assignment and 5 calendar quarters including and following that of random assignment; 7 calendar quarters including and following that of random assignment for an early cohort of the research sample
MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey	All Project Independence Unit supervisors and case managers	Full sample 190 Supervisors 26 Case managers 174	Survey administered in September and October 1991

NOTE: (a) The program flow subsample used to examine Project Independence participation patterns consists of the 639 program group members for whom casefile data were collected, plus 86 program group members for whom casefile data could not be located but who responded to the survey.

demographic and identifying information for all Project Independence-mandatory AFDC applicants and recipients at the time they entered the research sample. Each BIF was completed by the PAS in consultation with the sample member. These forms were mailed to MDRC after random assignment was completed. BIF data are available for 97 percent of the full research sample.<sup>14</sup>

When a PAS called MDRC to request a random assignment, she or he was asked to report a number of items from the BIF, which served as the Random Assignment Record (RAR). These items included the name of the county and the location of the Public Assistance Unit, whether the individual was an applicant or recipient, and the individual's name, social security number, birth date, and AFDC case number (if there already was one). MDRC random assignment clerks then keypunched these items into the random assignment data base. Since all the RAR items were required before random assignment could be completed, these data are available for all sample members.

BIF and RAR data are also used to describe the research sample members, identify important subgroups, increase the precision of the impact estimates, and analyze selection bias when subsamples are used.

#### **B. The Survey of a Subsample of Program Group Members**

A 30-minute survey was fielded for a randomly selected subsample of program group members from all nine research counties who entered the research sample between September 1990 and May 1991. The survey was fielded approximately 12 months after these individuals were randomly assigned, and the questions concerned their participation in Project Independence activities, their attitudes toward the program, and their use of child care services. The survey subsample consists of the 916 individuals in this group who completed the survey interview, which was conducted by telephone or in-person. By design, the survey subsample included only those who were randomly assigned from the Public Assistance Units located in the largest urban centers of the nine research counties.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>The remaining BIFs could not be obtained from the Public Assistance Units. It is possible that BIFs were not completed for some sample members and that PASs used some other source of identifying information to complete random assignment.

<sup>15</sup>In all, 1,134 program group members were randomly selected for the follow-up survey. The 916 members of the survey subsample represent a response rate of 81 percent. An analysis of survey nonresponse bias indicated that there were virtually no systematic differences in measured characteristics between the subsample who completed the survey interview and the 1,134 originally selected. The strategy of containing the survey subsample to a portion of the random assignment period and to more densely populated geographic areas was adopted in order to contain survey costs associated with a potentially long fielding period (in this case, as long as 14 months) and with tracking sample members over a wide geographic area.

### C. Project Independence Casefiles

MDRC staff also collected data from Project Independence casefiles for a subsample of 639 of the 1,134 program group members who had been selected for the survey subsample.<sup>16</sup> Project Independence casefiles contain detailed information about program group members' involvement with the program — including referrals to program activities, the incidence of participation in activities, length of stay in activities, and involvement with formal enforcement procedures.<sup>16</sup> Because these items are generally tied to the program's administrative rules, sample members were not able to recall the specific information accurately or in detail when responding to survey questions.

### D. The Program Flow Subsample

Findings on the program group's involvement with Project Independence are presented in Chapters 4 and 5 for a subsample of 725 randomly selected program group members (referred to as the "program flow subsample"). For 639 (88 percent) of them, the information was drawn from casefiles; for the remaining 86, whose casefiles could not be located, survey data were used. The subsample is concentrated in 12 Project Independence units and is distributed across the nine research counties.<sup>17</sup>

Three considerations guided the strategy for constructing this subsample. First, a key objective of the analysis was to produce findings that reflected participation patterns for the program group as a whole and thus to increase their capacity to reflect participation patterns statewide. This suggested that the subsample should be drawn from all nine research counties. Second, to arrive at an accurate measure of the program group's involvement with Project Independence and to get more information about why

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<sup>16</sup>In all, 756 program group members (of the original 1,134 survey subsample members) were selected for the casefile subsample, and MDRC staff were able to obtain Project Independence casefiles for 639 (85 percent) of them. Of the remaining 117, 86 (74 percent) responded to the survey; there are neither casefile nor survey data for the other 31. An analysis of casefile nonresponse bias indicated that there were virtually no systematic differences in measured characteristics between the subsample for whom casefiles were obtained and the 756 sample members originally selected. The strategy of containing the casefile subsample to a portion of the survey subsample was adopted in order to supplement the survey data and contain costs associated with data collection. This also created an opportunity to assess the reliability of self-reported information from the survey by checking those data against Project Independence program records.

<sup>16</sup>Casefile data, rather than computerized program tracking records, were required because an assessment of data from the automated Project Independence Interim System indicated that it did not contain complete information about program group members' participation in program activities.

<sup>17</sup>Note that since random assignment took place at the Public Assistance Units, a Project Independence unit had to be imputed for each sample member based on county documentation of the procedures and patterns for referring individuals from the Public Assistance Units to the Project Independence units. The 12 units include two from each of the three largest counties (Dade, Duval, and Hillsborough) and one from each of the other six counties. To make sure that the smaller counties were not overrepresented, the participation findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5 are weighted by the full sample size in each county.

some of them did not receive services, it was important to include individuals who had and had not attended Project Independence orientation. This suggested that casefile data -- which were not available for many sample members who did not attend orientation and even for a few who did -- should be supplemented by survey data. Third, the research team was also interested in exploring relationships between certain aspects of the program "treatment" (e.g., participation) and particular operating strategies. This suggested that the sample sizes should be large enough within Project Independence units to make possible reasonably reliable site-specific measures of the treatment.

#### **E. Automated Florida State Unemployment Insurance (UI) Earnings Records**

Earnings reported by employers to the state's Unemployment Insurance (UI) system provide measures of employment and earnings by calendar quarter (January through March, April through June, July through September, and October through December) for all 18,237 program and control group members. Data were collected for the period June 1989 (a year prior to the first random assignment) through September 1992. For some sample members, the calendar quarter in which random assignment took place may have included some earnings secured before the actual day of random assignment; therefore, for all sample members, the quarter in which random assignment occurred (quarter 1 of the follow-up period) is not counted in the analysis of program effects. Four full quarters of post-random assignment follow-up data (quarters 2 through 5) are available for the full sample, and six full quarters of follow-up data (quarters 2 through 7) are available for sample members randomly assigned from July through December 1990. In addition, the UI data include a minimum of four calendar quarters of earnings data prior to each sample member's date of random assignment. These data are used to increase the precision of the impact estimates by controlling for small random differences in the background characteristics of the program and control groups.

Florida's UI system is statewide and therefore provides data on employment and earnings that sample members secured in both research and non-research counties within the state. However, UI data are not available for employment and earnings secured in another state or for jobs not usually covered by the UI system (e.g., some domestic work or informal child care). Such employment and earnings will not be measured in this study and will not appear in the data.

#### **F. Automated Florida State AFDC Payments Records**

Monthly AFDC payments records were obtained for all 18,237 program and control group

members from the state's computerized Assistance Payments System (APS) and FLORIDA System.<sup>18</sup> These data were collected for the period June 1988 (two years prior to the first random assignment) through December 1992. For the analysis in this report, AFDC payments amounts were aggregated into calendar quarters to match the intervals covered by the UI earnings data. A total of four full quarters of AFDC follow-up data (not including the quarter of random assignment) are available for the full research sample, and six quarters of follow-up data are available for sample members who were randomly assigned from July through December 1990.

APS and FLORIDA operate as statewide data systems. With few exceptions, the data used in the evaluation reflect all AFDC payments for all research sample members even if they moved to non-research counties and reapplied for AFDC.<sup>19</sup> If sample members received AFDC in another state, however, these AFDC payments will not be measured in this study and will not appear in the data.

### **G. MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey**

This report uses information from MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey to describe the ways staff implemented the Project Independence program model in the research counties. This survey was administered in September and October 1991 to the unit supervisors at all 26 Project Independence units in the nine research counties and to the 164 case managers in these units. The survey included separate modules that asked about staff practices regarding seven key dimensions of Project Independence: orientation and initial screening, deferral procedures, child care, participation-monitoring, job placements, Employability Plans, and sanctioning procedures. It also included modules with questions about staff attitudes toward their job, Project Independence, and AFDC recipients. Two other modules asked staff about their perceptions of Project Independence's services and goals. The survey also collected background information on the staff.

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<sup>18</sup>Beginning in June 1991, HRS began converting its automated public assistance benefits and service system from APS to the Florida On-Line Recipient Integrated Data Access System (FLORIDA). This required that extra care be taken to ensure that data were collected accurately for all sample members as their AFDC cases were converted from APS to FLORIDA.

<sup>19</sup>The primary exception to this would be a sample member's moving to a non-research county and receiving AFDC under a new case number assigned there. Those payments will not be measured and will not appear in the data. However, most cross-county migrants are assigned their original case number if they reapply for AFDC in another county. If sample members received AFDC under more than one case number -- for example, because of the conversion from APS to FLORIDA or because they were given a new number in one of the research counties for other reasons -- these payments are included in the analysis.

## **H. Staff Interviews and Field Research**

MDRC staff held in-person interviews with Project Independence district administrators, unit supervisors, and case managers in each of the nine research counties in early 1991. During this period, MDRC staff also observed a variety of Project Independence activities. This qualitative research was used to learn about program operating strategies and organizational issues.



## CHAPTER 3

### PROJECT INDEPENDENCE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND SERVICES

Chapter 1 presented an overview of the Project Independence program model. This chapter provides a more detailed description of the program's organizational structure and capacity, for the state as a whole and within the nine research counties. It also describes the job search, education, training, and child care services that Project Independence provided. Chapter 4 analyzes the extent to which program group members in the research sample made use of these services and examines how Project Independence staff facilitated their progress through the program.

#### **I. The Organizational Structure of Project Independence**

Like most other states, Florida centralizes at the state level the primary responsibility for planning, administration, and management of its AFDC and JOBS programs.<sup>1</sup> The state-level management team exerted a relatively high degree of influence over local policy decisions and operating strategies, and promoted considerable consistency in the operation of Project Independence across the nine research counties. This section of the chapter examines the state-level organization of Project Independence and the management strategies that were employed to promote this consistency. This provides a context for interpreting the participation, implementation, and impact findings, which are pooled across the full research sample and the nine counties.

The Florida Employment Opportunity Act of 1987 designated the state's Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS) to be responsible for planning, integrating, and coordinating employment-related services for public assistance recipients through Project Independence. Until July 1992, primary responsibility for Project Independence rested with the Economic Services Program Office, which was administered under the Deputy Secretary for Programs.<sup>2</sup> (Economic Services also oversees the management of the state's AFDC program.) Within Economic Services, the Director of the Project Independence section was responsible for planning, coordinating, and directing all Project Independence

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<sup>1</sup>Some states place the primary responsibility for these functions at the county level.

<sup>2</sup>As noted in Chapter 1, Florida shifted operational oversight of Project Independence (but not administrative and primary policy responsibility) from HRS to the Department of Labor and Employment Security (LES) in July 1992. It is unlikely that this shift affected the results from this evaluation, since it did not change the basic program design and service delivery strategies. In fact, program staff remained the same and were simply shifted from HRS to LES. In addition, the shift occurred almost one full year after the last research sample member was randomly assigned.



services, for providing training and technical assistance for Project Independence staff, and for monitoring local Project Independence units for compliance with program procedures.

Until that same date (July 1992), HRS operated and managed Project Independence (along with its other health and human services programs) under the Deputy Secretary for Operations, who had line authority over service program operations in the 11 HRS service districts. Although each district encompassed several counties,<sup>3</sup> the counties themselves did not provide policy, administrative, or oversight functions. Policy and administrative decisions were made at the state and district levels and then were implemented and monitored through district offices and the local program units.

Project Independence services were coordinated through Project Independence units in HRS's 11 service districts, eight of which were represented by the research counties. The nine research counties included 26 of the state's Project Independence units, with the number ranging from one (in Bay and Lee) to eight (in Dade). Typically, the units were located in a local "service center," which also included several Public Assistance (AFDC) Units, Food Stamps units, and Medicaid Eligibility units, although some Project Independence units served outlying or remote Public Assistance Units.

State-level administrators employed a broad range of tools and strategies to coordinate the implementation and management of Project Independence, including a statewide procedures manual; state-coordinated monitoring procedures; statewide job placement goals and placement competitions among districts; annual statewide meetings of administrators, case managers, and service providers; quarterly planning meetings with district administrators; and a statewide marketing strategy. Each of these measures promoted considerable consistency among the local (i.e., unit-level) Project Independence programs. For example, MDRC's field research visits to the Project Independence units in the nine research counties revealed that most Project Independence staff were aware of their individual job placement goals and expressed a high level of commitment to meeting them. A majority of staff also indicated a commitment to enforcing the participation requirement through the use of sanctioning procedures when they were considered necessary and appropriate. Finally, although staff generally thought job placements were important, they also expressed a strong interest in making education and training services available to participants who needed them.

At the same time, local program administrators exercised discretion over specific case management strategies, methods of operationalizing the participation mandate, and types of partnerships developed with

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<sup>3</sup>District 10, which includes only Broward County (Fort Lauderdale), is an exception to this. Also, District 11 includes only two counties: Dade (Miami) and Monroe (the Florida Keys). The remaining nine HRS service districts each encompasses five or more counties.

local employment, education, and training service providers. MDRC's field research and other data collection activities revealed several important dimensions on which the organizational capacity of local programs differed, including the number and characteristics of staff, caseload sizes, service availability and quality, and child care availability. These factors are discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

## II. Project Independence Staffing

Each Project Independence unit was managed by an HRS unit supervisor, who had overall responsibility for training, directing, and evaluating program staff.<sup>4</sup> The Project Independence units were staffed by HRS employment counselors (i.e., case managers), who provided most of the program's case management services, including orientation, assessments, referrals to activities, coordination of support services, and monitoring. Through a statewide contract between HRS and LES, most Project Independence units also included LES employment specialists, who had access to the Job Service of Florida computer job bank system, which they used to assist Project Independence participants in finding employment. In some units, the LES employment specialists also focused on job development activities and job clubs and assisted with case management activities.

The Project Independence unit supervisors were able to exercise some discretion over the types of case management strategies employed in their units. MDRC's field research and interviews with supervisors revealed two types of case management strategies. Most units employed a "generalist" case management strategy, in which program participants were assigned to a single case manager who assumed responsibility for nearly all the tasks of case management: conducting orientation sessions, initial up-front assessments, activity referrals, and formal assessments; monitoring participation in Project Independence activities; and, when necessary, administering formal enforcement procedures. A few units employed a "specialist" case management strategy, in which Project Independence participants were referred to case managers who were responsible for specific tasks and program components. For example, one case manager would be responsible for conducting orientation sessions, making initial service referrals, and following up with those who failed to attend a scheduled orientation. Another would be responsible for monitoring participants who were engaged in individual job search and for conducting job clubs. A third would be responsible for formal assessment, referrals to education and training services, and monitoring participation in those activities.

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<sup>4</sup>Project Independence staff members at the district and local levels are state employees. Until July 1992, responsibility for hiring supervisors and other Project Independence staff rested with district-level HRS staff. Beginning in July 1992, hiring decisions became the responsibility of state and regional LES administrators.

Information on some of the characteristics of the Project Independence staff in the nine research counties is presented in the top section of Table 3.1. The number of staff in each county varied with the size of the county and, thus, the number of Project Independence units. On average, there were approximately 21 staff in each county. This ranged from 3 in Lee and 4 in Bay (each of which had only one Project Independence unit) to 71 in Dade (which had 8 units). The units averaged 7 Project Independence staff each, with as many as 10 in the large offices in Dade and Duval.

The top panel of Table 3.1 shows that more than 70 percent of the Project Independence staff in the research counties were employed by HRS and that just over 25 percent were employed by LES.<sup>5</sup> Although the three smallest counties in the evaluation (Bay, Lee, and Volusia) did not include LES employees on their Project Independence staffs, they worked closely with the Job Service of Florida (operated by LES) to provide participants with access to job banks and job development opportunities. The prominent role of LES staff in performing job development activities, providing access to the Job Service, and conducting job clubs in many units is evidence of the labor force attachment orientation of Project Independence.

Participants' experiences in Project Independence were also likely to be influenced by the characteristics of the staff with whom they interacted. For example, the top panel of Table 3.1 shows that 80 percent of the Project Independence staff in the nine research counties held a bachelor's degree or higher and that 60 percent had worked in other job training programs. It is likely that this training and experience helped prepare them for Project Independence.

### **III. Caseload Size, Monitoring, and Organizational Climate**

Findings from MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey provide evidence that caseload sizes were associated with staff's capacity to monitor and enforce the program participation requirements and with their job satisfaction and morale. In several counties with higher caseloads, a large percentage of staff tended to feel that they were unable to monitor clients closely and reported low or only moderate satisfaction with their jobs. In other counties with lower caseloads, a larger percentage of staff reported that they were able to monitor clients closely and were more satisfied with their jobs.

The bottom panel of Table 3.1 indicates that Project Independence staff reported carrying average caseloads of over 200 at the time MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey was administered

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<sup>5</sup>As discussed in Chapter 2, MDRC administered a Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey to 190 Project Independence staff in September and October 1991. The survey included only HRS supervisors, employment counselors (i.e., case managers), and employment interviewers and LES employment specialists and representatives. Clerical and other support staff were not surveyed.

**TABLE 3.1**  
**ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITIES OF PROJECT INDEPENDENCE PROGRAMS IN THE RESEARCH COUNTIES**

Variable	All Counties	Bay	Broward	Dade	Duval	Hillsborough	Lee	Orange	Pinellas	Volusia
<b>Project Independence staff (a)</b>										
Number of staff employed by										
HRS	137	4	12	54	17	17	3	10	13	7
LES	48	0	6	17	8	9	0	3	5	0
Other agencies	5	0	1	0	3	1	0	0	0	0
All agencies	190	4	19	71	28	27	3	13	18	7
<b>Selected staff background characteristics</b>										
Average age (years)	41.0	35.3	41.5	39.5	41.2	43.6	39.0	40.8	41.9	46.8
Bachelor's degree or higher (%)	80.3	100.0	73.7	83.1	82.1	88.5	100.0	76.9	66.7	57.1
Previously worked in a WIN, JTPA, or other job training program (%)	59.6	0.0	50.0	55.4	75.0	55.6	66.7	92.3	61.1	42.9
Previously worked as a Public Assistance Specialist (%)	25.1	25.0	36.8	17.2	25.0	29.6	33.3	30.8	22.2	42.9
<b>Caseload sizes, monitoring, and staff morale</b>										
Average registrant-to-staff ratio reported by case managers (b)	201	216	151	222	198	143	107	256	229	305
Staff who considered monitoring to be timely (%)	30.1	0.0	47.4	26.5	35.7	30.8	66.7	25.0	29.4	0.0
Staff who rated job satisfaction and morale as (%)										
High	2.6	0.0	0.0	5.6	0.0	3.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Moderate	61.6	25.0	68.4	71.9	60.7	51.9	100.0	30.8	61.1	42.9
Low	35.8	75.0	31.6	22.5	39.3	44.4	0.0	69.2	38.9	57.1

SOURCE: MDCR's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey.

NOTES: (a) This sample includes Project Independence staff employed at the time that MDCR's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey was administered (September-October 1991). It includes supervisors, HRS employment counselors and interviewers, and LES employment specialists and representatives. It does not include HRS support staff.

(b) These caseload sizes include both voluntary and mandatory registrants who could be either active or deferred.

(September and October 1991). Caseload sizes ranged from a low of 107 in Lee to a high of 305 in Volusia.<sup>6</sup> An important factor contributing to the large and increasing caseload sizes that existed during the period covered by this report was a series of hiring freezes instituted by HRS to cope with state budget cuts, which forced the various state agencies to reduce costs and cut back on services. In general, the hiring freezes prevented local programs from replacing staff who left Project Independence, thereby requiring existing staff to assume a share of that person's caseload. This tended to increase caseload sizes — in some cases dramatically — preventing staff from providing personalized attention to participants and monitoring their participation carefully. Because the hiring freezes occurred frequently, it is difficult to identify distinct periods when their impact was not being felt. As a result, it is very difficult to measure the effect, if any, this may have had on the evaluation results.

Personal interviews with many Project Independence staff revealed variation across counties and units in the extent to which caseload sizes inhibited or facilitated monitoring and enforcement. In some instances, caseload sizes were often considered to be unreasonably large and a critical factor in limiting the timeliness with which staff felt they could monitor participation. Many staff also reported considerable frustration with large caseloads, which hindered them from pursuing individualized follow-up on noncompliance, which in turn could have circumvented the need to impose AFDC grant reductions. In other instances, staff did not feel that caseloads were too large and reported that they were able to monitor participation closely. In many of these cases, staff had made a concerted effort to close cases quickly if individuals had not complied with the participation requirements and been slated to have their AFDC grant reduced.

These reports are confirmed by staff responses to questions from MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey about how closely they were able to monitor clients in their caseloads. The findings are presented in the bottom panel of Table 3.1, which presents the percentage of staff in each county who rated as high the closeness with which they were able to monitor participants.<sup>7</sup> Thirty percent of the Project Independence staff across all nine counties rated the closeness of monitoring as high; the

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<sup>6</sup>These caseloads are dramatically higher, for example, than those reported by case managers in California's GAIN program. Average caseload sizes in the six California counties in the GAIN evaluation ranged from approximately 63 to 128. See Riccio and Friedlander, 1992.

<sup>7</sup>Staff were asked a series of 10 questions about how often they made contact with clients or how closely they monitored clients' participation in various activities. Since the responses to these 10 questions were highly correlated, a scale was created using the average response for each respondent. Scores could range from 1 to 7. Scores of 6 or higher were defined as a high rating and indicated that staff felt that clients were monitored very closely. Scores of less than 3 were defined as a low rating and indicated that staff felt that clients were not monitored very closely. Scores between 3 and 6 were defined as a moderate rating and indicated that staff felt that clients were monitored only sporadically or inconsistently.

remainder rated it as moderate or low. This indicates that most staff felt that they were able to monitor participants inconsistently at best. Staff ratings of monitoring varied across counties. None of the staff in Bay or Volusia rated monitoring as high, while 47 percent of the staff in Broward and 67 percent of the staff in Lee did so.

The findings presented in Table 3.1 provide some evidence that the average caseload sizes reported by staff are associated with the percentage of staff who rated the closeness of monitoring as high. The five counties with average caseloads that were higher than the nine-county average also had the lowest percentage of staff who rated the closeness of monitoring as high. In addition, Broward and Lee had the highest percentage of staff who rated the closeness of monitoring as high and also had among the lowest average caseloads. This relationship is not entirely consistent, however. For example, Hillsborough staff reported the second-lowest average caseload size, while only 31 percent of the staff rated the closeness of monitoring as high. Also, although the average caseload size in Hillsborough was lower than Duval's, a lower percentage of Hillsborough staff rated the closeness of monitoring as high.

Table 3.1 also provides measures of staff self-reports on their levels of job satisfaction and the morale in their unit.<sup>8</sup> Thirty-six percent of the Project Independence staff across the nine counties rated job satisfaction and morale as low. This ranged from a low of none in Lee and 22 percent in Dade to a high of 75 percent in Bay and 69 percent in Orange. Sixty-two percent of the Project Independence staff rated job satisfaction and morale as moderate, and fewer than 3 percent rated it as high.

Table 3.1 provides some evidence that job satisfaction may have been related to caseload size. For example, more than half of the staff in the two counties with the highest average caseloads (Orange and Volusia) reported their job satisfaction and morale as low. By contrast, none of the staff in Lee (the county with the lowest caseload ratio) reported theirs as low. Exceptions to this pattern include Dade (which had above-average caseload sizes and a relatively low percentage of staff rating their job satisfaction as low) and Hillsborough (which had below-average caseload ratios and a relatively high percentage of staff who reported low job satisfaction).

In October 1991, in an effort to help Project Independence staff cope with expanding caseloads, HRS established caseload reduction measures, which gave top priority to serving volunteers and enforcing the participation requirements for JOBS target groups in counties where caseload ratios were too high.

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<sup>8</sup>This measure is based on staff responses to 11 questions from MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey. Since the responses to these 11 questions were highly correlated, the scale was created using the average response for each respondent. Scores could range from 1 to 7. Scores of 6 or higher were defined as indicating a high rating of job satisfaction and morale. Scores of less than 3 were defined as indicating a low rating. Scores between 3 and 6 were defined as indicating a moderate rating.



If caseloads exceeded an established level, Project Independence staff were allowed to relax the enforcement of the participation requirements for other Project Independence-mandatory applicants and recipients after they attended Project Independence orientation and completed a job search activity. Since the last research sample member was identified (i.e., randomly assigned) approximately three months before this change was implemented, and since most participants completed activities within six months of random assignment (as will be discussed in the next chapter), it is likely that this change could have affected a relatively small proportion of the full sample (approximately 15 percent).

#### IV. Project Independence Services

A cornerstone of JOBS and of the Florida Employment Opportunity Act of 1987, which created Project Independence, is an emphasis on enhancing coordination and cooperation among state agencies and other organizations to provide employment-related services for public assistance recipients. The primary purpose is to provide more – and more efficiently delivered – services to public assistance recipients than a single agency or organization could provide alone. Thus, a key function for Project Independence staff is to serve as conduits for linking program participants with necessary and appropriate services.

This section of the chapter describes the services available to Project Independence participants and examines staff and participant perceptions of the availability and quality of these services. Service "quality" is difficult to define and measure, and was not investigated in depth in the Project Independence evaluation. However, MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey asked Project Independence staff a series of questions concerning the availability and quality of key Project Independence services. The findings are presented in Table 3.2, which shows the proportion of staff who rated the normal availability of each service as high and the proportion who rated each service as worthwhile for those assigned to it.<sup>9</sup> MDRC's survey of a subsample of program group members asked whether those who participated in these activities thought they were helpful. These findings are also presented in Table 3.2, which shows

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<sup>9</sup>Staff were asked the same questions about each service: the extent to which it was normally available and how worthwhile it was for those to whom it was assigned. Scores could range from 1 to 7 on each measure, with scores of less than 3 defined as indicating that staff reported the service to be normally unavailable (or not worthwhile) and scores of 6 or higher defined as indicating a rating of "normally available" or "worthwhile." The scores for "all services" represent the average response on questions related to each of six Project Independence services: job club, adult basic education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED) classes, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, vocational education and training, and community college. The scores for basic education represent the average response on the questions related to ABE, GED, and ESL, and the scores for training and community college represent the average response on the questions related to these two services.



TABLE 3.2

AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY OF SERVICES IN THE RESEARCH COUNTIES

Variable	All Counties (%)	Bay Broward (%)	Dade (%)	Duval (%)	Hillsborough (%)	Lee Orange (%)	Pinellas (%)	Volusia (%)
<b>Service availability</b>								
Staff who rated availability of program services as high (a)	80.4	100.0	76.5	82.1	76.0	100.0	77.8	100.0
All services (b)	82.1	100.0	75.8	92.9	88.0	66.7	58.8	85.7
Job club	82.4	100.0	79.4	74.1	84.0	100.0	76.5	100.0
Basic education (c)	75.8	100.0	74.6	81.5	68.0	66.7	77.8	100.0
Training and community college (d)								
<b>Service quality</b>								
Staff who rated program services as worthwhile for assigned participants (a)	63.7	25.0	66.7	50.0	70.8	66.7	94.4	42.9
All services (b)	67.1	25.0	70.8	57.7	79.2	66.7	75.0	66.7
Job club	70.1	50.0	72.7	52.0	83.3	66.7	94.1	28.6
Basic education (c)	68.9	75.0	69.7	60.0	66.7	66.7	88.9	71.4
Training and community college (d)								
Participants who rated program services as very helpful (e)	52.6	63.0	50.0	57.7	51.3	64.7	57.5	70.8
All services (b)	43.9	56.0	39.8	53.5	33.9	53.9	46.2	--
Individual job search	69.9	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Job club	64.9	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Basic education (c)	78.8	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Training and community college (d)								

SOURCES: MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey and MDRC's survey of a subsample of program group members.

NOTES: Dashes indicate that the calculation was omitted because the sample size is less than 20.

(a) The calculations are based on responses from Project Independence staff employed at the time that MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey was administered (September-October 1991). They include supervisors, HRS employment counselors and interviewers, and LES employment specialists and representatives. They do not include HRS support staff.

(b) Includes average responses to questions about job club, ABE, GED, ESL, training and vocational education, and community college services.

(c) Includes average responses to questions about ABE, GED, and ESL services.

(d) Includes average responses to questions about training, vocational education, and community college services.

(e) The calculations are based on responses from the survey subsample members who participated in the respective services; therefore, the sample size varies for each program service.

the proportion of participants who rated each service as very helpful.<sup>10</sup>

Although, as shown in Table 3.2, a high percentage of Project Independence staff across the nine research counties reported that services were normally available to program participants, they varied somewhat in their assessment of the "quality" of those services. Overall, 80 percent of staff rated the availability of services as high, and this was consistent across the nine counties. Sixty-four percent of the Project Independence staff across the nine research counties rated the services as worthwhile for participants. This ranged from 25 percent in Bay to 94 percent in Pinellas. Bay, Duval, Orange, and Volusia stand out for the relatively low percentage of their staff who rated the quality of services as high, while Broward, Dade, Hillsborough, and Pinellas stand out at the other end of the spectrum. Among participants, 53 percent rated Project Independence services as very helpful; this ranged from 37 percent in Orange to 71 percent in Volusia.

These aggregate ratings across all Project Independence services mask differences in staff and participant perceptions of specific activities. These are discussed below.

#### **A. Individual Job Search**

Individual job search activities include both up-front job search and extended job search. Up-front job search is generally the first activity assigned to job-ready participants and involves a two-week period during which participants look for work on their own. Participants are assigned to extended job search only after having participated in another (non-job search) activity, and they usually look for work for two to four weeks. Participants assigned to either of these individual job search activities must make at least six in-person employment applications per week. They must document the applications on a job search report form<sup>11</sup> and return the form to their case manager at the end of each two-week period. Case managers usually encourage participants to use the job referral services of Project Independence or LES-contracted staff who have access to Job Service employment contacts.

MDRC's survey of a subsample of program group members asked participants in individual job

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<sup>10</sup>For each activity in which they participated, program group members were asked a series of up to four questions about their perceptions of how helpful it was. Ratings on each question could range from 0 (not at all helpful) to 10 (very helpful). Since responses to these questions were highly correlated, a scale was created using the average response to the questions. Average scores of 8 or higher were defined as indicating a rating of very helpful. The scores for "all services" represent the average response on questions related to each of six Project Independence services: job search, job club, ABE or GED classes, ESL classes, vocational education and training, and community college. The scores for basic education represent the average response on the questions related to ABE/GED and ESL, and the scores for training and community college represent the average response on the questions related to these two services.

<sup>11</sup>HRS-ES Form 4133.

search about whether they thought Project Independence was helpful in putting them in contact with employers and telling them about job openings. The findings are presented in Table 3.2, which indicates that 44 percent of participants rated job search as very helpful.<sup>12</sup>

### **B. Job-Readiness Skills Training (Job Club)**

Job club is a workshop and training session that teaches participants better ways to search for, apply for, and keep a job. Participants are usually assigned to job club if they are unsuccessful in finding employment during up-front or extended job search, or if they have completed education and training activities and need job search skills. Job clubs are generally scheduled for at least 20 hours per week for two to four weeks. Job clubs are generally conducted in two phases. During the first phase, participants receive classroom instruction on job-seeking strategies, procedures for completing a job application, job-interviewing skills, labor market trends, and life skills. During the second phase, participants are involved in a supervised group job search in which they receive instruction on how to make employer contacts and schedule job interviews over the phone. During the group job search, participants also practice making phone calls to employers under the supervision of program staff.

In most Project Independence units, job clubs were conducted by LES employment specialists. In some counties, however, Project Independence established a subcontract with the local Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) agency to conduct their job clubs or participants were referred to job clubs conducted by the JTPA agency for eligible applicants (all AFDC recipients are eligible for JTPA services). MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey asked a series of questions concerning the availability and quality of key Project Independence services. The findings are presented in the top panel of Table 3.2, which shows that 82 percent of the Project Independence staff across the nine counties rated the availability of job club as high.<sup>13</sup> This ranged from just under 60 percent in Pinellas to 100 percent in Bay.

MDRC's observations of several job clubs indicated some variation in the quality and emphasis of the classroom instruction and group job search components. For example, staff in one unit had developed innovative role-playing exercises to help participants practice interviewing skills, while staff in another unit focused on helping participants contact employers and schedule interviews as quickly as possible. Some job clubs, however, appeared to place very little emphasis on the group job search

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<sup>12</sup>See footnote 10 for details about the scale used.

<sup>13</sup>See footnote 9 for details about the scale used.

components, in part because the units did not have adequate telephone service for participants to use to make employer contacts.

The variability in the quality of job clubs is reflected in staff responses to MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey. The findings are presented in Table 3.2, which shows that 67 percent of all Project Independence staff rated job club services as worthwhile for participants.<sup>14</sup> This ranged from 25 percent in Bay to just under 80 percent in Hillsborough.

MDRC's survey of a subsample of program group members also asked job club participants for their assessment of this activity in terms of how much instructors helped them, how much it increased their confidence to look for a job, and how much it helped them learn useful job-hunting skills and techniques. The findings are presented in Table 3.2, which indicates that 70 percent of participants rated job club as very helpful (sample sizes were not large enough to provide county-specific percentages).<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, participants were much more likely to give a rating of "helpful" to job club than to individual job search.

### **C. Basic Education Services**

As previously noted, Project Independence basic education services include adult basic education (ABE), consisting of remedial classes designed to provide participants with basic literacy and numeracy skills equivalent to the completion of the eighth grade; General Educational Development (GED) and high school credit programs, which provide participants with the opportunity to achieve a high school diploma or a GED; and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, which provide participants who are not proficient in English with intensive instruction in English. Participants who are not job-ready are usually referred to basic education activities after a formal assessment of their education needs (including literacy testing) and the development of an Employability Plan.

In most counties, Project Independence coordinated with local education agencies (LEAs) for basic education services. The findings presented in Table 3.2 indicate that more than 80 percent of Project Independence staff across the nine counties rated basic education services as normally available. This high percentage was consistent across all counties, suggesting that there were very few slot limitations in basic education services.

Table 3.2 also indicates that staff and participant ratings of the quality of basic education services were relatively high compared to their ratings of the other services. Seventy percent of Project

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>See footnote 10 for details about the scale used.

Independence staff across the nine counties rated basic education services as worthwhile for the participants whom they referred to those services, and 65 percent of those who participated in basic education activities rated them as very helpful.

#### **D. Training and Community College Services**

Project Independence also offers two other types of education and training services for participants with a high school diploma or GED. Vocational training in a vocational or technical school, local school district, or community college provides training in an occupational skill that can be expected to lead to employment. Community college education is provided if the education program is consistent with the participant's Employability Plan and provides training in skills that can lead to employment. This community college education is generally limited to one year, but exceptions may be granted if approved by the case manager, the unit supervisor, and district program staff.

Vocational training and community college education services are generally provided by a consortium of local school districts, JTPA agencies, and community colleges. In some counties, local public school systems and community colleges have been able to develop special programs targeted specifically to Project Independence participants. Interviews with Project Independence staff, however, indicated that the relationship between Project Independence and local JTPA programs was somewhat more varied and, in some cases, quite strained. This may have resulted from the fact that the JTPA system placed a very high premium on performance standards. These standards, and the financial incentives that accompanied them, often provided an incentive for local JTPA programs to serve those who were most likely to experience positive outcomes and thus enhance program performance levels.

Table 3.2 indicates that 76 percent of Project Independence staff felt that training and community college education services were normally available – a perception that was quite consistent across the counties. Also, Project Independence staff and participants both had generally positive perceptions of the quality of training and community college services. Almost 70 percent of Project Independence staff felt that these services were worthwhile, and nearly 80 percent of those who participated in them felt that they were very helpful.

#### **V. Child Care Availability**

While extending the participation requirements to AFDC applicants and recipients whose youngest child is at least age three, the Florida Employment Opportunity Act of 1987 – and, subsequently, the JOBS provisions of the Family Support Act of 1988 (FSA) – also made two important provisions designed to help support families with young children. First, it expanded the resources available for child

care. Second, it stipulated that those whose youngest child is between the ages of three and five are required to participate in Project Independence no more than 20 hours per week, and only if the state assures that necessary child care will be provided.

This section of the chapter discusses the availability of child care services for Project Independence participants and presents findings on the types of child care arrangements staff recommended to participants. It also describes the restrictions on child care availability that occurred beginning in January 1991, and staff and participants' responses to these restrictions. This section concludes with a discussion of participants' use of child care services and their perceptions of child care quality.

All long-term child care services lasting more than 30 days -- including the transitional child care required by the FSA -- were funded through the Children, Youth, and Families Child Care appropriations category of the FSA (Title IV-A).<sup>16</sup> Short-term child care services lasting 30 or fewer days -- usually for those participating in short-term Project Independence activities -- were funded by the Project Independence Support Services appropriations category of the Economic Services budget. Project Independence case managers worked with parents to identify appropriate child care arrangements and providers. Formal arrangements included child care provided through facilities licensed by the state's central child care agencies. Informal arrangements included care provided through an unlicensed or unregistered facility, including a family home care facility and in-home care provided by family or friends. Both formal and informal arrangements were eligible for a subsidy.

During orientation, Project Independence case managers (or, in some cases, child care specialists located at the Project Independence unit) worked with participants to assess their needs for child care, inform them of the available child care options, and make appropriate referrals based on the participants' preferences. In general, staff were able to exercise discretion in the extent to which they encouraged the use of informal arrangements with friends and relatives as opposed to licensed child care facilities.

MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey included a question that asked Project Independence staff whether they thought child care arrangements using family or friends or more formal arrangements were generally better for program participants and their children. The findings are presented in Table 3.3, which indicates that 75 percent of Project Independence staff felt that formal child care arrangements were generally better for participants and their children.<sup>17</sup> Only 8 percent felt that family and friends

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<sup>16</sup>Under Title IV-A, transitional child care benefits are an entitlement: HRS must guarantee child care for up to one year to eligible families whose AFDC assistance has ceased because of employment.

<sup>17</sup>MDRC's survey of a subsample of program group members included a question that asked Project Independence participants about their perception of the child care advice given to them by staff. The findings from this question conflict with the findings from the staff survey. Specifically, only 29 percent of the participants (continued...)



TABLE 3.3

AVAILABILITY OF CHILD CARE IN THE RESEARCH COUNTIES

Variable	All Counties (%)	Bay (%)	Broward (%)	Dade (%)	Duval (%)	Hillsborough (%)	Lee (%)	Orange (%)	Pinellas (%)	Volusia (%)
<u>Staff opinions regarding the quality of child care arrangements (a)</u>										
Staff who rated formal child care arrangements as generally better	74.9	50.0	88.2	72.6	65.4	75.0	100.0	83.3	68.8	100.0
Staff who rated the use of family or friends for child care as generally better	8.4	0.0	5.9	17.7	3.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.3	0.0
Staff who had no clear preference	16.8	50.0	5.9	9.7	30.8	25.0	0.0	16.7	25.0	0.0
<u>Advice for when child care funding was not available</u>										
Staff who encouraged participants to use unsubsidized child care arrangements when no funds were available (a)	56.0	50.0	61.1	59.1	65.4	38.5	100.0	50.0	52.9	50.0
Program group members who were advised to participate in activities when child care funds were not available (b)	51.6	63.9	41.2	48.2	45.8	49.0	80.0	50.8	54.7	55.6
<u>Influence of child care on participation (a)</u>										
Staff who reported that participants were just as likely to participate when funds were not available	19.2	0.0	55.6	20.0	14.8	4.0	66.7	16.7	11.1	0.0
Staff who reported that participants were much less likely to participate when funds were not available	49.2	100.0	22.2	44.6	55.6	52.0	0.0	50.0	66.7	83.3

SOURCES: MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey and MDRC's survey of a subsample of program group members.

NOTES: (a) This sample includes Project Independence staff employed at the time that MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey was administered (September-October 1991). It includes supervisors, HRS employment counselors and interviewers, and LES employment specialists and representatives. It does not include HRS support staff.

(b) The calculations are based on responses from the survey subsample members who reported attending a Project Independence orientation.



were generally better, and the remainder had no clear preference for formal or informal arrangements. With a few exceptions, these percentages are fairly consistent across the research counties. All of the staff in Lee and Volusia felt that formal child care arrangements were generally better for participants and their children, while only half of the staff in Bay believed formal arrangements were generally better. Dade stands out with the highest percentage of staff – 18 percent – indicating that they thought informal arrangements were generally better for participants and their children.

The focus on formal child care arrangements (which were generally more costly than subsidized informal arrangements) was an important factor contributing to cost overruns that occurred in late 1990 and early 1991.<sup>18</sup> During this period, HRS administrators found that they had expended a large share of program child care resources for Project Independence participants. In order to ensure that adequate resources would be available for AFDC recipients entitled to transitional child care, Project Independence dramatically reduced the availability of child care for those participating in program activities.<sup>19</sup> The child care restrictions were likely to have had their greatest effect on parents with preschoolage children who, by law, could not be required to participate in program activities if child care needs presented a barrier.

Although individuals were not required to participate if needed child care was not available, case managers often encouraged them to make unsubsidized informal arrangements with family or friends in order to participate in program activities. Table 3.3 indicates that 56 percent of the staff encouraged participants to find unsubsidized child care arrangements so that they could participate in job search, job

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<sup>17</sup>(...continued)

indicated that they were advised to use formal arrangements. This discrepancy may be due, in large part, to the fact that the questions were worded differently. The staff survey question asked which type of arrangement they thought was best for participants and their children. The participant survey question asked what type of advice they had been given.

<sup>18</sup>The overall increases in Project Independence caseloads, the large number of employed AFDC recipients using HRS-funded child care, and eligible individuals using transitional child care were also important factors.

<sup>19</sup>Restrictions on the availability of subsidized child care for Project Independence participants were implemented at different rates and at different levels, depending on the HRS service district (and, therefore, county). However, all districts began implementing some cutbacks in January 1991, and the cutbacks expanded thereafter, with subsidized child care eventually being eliminated in many districts. In general, those who were determined to need education or training services could not be offered subsidized child care services. If they needed child care in order to participate in these activities, and could not secure arrangements on their own, they were generally excused from participation. Those already participating in education and training activities, and receiving child care at the time these restrictions went into effect, were eligible to continue receiving child care until the activity ended. Although subsidized child care was also drastically reduced for those assigned to job search and job club activities, there were some Project Independence support services resources available, which staff could use to cover some short-term child care needs.

club, or education activities.<sup>20</sup> The percentage of staff who strongly encouraged participants to find unsubsidized child care was consistent across the research counties, with the exception of Lee (where all of the staff strongly encouraged participants to use unsubsidized care) and Hillsborough (where only 39 percent of the staff strongly encouraged participants to use unsubsidized care). Table 3.3 also shows, however, that 49 percent of Project Independence staff indicated that individuals had been much less likely to fulfill participation requirements when child care restrictions began after December 1991. Only 19 percent of the staff said that these individuals had been just as likely to participate, and the remainder said that they had been only somewhat less likely to participate.

The findings from the staff survey are generally consistent with the subsample of program group members' perceptions of the advice they were given by staff. Table 3.3 shows that 52 percent of those who attended orientation indicated that staff encouraged them to take part in the program even though the program could not provide them with help in paying for child care. The percentage ranged from 41 percent in Broward to 80 percent in Lee. Although not reported in Table 3.3, MDRC's survey of a subsample of program group members also asked several questions about their actual use of child care. Among program group members who reported attending orientation, 19 percent also reported receiving subsidized child care during the 12-month follow-up period. The survey also asked program group members about their use of child care during their most recent spell of participation in a Project Independence activity. A total of 11 percent of the respondents indicated that they relied on Project Independence-subsidized child care, and more than half (55 percent) reported that they relied on family or friends and did not have to pay for the care. The remainder paid for child care out of their own pockets.

The survey also asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with the child care arrangements they used while participating in their most recent Project Independence activity. Overall, regardless of the child care arrangements they used while participating in their most recent activity, 87 percent of the respondents reported that they were very satisfied with the arrangements in terms of convenience, safety, cost, and availability.

An important question for the evaluation is whether the change in child care availability affected the actual program participation rates or impacts, particularly for individuals with preschoolage children. These issues are discussed in Chapter 5.

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<sup>20</sup>MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey asked Project Independence staff a series of three questions about how much they would encourage individuals to use unsubsidized child care arrangements in order to participate in job search, job club, or education or training activities, respectively. Since the responses to these questions were highly correlated, a scale was created using the average response to the three questions. Scores on this scale ranged from 1 to 7. Respondents with a score of 6 or higher were defined as strongly encouraging individuals to use unsubsidized child care arrangements in order to participate in activities.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE PROGRAM GROUP FLOW THROUGH PROJECT INDEPENDENCE

To interpret the results of the Project Independence evaluation's impact analysis, which are reported in Chapter 6, it is crucial to understand the extent to which program group members in the research sample were exposed to the Project Independence "treatment."<sup>1</sup> From the perspective of program group members, the Project Independence treatment includes attending orientation and participating in program activities as well as interacting with Project Independence staff through assessment, counseling, and, for some, procedures for reducing their AFDC grant levels if they fail to comply with program participation requirements. This chapter describes the Project Independence treatment received by program group members by analyzing their "flow" through the Project Independence program model and examining their interactions with Project Independence staff as staff acted to implement the program's participation mandate and its emphasis on employment-related outcomes.

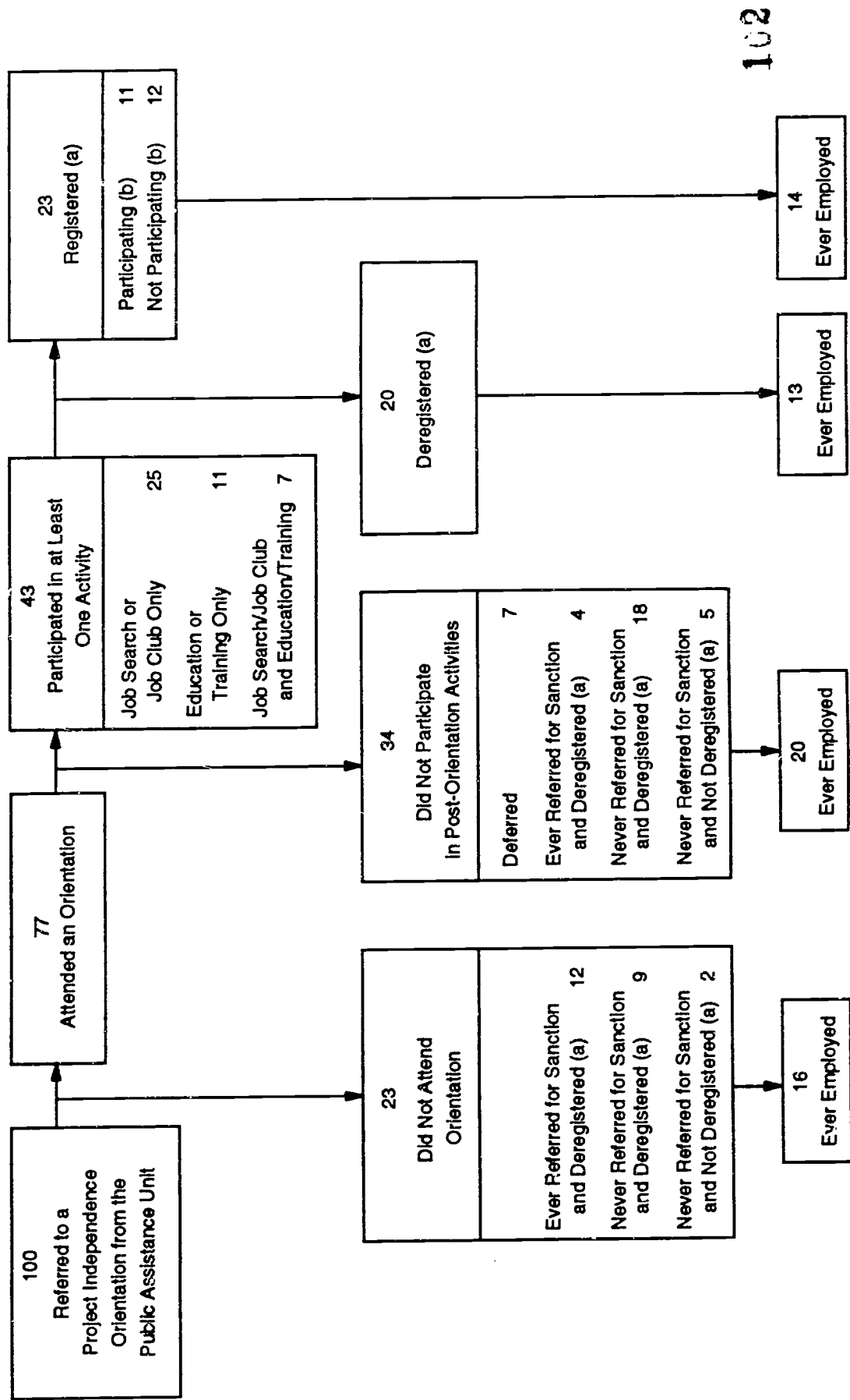
Figure 4.1 illustrates the flow of 100 typical program group members through the Project Independence program model during the 12 months following each person's referral by the Public Assistance Unit to a program orientation — which was also when random assignment took place.<sup>2</sup> The figure shows that two critical stages in the flow were the junctures between referral by the Public Assistance Unit and orientation and between orientation and specific program activities. At each of these stages, large numbers of program group members were diverted from active participation in Project Independence. During the follow-up period, 23 percent of the program group members never attended orientation and thus did not participate in further program activities or receive support services. The first section of this chapter focuses on the program flow leading up to orientation and examines staff responses to program group members who did not comply with this initial aspect of the Project Independence participation mandate. This analysis is especially important because program group members were

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<sup>1</sup>Although control group members did not have access to Project Independence, it is likely that some of them received similar services through other sources in the community. The program impacts reported in Chapter 6 reflect the *difference* between the Project Independence treatment received by program group members and the services received by control group members. Measures of the services received by the control group are not available for this report, but will be an important topic for the final report.

<sup>2</sup>Figure 4.1 is based on the program flow subsample of 725 program group members (see Chapter 2). Since the program flow subsample included program group members who were randomly assigned throughout the period September 1990 through May 1991, the 12-month follow-up period ended as early as August 1991 (for the first individuals who were randomly assigned) and as late as April 1992 (for the last of them).

**FIGURE 4.1**  
**THE FLOW THROUGH THE PROJECT INDEPENDENCE MODEL**  
**FOR 100 TYPICAL PROGRAM GROUP MEMBERS**  
**WITHIN 12 MONTHS AFTER RANDOM ASSIGNMENT**



102

101

(continued)

**FIGURE 4.1 (continued)**

SOURCES: Program flow subsample, Florida Unemployment Insurance records, and Florida AFDC records.

NOTES: (a) "Registered" refers to the finding that an individual's case was open at the end of the 12-month follow-up period.

"Deregistered" refers to the finding that an individual's case was closed at the end of the 12-month follow-up period.

(b) "Participating" refers to the finding that an individual was actively participating in a job search, job club, basic education, training, or community college activity at the end of the 12-month follow-up period.

identified (i.e., randomly assigned) before they had any formal contact with the program. For some of them, what happened prior to orientation constituted the only aspect of the Project Independence treatment they received, but may still have affected their employment and AFDC receipt patterns. It is also important to explore what happened to those who did not attend orientation because some of these program group members secured employment and discontinued their involvement with the AFDC system for reasons that were not necessarily related to Project Independence.

Figure 4.1 also shows that 34 percent of the program group members attended orientation but did not participate further. The second section of this chapter focuses on the juncture between orientation and the start of participation in specific Project Independence activities. It does so by examining both the treatment received by program group members during orientation and the response of staff to program group members who discontinued their participation after orientation.

The third box in the top row of Figure 4.1 shows that 43 percent of the program group members participated in at least one post-orientation activity during the 12-month follow-up period.<sup>3</sup> The final two sections of this chapter present findings on the rates at which program group members participated in specific Project Independence activities and on the number of months (within the 12-month follow-up period) they were active in the program.

An important conclusion of this chapter is that Project Independence achieved rates of compliance with its initial participation mandate (i.e., attending orientation), and rates of participation in particular activities, that were similar in magnitude to those of other welfare-to-work programs such as California's GAIN program.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, before beginning the analysis of the Project Independence program flow, it is important

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<sup>3</sup>An individual was counted as having "ever participated" in a post-orientation activity if she participated in at least one of the following activities: individual job search, job club, basic education (i.e., ABE, GED preparation, or ESL), vocational training, and community college courses. Formal assessment is not included among these post-orientation activities. Throughout this report, an individual was counted as participating in individual job search if there was a record of her having made at least one job application (although the number was usually at least six). She was counted as participating in other activities if her casefile contained written documentation that she had attended such an activity for at least one day. In instances where survey data were used because a casefile could not be obtained, MDRC relied on the individual's self-reported participation of at least one day. The "ever participated" measure used in this report differs somewhat from the one used in the GAIN evaluation conducted by MDRC. For example, in that evaluation, an individual was counted as having participated in an activity if she attended for at least one hour, although most participants stayed much longer (see Riccio and Friedlander, 1992). The measure used in this report also differs from the one embodied in the federal regulations for the JOBS program.

<sup>4</sup>For example, Riccio et al., 1989, showed that, within six months following their referral from the Income Maintenance (AFDC) offices, 71 percent of GAIN registrants attended orientation and 34 percent participated in at least one activity. Using a longer follow-up period (11 months), Riccio and Friedlander, 1992, reported that approximately 56 percent of those who attended GAIN orientation participated in at least one post-orientation activity. This is very similar to the comparable figure for Project Independence (43 out of 77 is 56 percent).



to note that program participation patterns are often influenced by normal AFDC caseload dynamics and by changes in life circumstances, as well as by a program's intervention. Employment, marriage, birth of another child, relocation out of the state, and health problems all affect an individual's mandatory status. As past studies have shown, all these factors lower the maximum feasible participation rate to well below 100 percent, even in programs, such as Project Independence, that have a continuous participation requirement. This is reflected, in part, by the finding (discussed later in the chapter) that only 33 percent of the program group were registered for Project Independence at the end of the 12-month follow-up period<sup>5</sup> and that fewer than one-third of these were participating in activities.

It is also important to note that Project Independence may have induced some of these changes. For example, a desire to avoid the participation requirement may have led some Project Independence program group members to discontinue their AFDC application, thereby both contributing to the program's impact on AFDC receipt rates and reducing the Project Independence participation rate. Alternatively, the prospect of getting help obtaining employment and education services may have led some Project Independence program group members to remain on AFDC longer than they would have otherwise and thus increased their involvement in Project Independence.

## **I. Getting to Project Independence Orientation**

This section of the chapter begins by examining the rates at which program group members attended Project Independence orientation within the 12-month follow-up period for this analysis of participation patterns. It then discusses several program features and strategies (particularly sanctioning procedures) that Project Independence staff used to enforce this initial participation mandate. The section concludes with an analysis of the extent to which program group members were subject to formal enforcement procedures if they did not comply with that mandate.

### **A. Orientation Attendance Rates**

Figure 4.1 shows that 77 percent of program group members attended Project Independence orientation within the 12 months following their initial referral from the Public Assistance Unit. This high rate of orientation attendance is evidence that Project Independence achieved substantial compliance with this first stage of its participation mandate.

The vast majority of those who attended orientation did so very soon after they were referred to the program by a Public Assistance Specialist (PAS). Overall, 47 percent of the program group attended

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<sup>5</sup>Not all of these individuals were registered for the entire 12-month period, although most were.



orientation within one month of referral, and an additional 23 percent attended orientation between two and three months after they were referred. This means that 90 percent of those who eventually attended orientation (within the 12-month follow-up period) did so within the first three months following their initial referral.<sup>6</sup>

### **B. Enforcing the Initial Participation Mandate**

The following discussion focuses first on the role of the PAS in informing Project Independence-mandatory AFDC applicants and recipients about the program. It goes on to examine the perspectives of Project Independence staff on using formal enforcement procedures to get program group members to comply with the participation requirements. This information is useful for understanding how Project Independence achieved the rates of orientation attendance discussed above and how program staff responded to those who did not attend orientation (discussed below).

**1. The role of Public Assistance Specialists (PASs).** During AFDC application and redetermination appointments, PASs provided Project Independence-mandatory AFDC applicants and recipients with their first general introduction to the obligations and opportunities of Project Independence. On-site observations and interviews with PASs revealed that in some cases PASs provided a fairly extensive explanation of the benefits and responsibilities of participating in the program, while in other cases they only informed individuals of their mandatory status and scheduled their orientation appointment.

Table 4.1 provides information from MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey on the Project Independence staff's assessments of the role PASs played in referring AFDC applicants and recipients to the program.<sup>7</sup> Very few Project Independence staff perceived the PASs as playing a very effective role in informing individuals about the program and in trying to build their clients' enthusiasm for it. Nearly

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<sup>6</sup>Thus, for the vast majority of orientation attenders, the follow-up period included at least nine months in which to measure rates and lengths of participation in the program's various employment, education, and training activities.

<sup>7</sup>PASs were not surveyed directly. The measure presented in Table 4.1 was constructed from three questions on MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey, which asked Project Independence staff to rate PASs on three dimensions: how well informed they were about the program, whether they spent enough time telling clients about the program, and whether they tried to make clients enthusiastic about the program. A scale was computed for each respondent by averaging the responses to these three questions. All respondents with a score of 6 or higher (on a scale of 1 to 7) were defined as rating the PAS's role as very effective. Respondents with a score of less than 3 were defined as rating the PAS's role as not effective, and those with a score between 3 and 6 were defined as rating the PAS's role as somewhat effective.

TABLE 4.1

**SELECTED REFERRAL AND PARTICIPATION ENFORCEMENT STRATEGIES  
AND THE SERVICE EMPHASIS IN THE RESEARCH COUNTIES**

Variable	All Counties (%)
<b><u>Role of Public Assistance Specialists</u></b>	
Staff rating of the role of the Public Assistance Specialist in Project Independence referrals	
Very effective	9.3
Somewhat effective	42.8
Not effective	48.0
<b><u>Use of sanctioning</u></b>	
Staff rating of the likelihood that they would request a sanction for noncompliance	
Very likely	62.8
Somewhat likely	27.4
Not likely	9.8
Staff rating of sanctioning as an effective enforcement measure	
Very effective	40.1
Somewhat effective	35.3
Not effective	24.6
<b><u>Message communicated during orientation</u></b>	
Staff rating of orientation's emphasis on opportunities versus requirements	
High emphasis on opportunities	6.4
High emphasis on requirements	10.4
Equal emphasis on both	83.2
Staff who strongly emphasized continuous participation	50.3
<b><u>Service emphasis</u></b>	
Staff rating of the likelihood that they would make an exception to the job-readiness criteria	
Very likely	21.4
Somewhat likely	59.9
Not likely	18.7
Staff rating of emphasis on immediate job placement	
High	36.1
Moderate	51.9
Low	12.0
Sample size	190

SOURCE: MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey.

NOTES: The sample includes Project Independence staff employed at the time that MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey was administered (September–October 1991). It includes supervisors, HRS employment counselors and interviewers, and LES employment specialists and representatives. It does not include HRS support staff.

Distributions may not add to 100.0 percent because of rounding.

half of the Project Independence staff reported that they did not believe PASs were very well informed about the program themselves and that PASs did not spend very much time explaining its requirements and opportunities to their clients.

2. **Conciliation and sanctioning procedures.** After the referral from the PAS, Project Independence case managers had primary responsibility for enforcing the Project Independence participation requirements by monitoring orientation attendance and responding to those who did not show up. The most stringent method Project Independence staff had at their disposal for enforcing the mandate was the formal financial sanctioning procedures, which could lead to an AFDC grant reduction. As discussed below, evidence from a variety of sources suggests that case managers were willing to initiate sanctioning procedures frequently, and that program group members were well informed about their obligation to participate and the likelihood of a sanction as a penalty for noncompliance. It appears that this threat was an important factor in promoting the relatively high orientation rates (as were sanctions themselves).

Before an AFDC grant reduction could be requested, Project Independence case managers initiated "conciliation" procedures by which they discussed differences with participants, tried to determine whether there was a "good cause"<sup>8</sup> for nonparticipation, and worked to resolve disputes involving participation. The conciliation process began when program group members missed the scheduled orientation. If they did not notify a case manager that there was good cause, they were sent a Project Independence Failure to Participate Notice.<sup>9</sup> This notice informed the individual of a second scheduled appointment and instructed her that failure to comply with this appointment, without establishing good cause, could result in her losing part of her AFDC grant. Individuals who did not appear for the second appointment or respond to this notice were subject to sanctioning procedures. To initiate a grant reduction, a case manager sent the individual an original copy of a Project Independence Notice of Case Action and Sanction<sup>10</sup> and, on the same day, sent two copies of a Project Independence AFDC/Case Action Request<sup>11</sup> to the Public Assistance Unit to request the sanction.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>A "good cause" is defined as a circumstance beyond an individual's control that prevents her from participating in an assigned activity.

<sup>9</sup>HRS-ES Form 4156.

<sup>10</sup>HRS-ES Form 4147.

<sup>11</sup>HRS-ES Form 4158.

<sup>12</sup>A PAS was required to take necessary action to reduce the AFDC grant for the first month in which the client could have had 10 days' notice of an impending sanction. However, according to Project Independence regulations, the sanction procedures did not result in a reduction of the AFDC grant if "good cause" was determined at any point in the sanctioning process; the sanctioning procedures would then be stopped. Once the grant reduction was enforced, a Project Independence-mandatory individual must have satisfactorily complied with program requirements for a minimum of 10 working days before the full grant could be restored.

Table 4.1 indicates that 63 percent of the Project Independence staff reported on MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey that they were very likely to request a financial sanction if individuals for whom the program was mandatory failed to comply with the participation requirements and did not provide good cause. In addition, 75 percent thought that sanctioning was at least a somewhat effective tool for improving compliance, with more than half of these indicating that they thought it was *very* effective. Only 10 percent reported that they were very unlikely to request a financial sanction.

Results from MDRC's survey of a subsample of program group members indicate that about 83 percent of the respondents were aware that their AFDC check could be reduced if they did not participate in Project Independence; 59 percent thought this was fair. In addition, 56 percent of the respondents indicated that the threat of a sanction was at least modestly influential in getting them to participate in the program.<sup>13</sup>

### C. What Happened to Those Who Did Not Attend Orientation?

Figure 4.1 indicates that 23 percent of the program group members never attended Project Independence orientation during the 12-month follow-up period. The following discussion focuses on the extent to which these individuals were subject to conciliation and sanctioning procedures and the level of effort Project Independence staff invested in these efforts.

As shown in Figure 4.1, just over half of the program group members who never attended orientation (12 out of 23 program group members) were sent a formal sanction notice from Project Independence indicating that their AFDC grant was in the process of being reduced (i.e., they were referred for sanction).<sup>14</sup> Almost all of these individuals were deregistered from the program at the end of the 12-month follow-up period. (The term "deregistered" is used throughout this report to indicate

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<sup>13</sup>This percentage includes survey respondents who did not participate in any activities.

<sup>14</sup>"Referrals" for sanction, rather than actual AFDC grant reductions that resulted from sanction requests, are emphasized in this report in part because the data collected from Project Independence casefiles may not have included a complete record of whether the sanctions were actually enforced (i.e., the AFDC grant was reduced). In many instances, case managers closed the individual's Project Independence case for other reasons before they received a notice from the Public Assistance Unit indicating that the sanction had been implemented. In other instances, the casefiles did not contain either a sanction enforcement notice or a formal case closure notice, even though a sanction might have been enforced. Based on information that was found in the casefiles, 5 percent of those who did not attend orientation had a sanction enforced. MDRC's survey of a subsample of program group members provides some evidence that this is a reasonably good estimate of the overall rate at which sanctions resulted in actual AFDC grant reductions. Of those who reported that they did not attend orientation, 8 percent indicated that their AFDC grant had been reduced at some point during the follow-up period for a failure to participate in Project Independence.

that an individual's Project Independence case — though not necessarily her AFDC case — was closed.)<sup>15</sup> Finally, the vast majority of those who did not attend orientation and were not referred for sanction were also deregistered from the program. In many cases, these individuals either were never approved for AFDC or left AFDC quickly.

In sum, 98 percent of the program group either attended orientation or, if they did not, were referred for sanction or deregistered from the program by the end of the follow-up period. In other words, only 2 percent of the program group did not attend orientation and were never subject to formal enforcement procedures even though they remained registered for the program. This is strong evidence that Project Independence staff placed a heavy emphasis on enforcing this initial participation requirement.

It is not clear how many of those who did not attend orientation left the program because they found a job or because they left the AFDC rolls. In all, however, 70 percent of those who did not attend orientation (16 out of 23 program group members in Figure 4.1) were employed at some point during the follow-up period, and 66 percent were employed during either the quarter in which they were randomly assigned or the following quarter.<sup>16</sup> Thirty-two percent of those who never attended orientation also never received AFDC during the follow-up period, and an additional 26 percent were no longer on the AFDC rolls at the end of the follow-up period.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, there is also evidence that enforcement measures did, in fact, lead to eventual orientation attendance. In other words, the initial push from the PASs was not enough to gain compliance with the orientation requirement. An additional pull from a Project Independence case manager was necessary. Overall, 5 percent of those who eventually attended an orientation were referred for a sanction before that point, and 29 percent were sent a Project Independence Failure to Participate Notice for not attending their orientation appointment and not providing good cause.

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<sup>15</sup>Reasons for case closure included: not having been approved for AFDC, leaving AFDC, being employed for 30 or more hours per week, being prevented from participation for health reasons or because child care needs could not be met, and meeting an exemption criterion. Under each of these circumstances, individuals were no longer subject to the Project Independence participation requirements. However, case managers often closed Project Independence cases after completing sanctioning procedures (and the case remained closed) until these individuals complied with the participation requirement or provided "good cause."

Although formal documentation of a case closure was not found in the Project Independence casefiles for some individuals, deregistration was assumed when a case manager provided a clear indication that the individual was no longer in the program. Also, deregistrations were assumed for program group members who never received AFDC payments during the follow-up period and for those who received AFDC for at least one month during the follow-up period but were not receiving AFDC at the end of that period.

<sup>16</sup>Information on employment was taken from Unemployment Insurance data (see Chapter 2).

<sup>17</sup>By contrast, 59 percent of those who attended orientation were employed at some point during the 12-month follow-up period, and 6 percent never received AFDC. However, this analysis cannot determine whether employment and AFDC receipt patterns were causes of not attending orientation or whether the participation mandate caused individuals to find jobs or discontinue their involvement with AFDC.

## II. Project Independence Orientation

This section of the chapter describes two critical aspects of the Project Independence treatment to which program group members were exposed during the orientation sessions. First, it describes the "message" case managers emphasized in the orientation sessions regarding the program's obligations and opportunities. Second, it describes how staff applied the Project Independence job-readiness criteria when they conducted the initial assessment of participants' educational attainment levels and work experience and referred them to their first Project Independence activity.

As indicated in Figure 4.1, 34 percent of the program group attended orientation but did not participate in any other Project Independence activities after orientation. This section concludes by examining the experiences of these individuals.

### A. The "Message" Communicated During Orientation

A key feature of the Project Independence treatment, which is embedded in the orientation, is the "message" that staff communicate and emphasize to participants. This message can be characterized as falling on a continuum between a heavy emphasis on the range of opportunities available through program participation to a heavy emphasis on the requirements of participation and the consequences of failing to meet them. Staff may also emphasize opportunities and obligations equally.

MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey asked Project Independence staff directly about what was actually emphasized in the orientation session in their unit. The findings are presented in Table 4.1, which indicates that the overwhelming majority (83 percent) of Project Independence staff indicated that opportunities and requirements were emphasized equally in their orientation sessions. In addition, half of the staff indicated that they strongly emphasized that continuous participation was mandatory rather than voluntary. These findings support one Project Independence administrator's characterization of the program as "tough, but with a heart."

### B. Up-Front Assessment and Initial Service Referrals

After those who attended orientation received a detailed explanation of Project Independence's opportunities and obligations, case managers conducted an initial assessment of their educational attainment and recent work experience to determine whether they were "ready" to enter the labor market immediately. Based on the outcome of this assessment, case managers referred participants to either up-front job search or a formal assessment of their education and training needs.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the Project Independence job-readiness criteria used during the period when the research sample was randomly assigned resulted in approximately 82 percent of the program



group members' falling into the "job-ready" category (i.e., they had completed at least the tenth grade or had worked in at least 12 of the previous 36 months). However, case managers were given some discretion to override the job-readiness criteria and could refer job-ready participants to further assessment and education or training.<sup>18</sup> MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey asked a series of questions about whether Project Independence staff were likely to make these exceptions. Table 4.1 presents these findings and indicates that only 19 percent of the Project Independence staff reported that they applied the job-readiness criteria very strictly and rarely referred job-ready individuals to education or training.<sup>19</sup> The remaining 81 percent indicated that they were willing to make exceptions to the job-readiness criteria, at least in some circumstances, if not very frequently. This suggests that, on balance, staff applied the job-readiness criteria on a case-by-case basis and were willing to exercise discretion.

Findings from MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey regarding the extent to which staff exercised discretion in applying the job-readiness criteria are confirmed by the patterns of program group members' actual referrals to initial services. According to information collected from Project Independence casefiles, a sizable proportion (28 percent) of the job-ready program group members who attended orientation were referred to formal assessment or to education or training (including activities in which they were already enrolled) as their first activity after orientation.

Table 4.1 also presents information on the degree to which staff emphasized moving participants into jobs as quickly as possible.<sup>20</sup> It indicates that 36 percent of the Project Independence staff would have strongly encouraged a participant to take a job quickly and get off welfare, even if the job would have made her only slightly better off financially. Also shown in Table 4.1 is the finding that only 12

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<sup>18</sup>For example, job-ready participants who were already enrolled in education or training classes, or who were under 24 years old and had no high school diploma or GED, could be exempted from up-front job search if the case manager approved.

<sup>19</sup>Staff were asked a series of nine questions about whether and under what circumstances they were likely to refer job-ready participants with various levels of education and work experience to education or training. Since responses to this series of questions were highly correlated, a scale (ranging from 1 to 7) was constructed by taking the average of their responses to these questions. All respondents with a score of 6 or higher were defined as not likely to make exceptions to the job-readiness criteria. Those with a score of less than 3 were defined as very likely to make exceptions. Those with a score between 3 and 6 were defined as willing to make exceptions in some cases.

<sup>20</sup>Staff were asked a series of four questions about whether and under what circumstances they would encourage a participant to take a low-skill, low-wage job that would make her slightly better off financially or advise her to stay on AFDC and wait for a better opportunity. Since the responses were highly correlated, a scale (ranging from 1 to 7) was constructed by calculating the average response to these four questions. Respondents with a score of 6 or higher were defined as indicating that they would strongly encourage the participant to take the job and leave welfare. Respondents with a score of less than 3 were defined as indicating that they would strongly encourage the participant to stay on welfare until she was offered a job that paid better than the one at hand. Respondents with a score between 3 and 6 were defined as indicating that they would not be inclined to give advice one way or the other.



percent would have strongly encouraged a participant in this situation to stay on welfare and wait for a better opportunity. The remainder of the staff indicated that they would not have been inclined to make a recommendation either way. The fact that about two-thirds of the staff would not have strongly recommended that participants take a job is somewhat surprising, since the Project Independence program model (during the period when the research sample was identified) emphasized job search and was oriented toward getting the vast majority of clients to secure employment as quickly as possible.

Program participants reported receiving a strong message that they should take a job and get off AFDC as quickly as possible, even if the job did not pay substantially more than the amount of their AFDC check. Almost 90 percent of those who responded to MDRC's survey of a subsample of program group members indicated that they thought Project Independence staff would advise them to take such a job rather than stay on AFDC and wait for a better opportunity.

### **C. What Happened to Those Who Did Not Participate in Project Independence Activities After Orientation?**

Like the juncture between referral from a Public Assistance Unit and attendance at Project Independence orientation, the juncture between orientation attendance and participation in specific activities represents a key point at which program group members either stopped complying with the participation mandate, were temporarily excused (i.e., deferred), or were permanently excused from participating (e.g., because they got a job or left AFDC). Forty-four percent of those who attended orientation (34 out of 77 program group members in Figure 4.1) did not participate in any other Project Independence activities. Although this is evidence that a substantial portion of the program group members did not participate in program activities on an ongoing basis, it is consistent with findings from previous studies of welfare-to-work programs, most of which focused only on post-orientation participation. For example, findings from the evaluation of California's GAIN program indicate that 45 percent of those who attended orientation did not participate in any GAIN activities.<sup>21</sup> This result is virtually identical to the comparable measure for Project Independence.

The vast majority (85 percent) of those who attended orientation but did not participate in Project Independence activities were either temporarily deferred from participation, were subject to formal sanctioning procedures, or were deregistered from the program. In a modest percentage of cases (6 percent of the program group), however, it appears that case managers did not follow up with program group members after orientation, even though they remained registered for the program.

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<sup>21</sup>This percentage reflects the average of the percentages for each of the six GAIN research counties, which were weighted equally (see Table 1.3 in Friedlander, Riccio, and Freedman, 1993).

Figure 4.1 indicates that, of those who attended orientation but did not participate in any activities, approximately 21 percent (7 out of 34 program group members in Figure 4.1) were deferred from participation and 12 percent (4 out of 34 program group members in Figure 4.1) were subject to sanction for not participating in the activity to which they were referred. More than half of those who did not participate in any activities (18 out of 34 program group members in Figure 4.1) were eventually deregistered from the program without being deferred or subject to formal enforcement procedures. The remainder of the nonparticipants (5 out of 34 program group members in Figure 4.1) were registered for the program at the end of the follow-up period but never participated and were never subject to formal enforcement procedures or deferred.

### III. Participation in Post-Orientation Activities

This section of the chapter examines the rates of participation in specific types of post-orientation activities including individual job search, job club, basic education, vocational training, and community college courses.<sup>22</sup> This includes participation in activities that occurred after individuals were referred to them by program staff, as well as participation in activities that individuals had already started before entering Project Independence and were allowed to continue as a way of meeting the participation mandate (i.e., "self-initiated activities").<sup>23</sup> Orientation itself, assessments, or meetings with case managers were not counted in this participation measure.

Figure 4.1 indicates that 43 percent of all program group members participated in at least one post-orientation activity. This represents 56 percent of those who attended orientation and is in the range of participation rates reported in other studies of mandatory welfare-to-work programs, where between 38 and 70 percent of orientation attenders took part in at least one activity.<sup>24</sup>

Table 4.2 displays the rates of participation in each type of Project Independence activity, calculated in three different ways to facilitate comparisons with findings from other studies. The first column presents these rates for all program group members, including those who never attended

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<sup>22</sup>Basic education includes ABE, GED preparation, and ESL classes. The tables and figures in this chapter combine vocational training and community college courses in the same category because community college courses usually had a vocational or occupational focus.

<sup>23</sup>Self-initiated activities in which program group members participated included basic education, vocational training, and community college courses. There was no evidence of self-initiated participation in job search programs or job clubs.

<sup>24</sup>See Gueron and Pauly, 1991, and Riccio and Friedlander, 1992. Comparisons with these other programs should be interpreted with caution because they differed from Project Independence and from one another in scale, eligibility requirements, and procedures for bringing mandatory registrants into the program. Programs also differed in terms of the types of services they emphasized.

**TABLE 4.2**  
**RATES OF PARTICIPATION IN PROJECT INDEPENDENCE ACTIVITIES**  
**WITHIN 12 MONTHS AFTER RANDOM ASSIGNMENT**  
**FOR ALL PROGRAM GROUP MEMBERS, ORIENTATION ATTENDERS, AND PARTICIPANTS**

Participation Measure	All Program Group Members (%)	Program Group Members Who Attended an Orientation (%)	Program Group Members Who Participated in any Activity (%)
Ever attended a Project Independence orientation	77.2	100.0	100.0
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (a)	42.9	55.5	100.0
Ever deferred (b)	12.7	15.9	11.5
Ever referred for sanction (b,c)	24.2	17.5	17.0
For missing an orientation	13.9	4.6	4.5
For missing a post-orientation activity	7.2	9.1	7.5
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (b)	3.1	2.6	2.6
Ever received a formal assessment (b)	38.0	49.1	61.3
Ever participated in			
Any job search or job club activity (d)	32.3	41.8	75.3
Job search	31.0	40.1	72.2
Job club	9.9	12.8	23.0
Any education or training activity (d)	17.6	22.8	41.0
Basic education (e)	6.4	8.3	14.9
Training or community college (f)	7.3	9.5	17.1
Self-initiated activities (g)	4.9	6.4	11.5
Both job search and education activities	7.0	9.1	16.3
Sample size	725	555	292

SOURCE: MDRC's program flow subsample.

NOTES: Results are weighted by the full research sample in each county.

(a) Includes self-initiated activities that were approved by Project Independence.

(b) Data for this measure were available only from Project Independence casefiles; therefore, members of the program flow subsample for whom casefiles could not be obtained were not included in the calculations.

(c) Includes sanction referrals for missing an orientation, activity, or other appointment.

(d) Individuals could participate in more than one activity during the follow-up period; therefore, the distribution may exceed the category percentage.

(e) Includes ABE, GED preparation, and ESL.

(f) Includes vocational training and community college courses.

(g) Includes self-initiated basic education, vocational training, and community college courses.

orientation and those who attended orientation but never started an activity. This approach is helpful for understanding the extent to which the entire program group received particular kinds of services. The second column presents the participation rates for only those program group members who attended Project Independence orientation. This information is useful for comparing these results with results from studies of welfare-to-work programs that identified the research sample at orientation. The final column presents participation rates for only those program group members who ever participated in at least one Project Independence activity. These measures are useful for gauging the relative emphasis Project Independence placed on particular services.

Table 4.2 shows that a total of 32 percent of the program group members participated in at least one job search or job club activity during the follow-up period. This represents 75 percent of those who participated in at least one activity and reflects the labor force attachment focus of Project Independence. The table also shows that job search was the most widely used Project Independence activity: 31 percent of the program group (representing 72 percent of those who participated in at least one activity) participated in job search. Also, a total of 10 percent of the program group (23 percent of those who participated in at least one activity) participated in at least one job club — in most cases, after they completed job search.

Table 4.2 also shows that a total of 18 percent of the program group members participated in an education or training activity. This represents 41 percent of those who participated in at least one activity and indicates that Project Independence was not exclusively a job search program. Staff appeared to place at least a modest emphasis on helping participants enhance their employability through education and training. Interestingly, training and community college courses, rather than basic education, represented the most widely used education activities, with 7 percent of the program group (17 percent of those who participated in at least one activity) participating in them. The relatively low rates of participation in Project Independence basic education activities contrast sharply with findings from the GAIN evaluation, which indicate that approximately half of those who were engaged in at least one GAIN activity participated in basic education.<sup>25</sup> Finally, 7 percent of the program group (representing 16 percent of those who participated in at least one activity) participated in both job search (including job club) and education or training activities.

In conclusion, the high rates of participation in job search and job club activities reflect the labor force attachment focus of the Project Independence program model. However, a substantial percentage

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<sup>25</sup>County-specific percentages found in the GAIN evaluation ranged between 35 and 72 (see Riccio and Friedlander, 1992).

of program group members also made use of education and training services, either as their only activity or in combination with job search or job club.

#### **IV. The Duration of Project Independence Registration and Participation**

Table 4.3 presents information on the number of months (during the 12 months following each individual's initial referral to orientation from the Public Assistance Unit) that program group members were registered for the program and the number of months they were actively participating in a Project Independence activity.<sup>26</sup> Like those in Table 4.2, the measures presented in Table 4.3 were calculated in three different ways: for all program group members, only for program group members who attended orientation, and only for program group members who participated in at least one Project Independence activity. Table 4.4 presents measures of the length of time program group members spent in specific activities such as job search or job club, education, or training. These measures are presented only for those who participated in these activities.

The top row of Table 4.3 indicates that, overall, program group members were registered for Project Independence for an average of almost two-thirds of the follow-up period (an average of almost 8 of the 12 months in the follow-up period). More than one-third of the program group were registered for more than 11 months – although they were not necessarily participating in activities for all of that time. Program group members were participating in Project Independence activities for an average of 1.6 months during the follow-up period. This represents less than one-quarter of the average number of months program group members were registered for the program. (Not displayed in Table 4.3 is the finding that those who did not attend orientation were registered for an average of 3 months less than those who attended orientation.)

Table 4.4 presents information on the length of participation in specific Project Independence activities (for program group members who ever participated in them). Overall, those who participated in job search (more than three-quarters of all participants) spent just under 2 of the 12 months of follow-up in that activity. Since job search is a relatively short-term activity, this indicates that many participants were referred to job search more than once during the follow-up period. By contrast, those

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<sup>26</sup>This information is available only for the 639 members (88 percent) of the program flow subsample for whom MDRC staff obtained Project Independence casefiles.

The length of registration and length of participation were calculated as the cumulative number of days in which program group members were registered in Project Independence or participating in activities, respectively. The average number of months was calculated as the average number of cumulative 30-day periods. Length of registration and participation was not necessarily continuous.

TABLE 4.3

**LENGTH OF TIME THAT PROGRAM GROUP MEMBERS WERE REGISTERED FOR  
PROJECT INDEPENDENCE WITHIN 12 MONTHS AFTER RANDOM ASSIGNMENT**

Participation and Measure	All Program Group Members	Program Group Members Who Attended an Orientation	Program Group Members Who Participated in any Activity
Average number of months registered for Project Independence during the follow-up period	7.8	8.4	9.5
Length of time registered for Project Independence during the follow-up period (a) (%)			
1 month or less	2.3	1.2	0.2
2-6 months	36.3	30.2	18.7
7-11 months	22.9	25.1	24.5
More than 11 months	38.5	43.6	56.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Was a Project Independence registrant at 12 months after random assignment (a) (%)	33.4	38.9	51.6
Average number of months participating in Project Independence activities during the follow-up period	1.6	2.0	3.4
Sample size	639	501	263

SOURCE: Program flow subsample members for whom a Project Independence casefile was obtained.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100.0 percent because of rounding. A test of statistical significance was not performed.

(a) This refers to a program group member's status at the end of the 12-month follow-up period. Individuals were not necessarily in this status for the full 12 months.

TABLE 4.4

LENGTH OF TIME THAT PROGRAM GROUP MEMBERS PARTICIPATED IN  
SELECTED ACTIVITIES WITHIN 12 MONTHS AFTER RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

Participation and Measure	Program Group Members Who Participated in the Activity (a)
Average number of months during the follow-up period participating in	
Job search or job club	1.7
Basic education (b)	2.9
Self-initiated activities (c)	5.6
Other education or training	6.6
In the activity 12 months after after random assignment (d) (%)	
Job search or job club	7.2
Basic education (b)	25.1
Self-initiated activities (c)	30.5
Other education or training	62.1

SOURCE: Program flow subsample members for whom a Project Independence casefile was obtained.

NOTES: A test of statistical significance was not performed.

(a) The data include only those program group members who participated in the specified activity for at least one day; therefore, the sample size varies among the activities in the table.

(b) Includes ABE, GED preparation, and ESL.

(c) Includes self-initiated basic education, vocational training, and community college courses.

(d) This refers to a program group member's status at the end of the 12-month follow-up period. Individuals were not necessarily in this status for the full 12 months.



who participated in either basic education or training or community college activities spent almost half of the follow-up period participating in these activities.

Figure 4.2 presents a month-by-month breakdown of the AFDC and Project Independence status of the program group. The sections of each bar in the figure represent mutually exclusive categories.<sup>27</sup> Month 1 in the figure represents the month during which the sample member applied or was redetermined for AFDC eligibility, randomly assigned, and then referred to Project Independence orientation.

Figure 4.2 shows that about two-thirds of the program group members were not subject to the Project Independence participation mandate at the end of the follow-up period (37 percent were not receiving AFDC at that point and another 29 percent were deregistered from the program but were receiving AFDC). The figure shows that the percentage of program group members not receiving AFDC decreased dramatically during the first three months after random assignment as applicants were approved for AFDC.<sup>28</sup> Then the percentage of those not receiving AFDC increased gradually through the remainder of the follow-up period. The percentage of program group members who were receiving AFDC but were no longer subject to the Project Independence participation requirements (i.e., they were deregistered) increased steadily throughout the follow-up period as staff closed cases for those who were either referred for sanction or were no longer mandatory for the program.

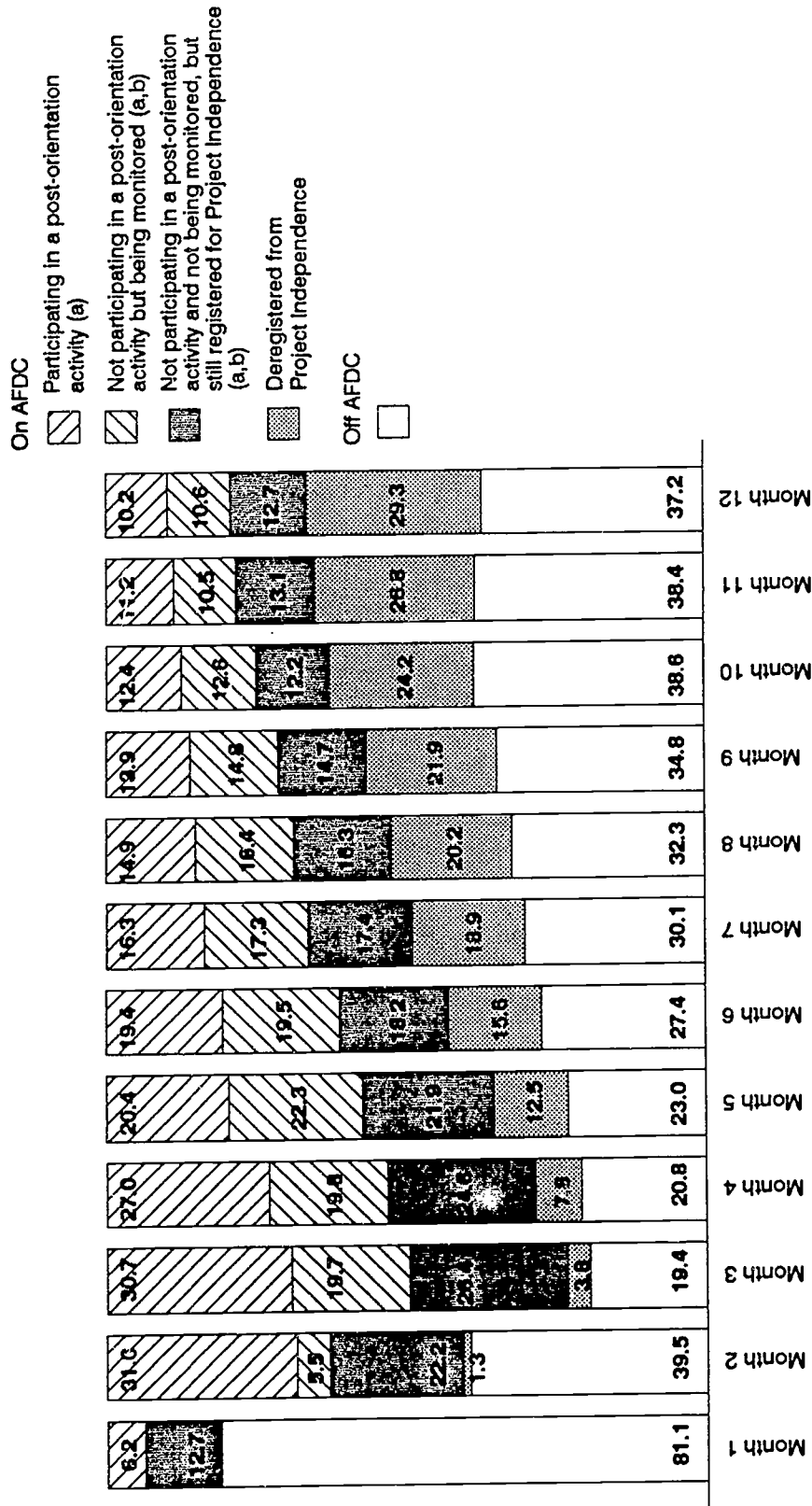
Figure 4.2 also shows that the percentage of program group members participating in program activities peaked in the second month following random assignment and then gradually decreased through the rest of the follow-up period. At the end of the follow-up period, only 10 percent of the program group were participating in activities; an additional 11 percent were still registered and either waiting to start an activity, deferred, or in the process of being sanctioned.

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<sup>27</sup>During any given month, it was possible for an individual to have been receiving AFDC and to have been in more than one of the remaining categories. For example, an individual could have participated in individual job search for part of a month and then to have remained registered and monitored for the remainder of the month. Thus, in order to construct meaningful mutually exclusive categories, a hierarchy was developed to reflect individuals' level of engagement with the program. Those who were deregistered from the program during a given month (and received AFDC) are included in the deregistered category. Those who participated in an activity during a given month (and received AFDC) are included in the "participating" category even if they completed that activity during the month. Those who did not participate in an activity but had been temporarily deferred from participation, were referred to an activity and were waiting to start, or were referred for a sanction during a given month are included in the "not participating but monitored" category. Finally, those with no record of participation or referral to an activity during a given month (but who were registered and received AFDC) are included in the "not participating and not monitored" category.

<sup>28</sup>Month 1 represents the month of random assignment, which, for many sample members, occurred before AFDC eligibility was determined. This is reflected in the high percentage of program group members not receiving AFDC in month 1 (81 percent) and the dramatic decline (to 19 percent) in month 3 as their applications were approved.

**FIGURE 4.2**  
**MONTH-BY-MONTH AFDC AND PROJECT INDEPENDENCE STATUS**  
**FOR THE PROGRAM GROUP WITHIN 12 MONTHS AFTER RANDOM ASSIGNMENT**



SOURCES: Program flow subsample members for whom a Project Independence casefile was obtained and Florida AFDC records.

NOTES: Results are weighted by the research sample in each county.

(a) Post-orientation activities include individual job search, job club, basic education, training, and community college activities. Orientation, assessment, and case management appointments are not included.

(b) Program group members were defined as being "monitored" if they were registered for Project Independence and were referred to an activity (but had not yet started it), were temporarily excused from participation (deferred), or were in the process of being referred for a sanction.

## CHAPTER 5

### PARTICIPATION PATTERNS FOR SELECTED SUBGROUPS

This chapter examines Project Independence participation patterns for three sets of subgroups within the full research sample. These sets of subgroups are defined by the age of the youngest child, the Project Independence job-readiness criteria, and previous AFDC receipt. The chapter also examines variations in participation patterns among the nine research counties.

The analysis focuses on those participation measures used in Chapter 4 that represent key features of the Project Independence program flow. As in the previous chapter, the tables in this chapter present the participation measures for all program group members, including those who did not attend Project Independence orientation, and then for only those who attended orientation. In addition, the analysis focuses on program group members who did not attend orientation and presents the rates at which they were referred for a sanction and the rates at which they were eventually deregistered from the program.

#### **I. Participation Patterns for Subgroups Defined by the Age of the Youngest Child**

This first set of subgroups distinguishes between sample members whose youngest child was between three and five years old (i.e., preschoolage) at the time of random assignment and those whose youngest child was age six or older. Most prior studies of welfare-to-work programs have focused only on single parents with children age six or older. Findings on Project Independence participation patterns for single parents with preschoolage children will be among the first available for a JOBS program. The analysis presented here will also explore whether child care needs and availability affected participation for single parents with preschoolage children.

The findings presented in this section indicate that Project Independence was able to implement the JOBS participation mandate, and to deliver employment and training services, both for the original pre-JOBS group of mandatory registrants (i.e., those whose youngest child was age six or older) and for the new JOBS-mandatory group (i.e., those with children between the ages of three and five).<sup>1</sup> The participation patterns for these two subgroups were generally similar in terms of their compliance with the initial participation mandate (i.e., to attend Project Independence orientation), the mix of services they received, and the average number of months they participated. There were moderate differences between

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<sup>1</sup>As noted in Chapter 1, Project Independence anticipated JOBS by mandating participation for single-parent AFDC applicants and recipients whose youngest child is three years old or older.

the two subgroups in the overall rate at which they participated in activities and in the average number of months they were registered. Table 5.1 presents the key participation measures for these two subgroups.

The top panel of Table 5.1 indicates that more than three-quarters of both subgroups attended Project Independence orientation. A total of 80 percent of the program group members whose youngest child was age six or older attended orientation, compared to 76 percent of those with preschoolage children. Among those who did not go to orientation, however, those with preschoolage children were much more likely to be referred for a sanction than were those whose youngest child was age six or older. This may be due in part to the fact that those with older children were less likely to have been approved for AFDC and thus more likely to have been deregistered quickly. In fact, at the end of the follow-up period, more than 90 percent of those from both subgroups who had not attended orientation were either deregistered from the program or, if they were registered, had been referred for a sanction.

Among those who attended orientation, 52 percent of those with preschoolage children participated in at least one activity, compared to 60 percent of those whose oldest child was age six or older. This difference suggests that the child care needs of those with preschoolage children may have been more of a hindrance to their capacity to begin activities. However, once engaged in the program, those with younger children used essentially the same mix of services and participated in these activities for just as long as those whose youngest child was age six or older. Among program group members who attended orientation, 41 percent of those with preschoolage children participated in job search or job club and 21 percent participated in education or training activities. The comparable figures for those with older children were 44 percent and 23 percent, respectively. In fact (not shown in Table 5.1), those with preschoolage children were somewhat more likely to participate in both education and job search activities (11 percent) than were those whose youngest child was age six or older (7 percent). Finally, members of both subgroups who attended orientation participated in Project Independence activities during approximately two months of the follow-up period, and (not shown in Table 5.1) approximately 13 percent of each subgroup was participating at the end of the follow-up period.

It is somewhat surprising that the overall differences in participation rates among these two subgroups were not larger, since child care needs were more likely to have been a barrier to participation among those with preschoolage children — particularly since they were also more likely to have had three or more children. However, the aggregate similarities discussed above appear to mask changes in participation patterns that occurred after December 1990, when HRS began to restrict the availability of child care for Project Independence participants (see Chapter 3). Specifically, although participation patterns for both subgroups were similar prior to January 1991, thereafter those whose youngest child

**TABLE 5.1**  
**PROJECT INDEPENDENCE FIRST-YEAR PARTICIPATION PATTERNS**  
**FOR ALL PROGRAM GROUP MEMBERS AND FOR SUBGROUPS**  
**DEFINED BY AGE OF YOUNGEST CHILD**

Sample and Participation Measure	All Program Group Members	Subgroups, by Age of Youngest Child	
		Ages 3 to 5	Age 6 or Older
<b><u>All program group members</u></b>			
Attended orientation (%)	77.2	75.7	80.1
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (a) (%)	42.9	39.0	47.7 **
Ever participated in any job search or job club activity (%)	32.3	31.3	35.3
Ever participated in any education or training activity (b) (%)	17.6	16.2	18.2
Sanctioning (c)			
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	24.2	29.7	19.7 ***
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	3.1	2.9	3.0
Average number of months registered (c)	7.8	8.1	7.5 **
Average number of months participating (c)	1.6	1.6	1.5
Sample size	725	296	368
<b><u>Program group members who attended orientation</u></b>			
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (a) (%)	55.5	51.5	59.6 *
Ever participated in any job search or job club activity (%)	41.8	41.3	44.0
Ever participated in any education or training activity (b) (%)	22.8	21.4	22.7
Sanctioning (c)			
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	17.5	20.7	15.1
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	2.6	2.3	2.8
Average number of months registered (c)	8.4	8.8	8.0
Average number of months participating (c)	2.0	2.1	1.9
Sample size	555	223	292
<b><u>Program group members who did not attend orientation</u></b>			
Sanctioning (c)			
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	50.4	60.7	40.4 **
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	5.1	5.2	3.7
Average number of months registered (c)	5.5	5.7	5.0
Was registered at end of follow-up period and had never received a sanction notice (e) (%)	9.8	7.9	9.8
Sample size	292	73	76

SOURCE: Program flow subsample.

NOTES: Sample sizes for subgroups defined by the age of the youngest child do not add to the sample size for all program group members because of missing data. Therefore, the weighted average of the percentages of the subgroups within a measure does not equal the percentage for all program group members.

A chi-square test or two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between subgroups defined by the age of the youngest child. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

(a) Includes self-initiated activities that were approved by Project Independence.

(b) Includes both program-arranged and self-initiated ABE, GED preparation, ESL, vocational training, and community college courses.

(c) Data for this measure were available only from Project Independence casefiles; therefore, members of the program flow subsample for whom casefiles could not be obtained were not included in the calculations.

(d) Includes sanction referrals for missing an orientation, activity, or other appointment.

(e) This refers to a program group member's status at the end of the 12-month follow-up period. Individuals were not necessarily in this status for the full 12 months.



was age six or older had somewhat higher rates of participation than did those with preschoolage children. In general, this appears to have been due to an increase in participation among those whose youngest child was age six or older that did not occur among those with preschoolage children.

Appendix Table C.1 presents the selected participation measures for the two age-of-youngest-child subgroups within each of two random assignment cohorts (September 1990 through December 1990 and January 1991 through May 1991).<sup>2</sup> It shows, first, that the orientation attendance rates among program group members with preschoolage children declined across the two cohorts (from 80 percent to 72 percent), while it increased slightly for those whose youngest child was age six or older (from 78 percent to 83 percent). Appendix Table C.1 also shows that, among those who attended orientation, the difference between the two subgroups in their rates of participation in at least one activity was much larger after December 1990. For example, participation rates for orientation attenders with preschoolage children increased only slightly across the two cohorts (from 49 percent to 54 percent), while participation rates for those whose youngest child was age six or older increased more dramatically (from 55 percent to 68 percent).

Project Independence staff also appear to have increased the rate at which they deregistered those with preschoolage children after the child care restrictions went into effect. In fact, deregistrations for program group members with younger children increased across the two cohorts (from 61 percent to 73 percent), while deregistrations for those whose youngest child was age six or older actually decreased<sup>2</sup> (from 71 percent to 61 percent). This pattern was particularly striking among those who did not attend orientation, suggesting that Project Independence staff were probably accepting the need for subsidized child care as a "good cause" reason for missing an orientation appointment and, ultimately, for being deregistered from the program. Recall that JOBS regulations allow single parents with preschoolage children to be exempted from participation if their child care needs cannot be met.

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<sup>2</sup>A "cohort" is a group of people who experience a particular event or events – in this case, random assignment – during the same time period. As noted in Chapter 3, restrictions on the availability of subsidized child care for Project Independence participants were implemented at different rates and at different levels, depending on the HRS service district (and, therefore, county). However, all districts began implementing some cutbacks in January 1991, and the cutbacks expanded thereafter, with subsidized child care eventually being eliminated in many districts. The research sample members who were randomly assigned before January 1, 1991, represent a cohort of individuals who were referred to Project Independence – and, in most cases, began participation – when subsidized child care was most widely available. Although there may have been some variation in the availability of child care over time and across the research counties for those randomly assigned after January 1, 1991, this cohort, on average, had much less access to subsidized child care while participating in Project Independence. Since the program flow subsample (on which the analysis in this chapter is based) consists of program group members who were randomly assigned between September 1990 and May 1991, the cohorts for this analysis are defined as September 1990 through December 1990 and January 1991 through May 1991.

## II. Participation Patterns for Subgroups Defined by the Project Independence Job-Readiness Criteria

This second set of subgroups was defined on the basis of the Project Independence job-readiness criteria that were used during the period when the research sample was identified. According to these criteria, a person was job-ready if she had attained the tenth grade in school or had worked in at least 12 of the previous 36 months. These criteria were the basis for determining participants' initial service referral.<sup>3</sup> The findings presented in this section indicate that a high percentage of both the job-ready and the not job-ready subgroups complied with the initial participation mandate (i.e., to attend orientation) or were subject to formal enforcement procedures. However, as expected, the subgroups received a substantially different mix of services. The two subgroups also differed in the length of time they were registered for Project Independence and were participating in activities during the follow-up period. Table 5.2 presents the key participation measures for the two job-readiness subgroups.

The top panel of Table 5.2 shows that 77 percent of the job-ready subgroup attended orientation, compared to 83 percent of the not job-ready subgroup. Although not shown in Table 5.2, two reasons for this difference may be that the job-ready sample members were less likely to have been approved for AFDC and were more likely to have found employment without help from Project Independence. At the same time, however, those defined as job-ready were more likely to have been referred for a sanction than were those defined as not job-ready.

The middle panel of Table 5.2 shows that, among those who attended orientation, more than half of the job-ready subgroup (57 percent) participated in at least one activity, compared to slightly fewer than half of the not job-ready subgroup (49 percent). Not surprisingly, the job-ready subgroup had much higher rates of participation in job search activities, while the not job-ready subgroup had higher rates of participation in education and training activities. However, a substantial percentage of the job-ready subgroup did participate in education and training activities (22 percent), and an even larger percentage of the not job-ready subgroup participated in job search activities (33 percent). This is evidence that case managers were persistent in linking participants with education services if they needed them. Although not shown in Table 5.2, 13 percent of the not job-ready subgroup participated in both education and job search activities (compared to 8 percent of the job-ready subgroup). This is evidence that case managers

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<sup>3</sup>To ascertain which sample members met (or did not meet) these criteria, the program group members' Background Information Forms (BIFs) were analyzed with respect to educational attainment levels and work experience. That information served as the basis for constructing the job-ready and not job-ready subgroups used in the present analysis (and in Table 5.2). As discussed in Chapter 4, however, case managers had (and used) some discretion to make exceptions to the job-readiness criteria when they referred individuals to their first activity.



**TABLE 5.2**  
**PROJECT INDEPENDENCE FIRST-YEAR PARTICIPATION PATTERNS**  
**FOR ALL PROGRAM GROUP MEMBERS AND FOR SUBGROUPS**  
**DEFINED BY JOB-READINESS STATUS**

Sample and Participation Measure	All Program Group Members	Subgroups, by Job-Readiness Status	
		Job-ready	Not job-ready
<b>All program group members</b>			
Attended orientation (%)	77.2	77.1	83.4
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (a) (%)	42.9	43.7	40.6
Ever participated in any job search or job club activity (%)	32.3	33.3	27.5
Ever participated in any education or training activity (b) (%)	17.6	16.7	24.2
Sanctioning (c)			
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	24.2	26.0	14.9 *
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	3.1	3.4	1.4
Average number of months registered (c)	7.8	7.7	8.2
Average number of months participating (c)	1.6	1.6	1.1
Sample size	725	611	68
<b>Program group members who attended orientation</b>			
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (a) (%)	55.5	56.7	48.7
Ever participated in any job search or job club activity (%)	41.8	43.2	33.0
Ever participated in any education or training activity (b) (%)	22.8	21.6	29.0
Sanctioning (c)			
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	17.5	19.2	12.5
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	2.6	2.9	1.6
Average number of months registered (c)	8.4	8.3	8.4
Average number of months participating (c)	2.0	2.0	1.3
Sample size	555	468	55
<b>Program group members who did not attend orientation</b>			
Sanctioning (c)			
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	50.4	51.5	--
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	5.1	5.1	--
Average number of months registered (c)	5.5	5.5	--
Was registered at end of follow-up period and had never received a sanction notice (e) (%)	9.8	9.9	--
Sample size	292	143	13

SOURCE: Program flow subsample.

NOTES: Sample members are defined as "job-ready" if they had completed at least 10th grade or were employed for at least 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. Sample members are defined as "not job-ready" if they had not completed 10th grade and were employed for less than 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. These definitions are based on the criteria used by Project Independence during the random assignment period.

Sample sizes for subgroups defined by job-readiness status do not add to the sample size for all program group members because of missing data. Therefore, the weighted average of the percentages of the subgroups within a measure does not equal the percentage for all program group members.

Dashes indicate that the calculation was omitted because the sample size is less than 20.

A chi-square test or two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between subgroups defined by job-readiness status. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

(a) Includes self-initiated activities that were approved by Project Independence.

(b) Includes both program-arranged and self-initiated ABE, GED preparation, ESL, vocational training, and community college courses.

(c) Data for this measure were available only from Project Independence casefiles; therefore, members of the program flow subsample for whom casefiles could not be obtained were not included in the calculations.

(d) Includes sanction referrals for missing an orientation, activity, or other appointment.

(e) This refers to a program group member's status at the end of the 12-month follow-up period. Individuals were not necessarily in this status for the full 12 months.

pursued job placements even after participants completed their education and training activities.

Finally, the middle panel of Table 5.2 indicates that both subgroups were registered for the program for just over eight months of the follow-up period, but that the job-ready subgroup participated in activities for more than half a month longer than the not job-ready subgroup (i.e., two months compared to 1.3 months). This is due, in large part, to the fact that the not job-ready subgroup was less likely to participate in activities at all.

As noted in Chapter 1, the Project Independence job-readiness criteria were modified in October 1991 to provide more of the caseload with the option of participating in education and training activities.<sup>4</sup> An important rationale for this modification was that many of the job-ready participants (particularly those with no high school diploma or GED) may not have been served effectively by the program's up-front emphasis on individual job search. The following discussion provides an assessment of this hypothesis by exploring whether those defined as job-ready under the original job-readiness criteria, but who did not have a high school diploma or GED, received different services than the remainder of the job-ready subgroup and those who were defined as not job-ready. Chapter 6 examines the program's impacts on earnings and AFDC payments for this subgroup.

Appendix Table C.2 presents the selected participation measures for three subgroups defined by combinations of the original and modified job-readiness criteria. The first subgroup includes those who would be defined as job-ready using either set of criteria. The second subgroup includes those who would be defined as job-ready using the original criteria, but would be defined as not job-ready using the new criteria because they have no high school diploma or GED. The latter subgroup represents 13 percent of the full program group sample and 16 percent of the job-ready subgroup (as defined by the original criteria).<sup>5</sup> The third subgroup includes those who would be defined as not job-ready using either set of criteria.

Did the middle subgroup receive a treatment different from what the other two received? The findings presented in Appendix Table C.2 indicate that those who would originally have been defined as job-ready but who would now be defined as not job-ready were the least likely to participate in Project

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<sup>4</sup>Under the modified job-readiness criteria, the job-ready subgroup is defined as those who have a high school diploma or GED *or* have worked in at least 12 of the 24 months prior to orientation. The not job-ready subgroup is defined as those who have no high school diploma or GED *and* have not worked in at least 12 of the 24 months prior to orientation. It is not likely that the change in the job-readiness criteria affected members of the research sample during the follow-up period, since almost all of the program group members who attended orientation did so before the change was made.

<sup>5</sup>It was not possible to define research sample members according to the complete set of revised job-readiness criteria because the BIFs only collected data on employment in the previous 36 months (in accordance with the original job-readiness criteria), not the previous 24 months.

Independence activities. For example, among those who attended orientation, 44 percent of the middle subgroup participated in at least one activity, compared to 59 percent of those who would be defined as job-ready using both the original and new criteria and 49 percent of those who would be defined as not job-ready using both sets of criteria. Also, among those who attended orientation, this middle subgroup received a different mix of services than did either of the other two subgroups. They were less likely to participate in job search activities than the job-ready subgroup (36 percent compared to 44 percent), but they were also less likely to participate in education activities than the not job-ready subgroup (17 percent compared to 29 percent). These findings suggest that this was a particularly difficult subgroup to serve using the original criteria because they may not have been ready for (or successful at) individual job search, yet they did not have high rates of participation in education and training activities. Using the modified job-readiness criteria, their needs may be met more appropriately because education and training are more accessible to them.

### **III. Participation Patterns for Subgroups Defined by Previous AFDC Receipt**

The third set of subgroups splits the research sample by program group members' history of AFDC receipt prior to random assignment: first-time applicants, AFDC receipt of less than two years ("short-term" applicants and recipients), and AFDC receipt of two years or more ("long-term" applicants and recipients).<sup>6</sup> Information about the Project Independence participation patterns of these subgroups is important because JOBS provides strong incentives for states to serve long-term AFDC recipients.<sup>7</sup> Table 5.3 presents selected participation measures for these subgroups.

The findings presented in Table 5.3 indicate that participation patterns among the three subgroups were generally quite similar. At least three-quarters of each subgroup attended orientation, and more than half of those who attended orientation participated in at least one activity. Among those who did not attend orientation, the long-term applicants and recipients were especially likely to be referred for a sanction. This indicates that the Project Independence staff made a special effort to enforce the

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<sup>6</sup>These definitions differ from those used in other MDRC studies of welfare-to-work programs. In most of these studies, applicants are defined as a single group, and only ongoing recipients are divided into subgroups defined by long-term and short-term AFDC histories. Appendix Table C.3 presents selected participation measures for subgroups of both applicants and recipients defined by long-term and short-term AFDC histories. The findings presented in that table indicate that long-term recipients had higher rates of participation than long-term applicants. However, short-term recipients had lower participation rates than short-term applicants.

<sup>7</sup>Specifically, federal law requires that a minimum of 55 percent of JOBS expenditures be directed to participants who belong to specified "target groups." One of these target groups includes those who have received AFDC for a minimum of 36 of the previous 60 months.

**TABLE 5.3**  
**PROJECT INDEPENDENCE FIRST-YEAR PARTICIPATION PATTERNS**  
**FOR ALL PROGRAM GROUP MEMBERS AND FOR SUBGROUPS**  
**DEFINED BY PRIOR AFDC RECEIPT**

Sample and Participation Measure	All Program Group Members	Subgroups, by Prior AFDC Receipt		
		None	Less Than 2 Years	2 Years or More
<b>All program group members</b>				
Attended orientation (%)	77.2	75.3	75.6	82.6
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (a) (%)	42.9	44.2	39.4	43.9
Ever participated in any job search or job club activity (%)	32.3	32.4	30.2	32.7
Ever participated in any education or training activity (b) (%)	17.6	18.8	15.5	18.8
Sanctioning (c)				
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	24.2	23.6	26.6	26.6
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	3.1	2.2	4.2	4.1
Average number of months registered (c)	7.8	7.3	8.1	7.9 *
Average number of months participating (c)	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.4
Sample size	725	284	209	200
<b>Program group members who attended orientation</b>				
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (a) (%)	55.5	58.8	52.2	53.1
Ever participated in any job search or job club activity (%)	41.8	43.0	39.9	39.5
Ever participated in any education or training activity (b) (%)	22.8	24.9	20.6	22.8
Sanctioning (c)				
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	17.5	16.6	21.1	18.6
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	2.6	1.8	2.9	4.2
Average number of months registered (c)	8.4	7.9	9.0	8.2
Average number of months participating (c)	2.0	2.2	1.9	1.7
Sample size	555	208	160	162
<b>Program group members who did not attend orientation</b>				
Sanctioning (c)				
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	50.4	47.0	47.1	67.5
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	5.1	3.6	9.0	3.6
Average number of months registered (c)	5.5	5.2	5.0	6.3
Was registered at end of follow-up period and had never received a sanction notice (e) (%)	9.8	7.0	11.3	11.7
Sample size	292	76	49	38

SOURCE: Program flow subsample.

NOTES: "Prior AFDC receipt" refers to the total number of months accumulated from one or more spells on an individual's own or spouse's AFDC case. It does not include AFDC receipt under a parent's name.

Sample sizes for subgroups defined by prior AFDC receipt do not add to the sample size for all program group members because of missing data. Therefore, the weighted average of the percentages of the subgroups within a measure does not equal the percentage for all program group members.

An F test was applied to differences among subgroups defined by prior AFDC receipt. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

(a) Includes self-initiated activities that were approved by Project Independence.

(b) Includes both program-arranged and self-initiated ABE, GED preparation, ESL, vocational training, and community college courses.

(c) Data for this measure were available only from Project Independence casefiles; therefore, members of the program flow subsample for whom casefiles could not be obtained were not included in the calculations.

(d) Includes sanction referrals for missing an orientation, activity, or other appointment.

(e) This refers to a program group member's status at the end of the 12-month follow-up period. Individuals were not necessarily in this status for the full 12 months.

participation mandate for this subgroup (many of whom belonged to a JOBS target group). Among those who attended orientation, the first-time applicants were the most likely to participate in at least one activity. The rates of participation in particular types of activities were generally similar among the three subgroups. Table 5.3 also indicates moderate differences among the subgroups in the length of time they were registered for Project Independence and participated in activities during the follow-up period.

#### **IV. Participation Patterns Across the Research Counties**

The pooled results discussed in Chapter 4 and in this chapter mask potential variation in the Project Independence treatment among the nine research counties. The counties represent different policy and administrative decisions made at the district level,<sup>8</sup> different service delivery strategies at the local (i.e., unit) level, different economic conditions, and different client characteristics. The key treatment measures for each county and for the full nine-county sample are presented in Table 5.4.

The findings presented in Table 5.4 indicate considerable variation across counties in level of compliance with the initial participation mandate (i.e., orientation attendance), the use of sanction referrals, the overall levels of service receipt, and the mix of services participants received. The top panel of Table 5.4 shows that rates of orientation attendance ranged from 57 percent in Orange County to more than 85 percent in Bay, Dade, and Volusia. The bottom panel of Table 5.4 shows that Lee, Orange, and Pinellas were the counties least likely to refer individuals for a sanction if they did not attend orientation, whereas Broward, Duval, Hillsborough, and Volusia had the highest rates.

The middle panel of Table 5.4 indicates that, among those who attended orientation, the percentage who participated in at least one Project Independence activity was lowest in Orange (42 percent) and Pinellas (44 percent) and highest in Dade (67 percent) and Lee (61 percent). The counties appear to have varied most in rates of participation in education and training activities. Among those who attended orientation, fewer than 10 percent participated in education activities in Broward and Orange, compared to more than 25 percent in Bay, Dade, Hillsborough, Lee, and Volusia. In fact, Bay and Volusia had higher rates of participation in education activities than in job search activities.

Finally, Table 5.4 indicates that there was a great deal of variation among the counties in the average number of months in which program group members were registered for Project Independence and participated in activities. Program group members in Dade and Orange were registered for an average of more than nine months during the follow-up period, and more than 40 percent were registered

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<sup>8</sup>As noted in Chapter 3, HRS service districts usually encompassed several counties.

TABLE 5.4

## PROJECT INDEPENDENCE FIRST—YEAR PARTICIPATION PATTERNS, BY COUNTY

Sample and Participation Measure	All Counties	Bay	Broward	Dade	Duval	Hillsborough	Lee	Orange	Pinellas	Volusia
<b>All program group members</b>										
Attended orientation (%)	77.2	85.0	68.3	118.3	73.8	71.7	81.0	57.1	74.5	85.5 ***
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (a) (%)	42.9	40.0	35.0	59.2	34.4	37.5	49.2	23.8	32.7	40.3 ***
Ever participated in any job search or job club activity (%)	32.3	21.7	31.7	44.2	27.0	24.2	41.3	20.6	25.5	22.6 ***
Ever participated in any education or training activity (b) (%)	17.6	23.3	3.3	28.3	10.7	20.8	20.6	4.8	9.1	9.7 ***
<b>Sanctioning (c)</b>										
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	24.2	12.7	45.6	10.9	39.3	35.9	19.0	18.9	20.0	23.3 ***
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	3.1	0.0	3.5	1.0	5.6	7.8	1.6	3.8	0.0	5.0 *
Average number of months registered (c)	7.8	6.9	4.0	9.4	7.6	7.2	5.8	9.1	8.4	7.2
Average number of months participating (c)	1.6	1.3	0.5	2.5	1.2	1.7	1.7	0.5	1.1	1.6
Sample size	725	60	60	120	122	120	63	63	55	62
<b>Program group members who attended orientation</b>										
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (a) (%)	55.5	47.1	51.2	67.0	46.7	52.3	60.8	41.7	43.9	47.2 ***
Ever participated in any job search or job club activity (%)	41.8	25.5	46.3	50.0	36.7	33.7	51.0	36.1	34.1	26.4 **
Ever participated in any education or training activity (b) (%)	22.8	27.5	4.9	32.1	14.4	29.1	25.5	8.3	12.2	28.3 ***
<b>Sanctioning (c)</b>										
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	17.5	8.3	38.5	8.5	21.8	26.0	17.6	18.8	16.1	15.1 ***
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	2.6	0.0	2.6	1.1	3.8	5.3	2.0	6.3	0.0	5.7
Average number of months registered (c)	8.4	7.1	4.1	9.7	8.6	7.9	6.5	8.9	9.6	7.5
Average number of months participating (c)	2.0	1.5	0.8	2.0	1.7	2.3	2.1	0.8	1.4	1.8
Sample size	555	51	41	106	90	86	51	36	41	53
<b>Program group members who did not attend orientation</b>										
Sanctioning (c)										
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	50.4	42.9	61.1	42.9	66.2	57.1	25.0	19.0	33.3	65.7 **
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	5.1	0.0	5.6	0.0	10.3	14.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Average number of months registered (c)	5.5	6.0	3.6	5.3	4.7	5.2	2.6	9.5	4.4	5.1
Was registered at end of follow-up period and had never received a sanction notice (e) (%)	9.8	12.5	5.6	0.0	3.3	3.3	8.3	32.0	0.0	0.0 ***
Sample size	292	9	19	14	32	34	12	27	14	9

(continued)



TABLE 5.4 (continued)

SOURCE: Program flow subsample.

NOTES: In the "all counties" column, results are weighted by the full research sample in each county.

An F test was applied to differences among counties. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

(a) Includes self-initiated activities that were approved by Project Independence.

(b) Includes both program-arranged and self-initiated ABE, GED preparation, ESL, vocational training, and community college courses.

(c) Data for this measure were available only from Project Independence casefiles; therefore, members of the program flow subsample for whom casefiles could not be obtained were not included in the calculations.

(d) Includes sanction referrals for missing an orientation, activity, or other appointment.

(e) This refers to a program group member's status at the end of the 12-month follow-up period. Individuals were not necessarily in this status for the full 12 months.



at the end of the follow-up period (not shown in the table). By contrast, program group members in Broward were registered for an average of four months, and only 5 percent were registered at the end of the follow-up period (not shown in the table).

#### V. Explaining County Variation in Participation Patterns: A Preliminary Exploration

Table 5.5 includes measures of the local environment (from Chapter 2), Project Independence organizational capacity (from Chapter 3), and staff case management practices (from Chapter 4), as well as selected participation measures (from Table 5.4). County comparisons must be interpreted cautiously or they can lead to misleading conclusions about "what conditions or practices work best."<sup>9</sup> Judgments must be made about the possible influence of a whole host of factors that can affect a county's participation patterns before drawing any inferences about the role of any specific characteristics or practices. With these limitations clearly recognized, this final section of the chapter offers a brief and preliminary exploration of whether differences in the counties' local environment, organizational capacity, and staff practices were associated with the counties' participation patterns during the 12-month follow-up period. Further examinations of these associations may be pursued in the final report.

The findings discussed in the previous section reveal a few consistent patterns across several participation measures in some counties. For example, in Dade and Lee, orientation attendance rates and rates of participation in job search and education activities were consistently higher than the rates for the full research sample. In Broward, Duval, Orange, and Pinellas, these measures were consistently lower than the rates for the full sample. This raises the question of whether these two groups of counties have any characteristics that might explain their different participation patterns.

The data presented in Table 5.5 do not reveal any obvious or consistent relationships between county participation patterns and local environment, Project Independence organizational capacity, or staff practices. For example, Dade and Lee rank consistently high on the participation measures, but the registrant-to-staff ratio reported by case managers was well above average in Dade and well below average in Lee. A similar split can be seen among the four counties that rank consistently lower on the participation measures. Broward and Duval staff reported below-average registrant-to-staff ratios, while staff in Orange and Pinellas reported above-average ratios.

There also does not appear to be a relationship between rates of participation in job search and the percentage of staff who reported a high emphasis on making immediate placements. For example, none

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<sup>9</sup>See Riccio and Friedlander, 1992; Friedlander, Riccio, and Freedman, 1993; and Cave and Doolittle, 1991, for further discussion of these issues.

TABLE 5.5

SELECTED MEASURES OF COUNTY ENVIRONMENTS, FIRST-YEAR PARTICIPATION PATTERNS, PROGRAM ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY, AND CASE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Measure	All Counties	Bay	Broward	Dade	Duval	Hillsborough	Lee	Orange	Pinellas	Volusia
<b>Local environment</b>										
Unemployment rate, 1991 (%)	7.3	8.0	7.4	8.7	6.6	6.0	6.4	6.6	6.2	6.9
Percent of all workers employed in the service sector, 1990	30.9	25.6	32.9	32.1	25.7	31.8	28.8	35.9	33.1	31.1
<b>First-year participation for all program group members</b>										
Attended orientation (%)	77.2	85.0	68.3	88.3	73.8	71.7	81.0	57.1	74.5	85.5
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (a) (%)	42.9	40.0	35.0	59.2	34.4	37.5	49.2	23.8	32.7	40.3
Ever participated in any job search or job club activity (%)	32.3	21.7	31.7	44.2	27.0	24.2	41.3	20.6	25.5	22.6
Ever participated in any education or training activity (b) (%)	17.6	23.3	3.3	28.3	10.7	20.8	20.6	4.8	9.1	24.2
<b>Program organizational capacity</b>										
Average registrant-to-staff ratio reported by case managers (c)	201	216	151	222	198	143	107	256	229	305
Staff who rated availability of program services as high (%)	80.4	100.0	84.2	76.5	82.1	76.0	100.0	83.3	77.8	100.0
All services (d)	82.1	100.0	94.1	75.8	92.9	88.0	66.7	91.7	58.8	85.7
Job club	82.4	100.0	89.5	79.4	74.1	84.0	100.0	91.7	76.5	100.0
Basic education (e)	75.8	100.0	73.7	74.6	81.5	68.0	66.7	66.7	77.8	100.0
Training and community college (f)										
Staff who rated program services as worthwhile for assigned participants (%)	63.7	25.0	68.4	66.7	50.0	70.8	66.7	33.3	94.4	42.9
All services (d)	67.1	25.0	64.7	70.8	57.7	79.2	66.7	50.0	75.0	66.7
Job club	70.1	50.0	73.7	72.7	52.0	83.3	66.7	58.3	94.1	28.6
Basic education (e)	68.9	75.0	68.4	69.7	60.0	66.7	66.7	54.6	88.9	71.4
Training and community college (f)										

(continued)

TABLE 5.5 (continued)

Measure	All Counties	Bay	Broward	Dade	Duval	Hillsborough	Lee	Orange	Pinellas	Volusia
<b>Case management practices</b>										
Staff who were very likely to request a sanction for noncompliance (%)	62.8	75.0	76.5	42.1	69.6	76.0	100.0	58.3	70.6	100.0
Staff who rated sanctioning as a very effective enforcement measure (%)	40.1	50.0	33.3	46.7	43.5	32.0	66.7	25.0	31.3	50.0
Staff rating of orientation's emphasis on opportunities versus requirements (%)	6.4	0.0	0.0	13.9	0.0	8.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
High emphasis on opportunities	10.4	25.0	16.7	6.2	16.0	8.7	0.0	25.0	0.0	14.3
High emphasis on requirements	83.2	75.0	83.3	80.0	84.0	82.6	100.0	75.0	100.0	85.7
Equal emphasis on both										
Staff who rated emphasis on immediate job placement as high (%)	36.1	25.0	33.3	39.1	33.3	40.7	0.0	53.8	18.8	33.3
Staff who considered monitoring to be timely (%)	30.1	0.0	47.4	26.5	35.7	30.8	66.7	25.0	29.4	0.0

SOURCES: Tables 2.1, 5.4, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, and additional data from MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100.0 percent because of rounding.

(a) Includes self-initiated activities that were approved by Project Independence.

(b) Includes both program-arranged and self-initiated ABE, GED preparation, ESL, vocational training, and community college courses.

(c) These caseload sizes include both voluntary and mandatory registrants who could be either active or deferred.

(d) Includes average responses to questions about job club, ABE, GED, ESL, training and vocational education, and community college services.

(e) Includes average responses to questions about ABE, GED, and ESL services.

(f) Includes average responses to questions about training, vocational education, and community college services.

of the staff in Lee placed a high emphasis on making immediate job placements, but Lee had among the highest rates of participation in job search activities. By contrast, Orange had the highest percentage of staff who placed a high emphasis on making immediate job placements, but the lowest percentage of those participating in job search activities.

The lack of clear and consistent associations between county participation patterns and characteristics does not mean that other such relationships may not exist. For example, some characteristics may be important in some counties but not in others. In addition, combinations of characteristics, rather than single characteristics, may help explain differences in participation patterns. Finally, other characteristics not presented in Table 5.5 may help explain the differences.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS OF PROJECT INDEPENDENCE

This chapter presents the first-year impacts of Project Independence on employment, earnings, months of AFDC receipt, and amounts of AFDC payments. As discussed in previous chapters, Project Independence was structured to increase employment among AFDC recipients as quickly as possible, primarily through job search activities. Other studies of programs emphasizing job search assistance indicate that employment impacts are typically realized within the first year of follow-up, often within the first two or three calendar quarters. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that Project Independence's impact on employment, if any, should begin to be manifested during the period covered by this analysis. However, a fuller assessment of the program will require longer-term follow-up. The next and final report will present the program's two-year impacts.

As discussed in Chapter 2, impact estimates are available for each of the four quarters following the quarter of random assignment ("quarter 1"). Because quarter 1 contains some earnings and AFDC payments from the months and weeks immediately preceding random assignment, it is excluded from the summary measures for the first year of follow-up. Hence, the "total first-year" earnings and AFDC payments impacts are defined as the sum of impacts over quarters 2 through 5.

There are three mechanisms through which AFDC receipt and payments could be affected by the program. First, by increasing employment rates, Project Independence may reduce AFDC payments and receipt rates. Since Florida's AFDC grant levels are relatively low, one would expect that positive impacts on employment should translate quickly into reductions in AFDC receipt.<sup>1</sup> Second, regardless of whether Project Independence led to employment gains, the participation mandate may have made AFDC unattractive to some members of the program group, leading to reductions in their average welfare receipt rate. Third, recipients' AFDC grants are reduced as the final step in the sanctioning process for failure to fulfill the Project Independence participation requirements.

To summarize the major findings reported in this chapter: Project Independence both increased employment and reduced AFDC receipt during the first year of follow-up. The program increased (i.e., relative to the control group) the fraction of persons ever employed during this period by 2.8 percentage points and raised annual earnings by \$157 (about a 7 percent increase relative to earnings for the control

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<sup>1</sup>In states with relatively low benefit levels, the AFDC eligibility rules make it difficult for persons to combine welfare receipt and employment unless their earnings are quite small.

group). Over the same period, Project Independence reduced the average number of months of AFDC receipt by one-half month. The program decreased AFDC payments by the same amount as it increased earnings, \$157 (about a 7 percent decrease relative to AFDC payments to controls).

There was some variation in impacts — particularly the earnings impacts — by subgroup and county. While impacts were found for program group members with children six years old and older, there were AFDC savings and employment rate gains, but only negligible earnings gains, for those with younger children (three to five years old). There were earnings impacts for the subgroup classified by the program as job-ready, but these impacts were close to zero for those who were classified as not job-ready. Finally, earnings impacts were larger for those who had received AFDC for a total of two years or more than for first-time applicants or those who had received AFDC for a total of less than two years.

The first section of this chapter outlines several key issues relating to how the impacts are defined. Subsequent sections describe the impacts for the full sample and for each of the key subgroups.

### **I. Interpreting Impacts**

In analyzing the effects of Project Independence (as well as other welfare-to-work programs), a key distinction is between program "outcomes" and "impacts." "Outcomes" refer to the status of sample members during one or more quarters in the follow-up period. For this study, four kinds of outcomes have been measured: employment, earnings, AFDC receipt, and AFDC payments. In the following discussion, persons are considered to have been employed in a given quarter if they received earnings at any point during that three-month period; similarly, they are classified as having received AFDC in a given quarter if they received AFDC payments during one or more months within that quarter.

The average employment outcomes for the program group alone are a potentially misleading measure of the effects of Project Independence. Past research has shown that, even in the absence of any intervention, many recipients will go off welfare and/or succeed in obtaining a job.<sup>2</sup> Thus, even if they had not had access to Project Independence, many members of the program group would have reduced their AFDC receipt and/or increased their earnings.

An "impact" refers to the program's effect on an outcome. This effect is captured by the difference between the average outcome for those in the control group and the average outcome for program group members. The impacts described in this chapter reveal how Project Independence affected the employment, earnings, AFDC receipt, and AFDC payments outcomes. Since people were randomly

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<sup>2</sup>See Bane and Ellwood, 1983.

assigned to the program and control groups, the two groups should not differ systematically, on average, in their characteristics. The only difference was that program group members had access to Project Independence, and control group members did not. Hence, any differences in the outcomes for the two groups are attributable to Project Independence.<sup>3</sup>

In general, impact estimates capture all of the effects that accrued from the time sample members were randomly assigned to the program and control groups. When interpreting the Project Independence impacts, one should remember that random assignment occurred early in the Project Independence intake process — i.e., at the point of AFDC application or eligibility redetermination.<sup>4</sup> As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the early point of random assignment is one difference between this study and some other evaluations of welfare-to-work programs, including the evaluation of California's GAIN program, where random assignment was conducted later (during program orientation sessions). This is one reason for caution when comparing the Project Independence impacts with those found in other studies such as the evaluation of GAIN.

There are two ways in which the earlier point of random assignment may capture impacts that might otherwise be missed. First, the impacts will include a portion of any "deterrence" effect there might have been. Having learned that they were members of the program group, and hence subject to the Project Independence participation mandate, some persons may have decided not to follow up with their AFDC application (or redetermination), and hence did not receive AFDC.<sup>5</sup> If there was a deterrence effect, and it was substantial, that would have increased the overall AFDC receipt impacts. Such an effect might also have heightened the employment and earnings impacts if program group members who were discouraged from following up on their applications chose instead to increase their job search efforts.

Second, the impacts also include AFDC grant reductions that resulted from sanctioning procedures among program group members who did not comply with the Project Independence participation requirements and did not provide an acceptable reason. A research design with a later point of random assignment would pick up grant reductions only for orientation attenders who were subject to sanctioning procedures for failure to participate in post-orientation activities, not for individuals who were sanctioned

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<sup>3</sup>The differences between program and control group outcomes have been regression-adjusted to control for small random differences in the two groups' background socioeconomic characteristics and to increase the precision of the impacts.

<sup>4</sup>For a full description of the random assignment process, see Chapter 2.

<sup>5</sup>There is another type of "deterrence" effect, which cannot be measured in an evaluation of this kind. In particular, knowledge of Project Independence's participation mandate may have discouraged some people from ever applying for AFDC or attending a redetermination session.



prior to orientation. As discussed in Chapter 4, more than half of those who did not attend Project Independence orientation were referred for a sanction, although it is not clear how many of these referrals resulted in actual grant reductions.

The Project Independence evaluation research design could also make the impacts appear somewhat smaller relative to those that might have been found with a design that placed random assignment at orientation. Many program group members, including some who received AFDC, did not attend orientation or participate in any post-orientation Project Independence activities. As noted in Chapter 4, 23 percent of the program group never attended Project Independence orientation, and an additional 34 percent of the program group attended orientation but did not participate in post-orientation activities (i.e., job search, job club, education, or training). If these activities are the primary source of the program's impacts, then the fact that 57 percent of the program group did not participate in them may "water down" the impacts.

Nevertheless, it is critical that the impacts be calculated for all program group members, not just those who participated in activities. This is especially important when studying a mandatory program such as Project Independence, where the very existence of a requirement to participate may itself produce impacts. Such effects might have resulted, for example, from individuals' responses to referrals for a sanction or the threat of a sanction referral. Recall that most of the program group members were aware that they could be referred for a sanction if they did not comply with the Project Independence mandate and, in fact, almost one-quarter of the program group members were referred for a sanction at some point during the follow-up period. Such effects, which would be part of the true impact of the program, would not be captured by impact estimates calculated for orientation attenders or program participants only. Thus, for this analysis, program impacts are calculated by including all sample members — nonparticipants as well as participants.

Including all research sample members in the impact calculations means that the estimates of average earnings and AFDC payments must be interpreted carefully. It means, for example, that estimates of average earnings per program group member necessarily will include zero dollar amounts for sample members who were not employed during the follow-up period. Similarly, estimates of average AFDC payments will include zero dollar amounts for sample members who did not receive AFDC during the follow-up period. To the extent that the program converts nonearners to earners, or encourages AFDC recipients to leave the rolls, excluding the zero values from the program and control group averages would obviously lead to a serious underestimation of program impacts.

One final issue of interpretation concerns the "statistical significance" of impact estimates. Statistical significance is a measure of the degree of certainty that an impact estimate actually represents

a program's effect. If an impact estimate is statistically significant, then one may conclude with some confidence that the numerical estimate is really the result of the program. If an impact estimate is not statistically significant, then the estimate may be the product of chance.

Statistical significance does not reflect the magnitude or importance of an impact estimate, only the level of its reliability. In an evaluation such as this one numerically small impact estimates are usually not statistically significant. Some numerically large impact estimates may not be statistically significant, however, particularly when sample sizes are small. Smaller sample sizes yield less reliable impact estimates — estimates in which one can have less confidence — than are possible when samples are larger. In this chapter, smaller sample sizes were created by breaking up the full sample for subgroup or county-level analyses. Thus, an estimate of a given magnitude that is statistically significant for the full sample will often not be statistically significant for a subgroup or a county.

This chapter also examines whether impact estimates differed among subgroups and counties. In this context, statistically significant differences in subgroup or county impact estimates indicate that one may have confidence that the numerical differences in impacts are really the result of differences in the relative effectiveness of the program. If a difference in impacts among subgroups or counties is not statistically significant, then it may be the result of chance. In this chapter, most subgroup and county differences in impacts are not statistically significant.

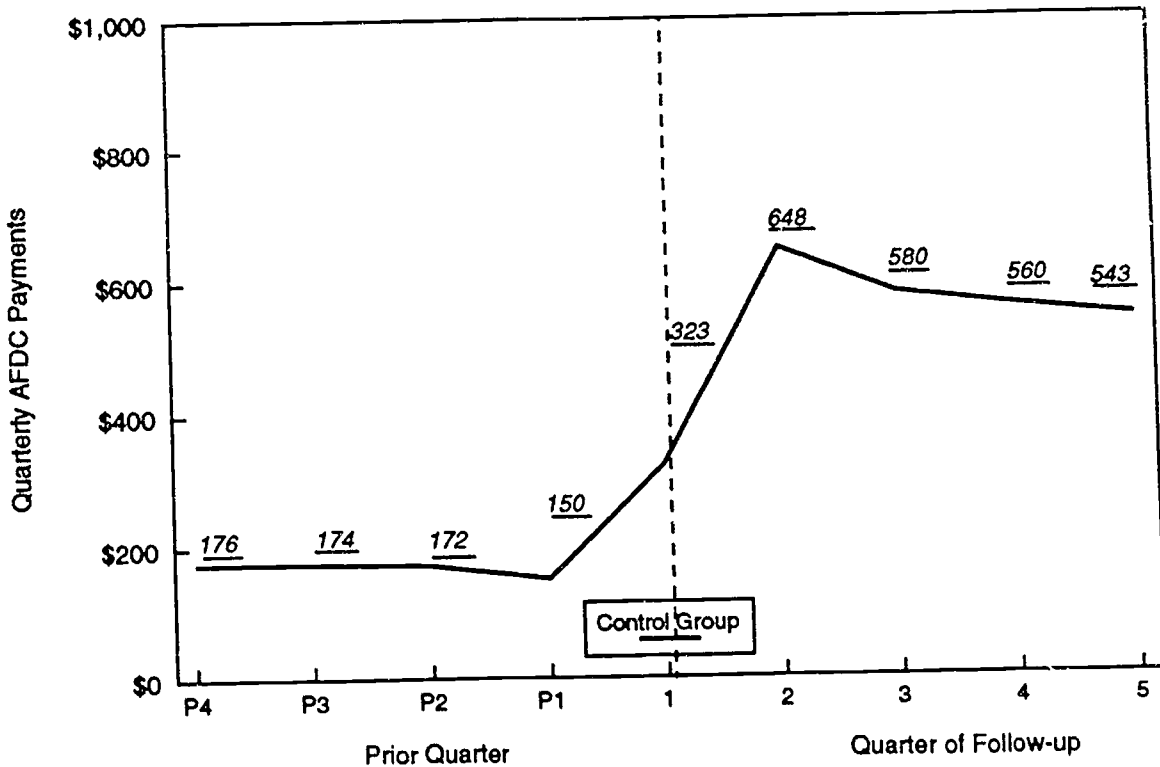
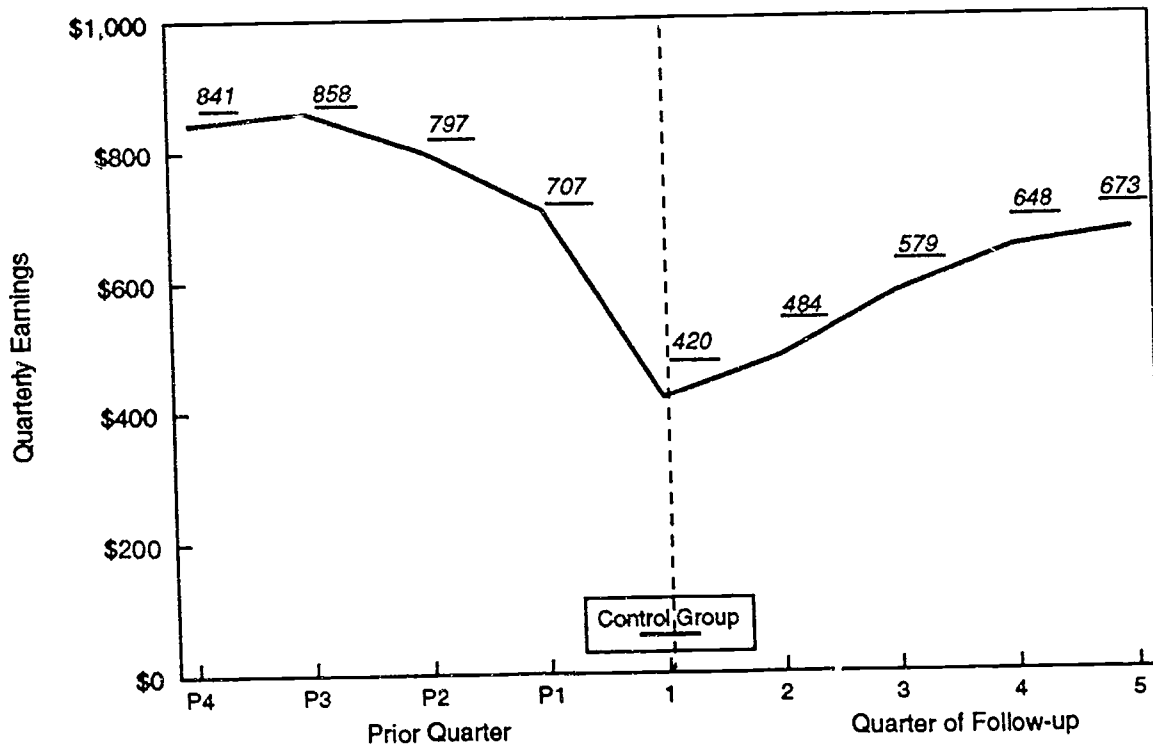
## II. The Behavior of the Control Group: The Benchmark for Measuring Impacts

The control group's employment, earnings, AFDC receipt, and AFDC payments are the critical "benchmarks" used to assess how Project Independence affected the program group. Since the groups were determined randomly, the behavior of the control group provides the best estimate of how program group members would have fared if they did not have access to Project Independence, and thereby makes it possible to estimate reliably how much *difference* the program made (i.e., the *impacts* of the program).

Figure 6.1 displays the control group's average earnings and AFDC payments during each of nine quarters: the four quarters prior to random assignment, the quarter of random assignment (quarter 1), and the four quarters of follow-up (quarters 2 through 5). It shows that earnings decreased dramatically in the quarters leading up to random assignment and then increased more gradually over the follow-up period. The relatively high (although decreasing) earnings of the control group prior to random assignment are due, in large part, to the fact that the research sample includes a high proportion of AFDC applicants and reapplicants, most of whom were not receiving AFDC and may have been employed. By

FIGURE 6.1

QUARTERLY EARNINGS AND AFDC PAYMENTS FOR CONTROL GROUP MEMBERS



SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Florida Unemployment Insurance records and AFDC records.

NOTES: The sample used to analyze Project Independence's impacts is slightly smaller than the full research sample. Dollar averages include zero values for sample members not employed and for sample members not receiving welfare.

Prior quarters are the calendar quarters before the quarter in which random assignment occurred (quarter 1).

Numbers for the control group are italicized and underlined.

the fourth quarter of follow-up (quarter 5), the control group's earnings had risen to \$673 — a 60 percent increase over their earnings of \$420 in the quarter of random assignment (quarter 1). This reflects an increase in earnings (and employment), which occurred even though the control group did not have access to Project Independence services. However, the control group's earnings in quarter 5 were still lower than those realized in each of the quarters preceding random assignment. In all, control group members earned an average of \$2,383 during the first year of follow-up (quarters 2 through 5).

Figure 6.1 also shows that AFDC payments for the control group were quite low during the four quarters prior to random assignment and then increased dramatically in the quarter of random assignment (quarter 1) and the first quarter of follow-up (quarter 2). The low level of AFDC payments prior to random assignment is also due primarily to the presence of a large proportion of AFDC applicants and reapplicants, most of whom were not receiving AFDC. Control group members were receiving an average of \$543 in AFDC payments by the end of the follow-up period (quarter 5), which was \$105 (16 percent) less than the average for the first quarter of follow-up (\$648), and the peak of the AFDC payments trend. Again, this reflects the fact that some control group members left the AFDC rolls even though they did not have access to Project Independence. In all, control group members received an average of \$2,331 in AFDC payments during the first year of follow-up (quarters 2 through 5).

### **III. First-Year Impacts for the Full Sample**

This section presents Project Independence's first-year impacts on employment, earnings, AFDC receipt, and AFDC payments for the full sample. In general, the discussion in this section focuses on impact estimates that are statistically significant. An impact is referred to as "statistically significant" if there is no more than a 10 percent probability that the program actually had no effect on the outcome in question. All of the AFDC payments and receipt impacts, and nearly all of the employment rate impacts, are significant at the 1 percent level. These are presented in Table 6.1 and Figures 6.2 and 6.3.

#### **A. Employment and Earnings**

The first panel of Table 6.1 shows that, during the follow-up period, Project Independence produced an increase in the overall employment rate of program group members of 2.8 percentage points (a 5.3 percent increase over the control group employment rate of 52.5 percent). The table also shows that the program group produced an increase in earnings of \$157 (a 6.6 percent increase over the control group's earnings of \$2,383). A large portion of this earnings gain (\$63) was realized during quarter 3 (see Table 6.1 and Figure 6.2).

The impacts on employment rates were largest in quarter 2, the first quarter after random

TABLE 6.1

**FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS ON EMPLOYMENT, EARNINGS, AFDC RECEIPT, AND AFDC PAYMENTS  
FOR THE FULL SAMPLE**

Outcome and Follow-up Period	Program Group	Control Group	Difference	Percentage Change
<b>Ever employed (%)</b>				
Quarter 2	36.5	33.8	2.7 ***	8.0%
Quarter 3	37.2	34.7	2.5 ***	7.2%
Quarter 4	36.6	34.9	1.7 **	4.8%
Quarter 5	36.5	34.3	2.2 ***	6.4%
Total (quarters 2-5)	55.3	52.5	2.8 ***	5.3%
<b>Average number of quarters ever employed (quarters 2-5)</b>				
	1.5	1.4	0.1 ***	6.5%
<b>Average total earnings (\$)</b>				
Quarter 2	507	484	23	4.8%
Quarter 3	642	579	63 ***	10.9%
Quarter 4	678	648	30	4.7%
Quarter 5	713	673	40 *	5.9%
Total (quarters 2-5)	2,540	2,383	157 **	6.6%
<b>Ever received any AFDC payments (%)</b>				
Quarter 2	79.6	81.7	-2.1 ***	-2.6%
Quarter 3	72.2	76.3	-4.1 ***	-5.4%
Quarter 4	66.7	71.6	-4.9 ***	-6.8%
Quarter 5	64.3	68.6	-4.3 ***	-6.3%
Total (quarters 2-5)	85.1	86.7	-1.6 ***	-1.8%
<b>Average number of months receiving AFDC (quarters 2-5)</b>				
	7.8	8.3	-0.5 ***	-6.1%
<b>Average total AFDC payments received (\$)</b>				
Quarter 2	619	648	-29 ***	-4.4%
Quarter 3	535	580	-44 ***	-7.7%
Quarter 4	513	560	-47 ***	-8.4%
Quarter 5	507	543	-37 ***	-6.7%
Total (quarters 2-5)	2,174	2,331	-157 ***	-6.7%
Sample size (total = 18,233)	13,509	4,724		

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Florida Unemployment Insurance records and AFDC records.

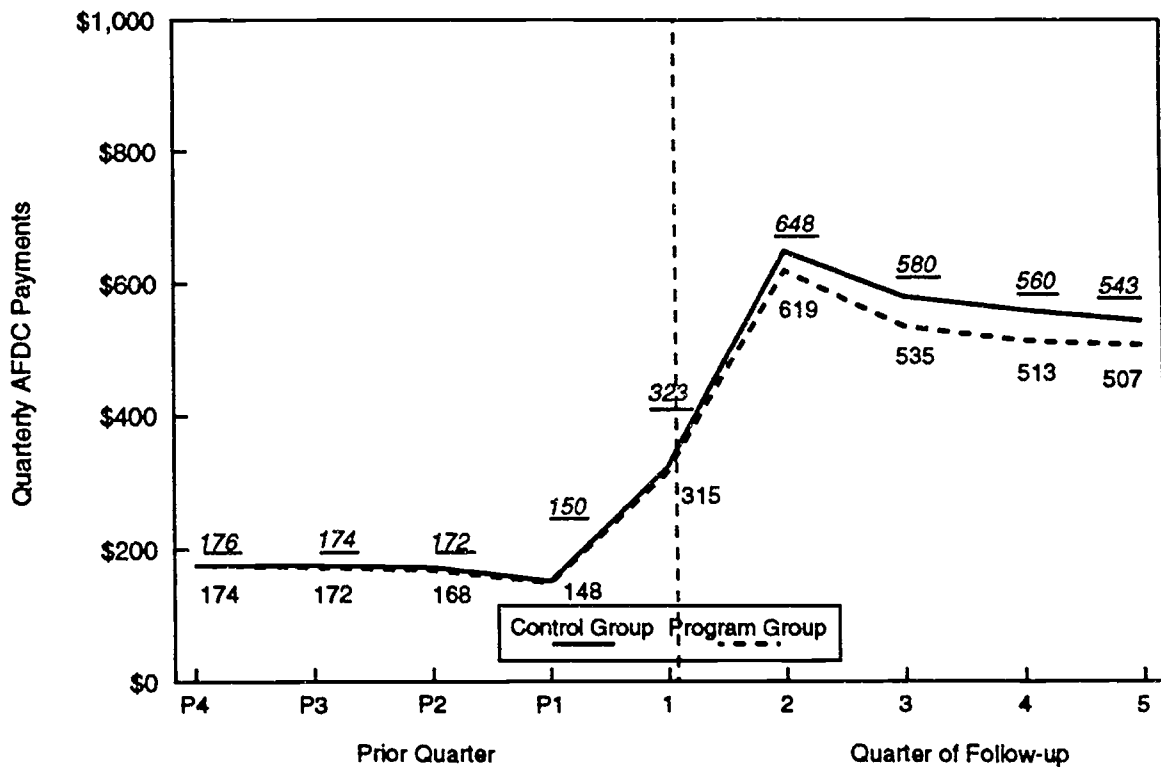
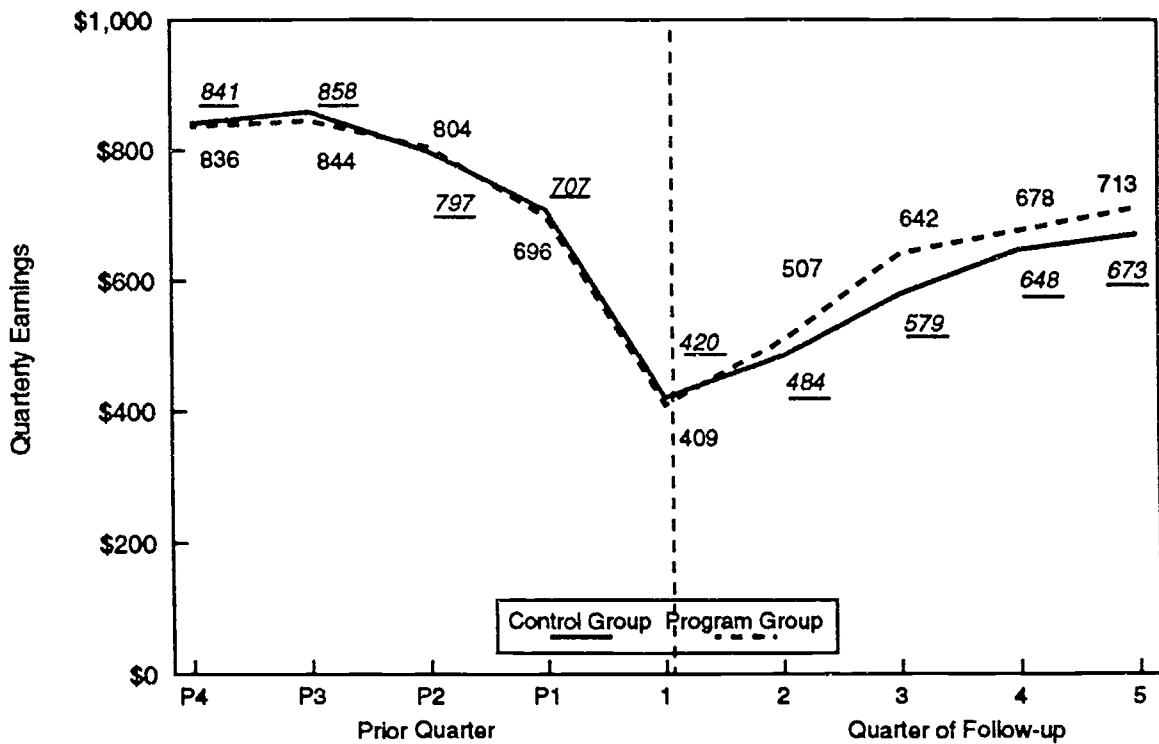
NOTES: The sample used to analyze Project Independence's impacts is slightly smaller than the full research sample. Dollar averages include zero values for sample members not employed and for sample members not receiving welfare. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics of sample members. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

For all measures, the quarter of random assignment (quarter 1) refers to the calendar quarter in which random assignment occurred. Because the quarter of random assignment may contain some earnings and AFDC payments from the period prior to random assignment, it is excluded from the summary measures of follow-up.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

FIGURE 6.2

QUARTERLY EARNINGS AND AFDC PAYMENTS FOR THE FULL SAMPLE

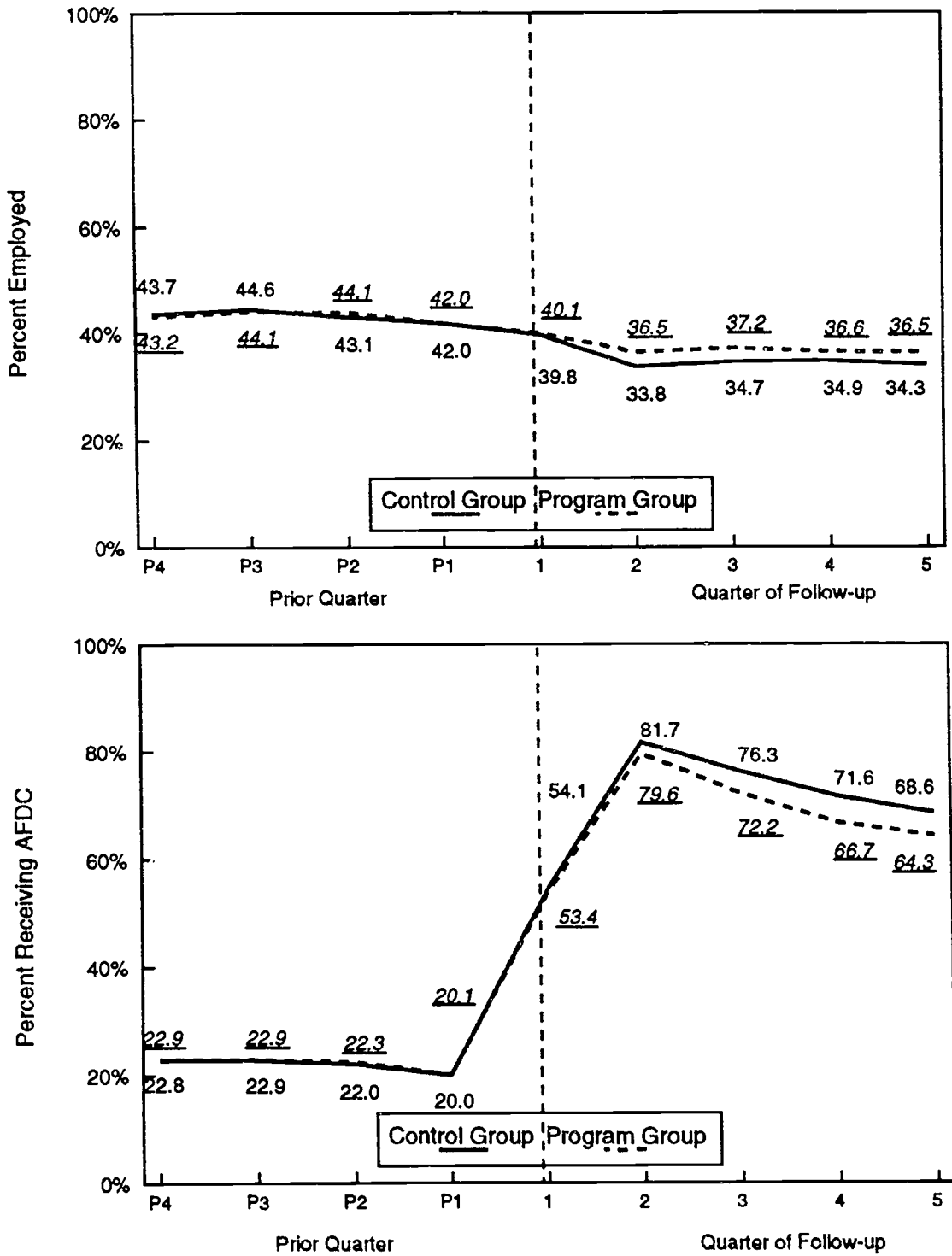


SOURCE: See Figure 6.1.

NOTES: In addition to the following, see Table 6.1.

Numbers for the control group are italicized and underlined.

**FIGURE 6.3**  
**QUARTERLY EMPLOYMENT AND AFDC RECEIPT RATES FOR THE FULL SAMPLE**



SOURCE: See Figure 6.1.

NOTES: In addition to the following, see Table 6.1.  
 Numbers for the control group are italicized and underlined.



assignment (see Table 6.1 and Figure 6.3). During that quarter, the program group employment rate exceeded that of the control group by 2.7 percentage points. The employment impact fell somewhat during both quarters 3 and 4 and then rebounded slightly in quarter 5.

The percentage impact on earnings (6.6 percent) was only slightly larger than the percentage impact on employment rates (5.3 percent) and approximately the same as the percentage impact (6.5 percent) on the number of quarters employed. This suggests that the program's effect on earnings may be primarily attributable to the increases it produced in employment rates, rather than to its effects on the number of hours worked per quarter or the wages of those who would have been employed even without access to the program.<sup>6</sup> This is supported by the findings presented in Table 6.2, which shows the distribution of earnings for the program and control groups. The table shows the percentage of program and control group members in five income classes: \$0, \$1-\$999, \$1,000-\$2,999, \$3,000-\$6,999, and \$7,000 or more.<sup>7</sup> As indicated in the table, Project Independence had two statistically significant effects: (1) it reduced the percentage of individuals earning \$0 (i.e., those never employed), and (2) it slightly increased the percentage with earnings in the \$3,000-\$6,999 range.<sup>8</sup> These results support the conclusion that Project Independence increased employment but did not substantially increase the proportion of workers with higher levels of earnings.

#### **B. AFDC Receipt and Payments**

Table 6.1 shows that Project Independence reduced the percentage of the program group who received any AFDC payments during the follow-up period by 1.6 percentage points (a 1.8 percent decrease from the control group rate of 86.7 percent). It also shows that Project Independence reduced AFDC payments by an average of \$157 over the first year of follow-up (a 6.7 percent decrease from the control group's average first-year AFDC payments of \$2,331). The impacts on AFDC savings were somewhat larger in quarters 3 and 4 than in quarters 2 and 5.

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<sup>6</sup>This assumes that the average earnings of the individuals who became employed as a result of Project Independence were not very different from the average earnings for all employed sample members.

<sup>7</sup>The four non-zero ranges (\$1-\$999, \$1,000-\$2,999, \$3,000-\$6,999, and \$7,000 or more) were selected to correspond approximately to the income distribution of employed sample members, about one-quarter of whom had earnings in each of those four ranges (as shown in Table 6.2).

<sup>8</sup>The program may have achieved these impacts in at least two alternative ways. It is possible that Project Independence shifted some program group members into the next higher earnings class: Some who would have been unemployed in the absence of the program were moved into the lowest earnings class, while some who would have been in the lowest earnings class were shifted into the next higher class, and so on. Alternatively, some program group members who would have been unemployed in the absence of the program may have been shifted into each of the positive earnings classes (with the largest number moving into the \$3,000-\$6,999 class), and the earnings of those who would have secured jobs anyway may not have been affected at all.

TABLE 6.2

**FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF EARNINGS  
FOR THE FULL SAMPLE**

Outcome and Subgroup	Program Group (%)	Control Group (%)	Difference
<b>Average total earnings (quarters 2-5)</b>			
None	44.7	47.5	-2.8 ***
\$1-\$999	14.3	13.9	0.4
\$1,000-\$2,999	12.7	12.2	0.6
\$3,000-\$6,999	14.7	13.6	1.1 *
\$7,000 or more	13.5	12.8	0.7
Total	100.0	100.0	0.0
<b>Sample size (total = 18,233)</b>	<b>13,509</b>	<b>4,724</b>	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Florida Unemployment Insurance records.

NOTES: In addition to the following, see Table 6.1 for notes.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent. Tests are not strictly independent.

Table 6.1 and Figure 6.3 show that quarterly impacts on AFDC receipt rose from 2.1 percentage points in quarter 2 to 4.9 percentage points in quarter 4, and then declined slightly to 4.3 percentage points in quarter 5. The decrease in AFDC receipt rates in the first quarter of follow-up (quarter 2) suggests that Project Independence may have deterred some program group members from following up on their AFDC applications or eligibility redeterminations. However, the smaller impact on receipt rates for the full year indicates that some of those who were initially discouraged from applying for AFDC may have subsequently reapplied and received payments.

On average, program group members spent about one-half month less on AFDC during the follow-up period (a reduction of 6.1 percent from the control group average of 8.3 months). The percentage reduction in AFDC payments (6.7 percent) is only slightly larger than the percentage impact on the number of months on AFDC (6.1 percent). This suggests that the decline in the number of months on AFDC (rather than a reduction in the average monthly grant for recipients) accounts for most of the reduction in AFDC payments.<sup>9</sup> As noted above, reductions in receipt were facilitated by Florida's relatively low benefit levels.

Table 6.1 shows that the percentage point impacts on AFDC receipt were somewhat larger than those on employment for quarters 3 through 5. This is because some of the people who stopped receiving AFDC as a result of Project Independence were not employed. This is illustrated in Table 6.3, which displays the impacts on sample members' combined employment and welfare status for each quarter and over the entire follow-up period. In each quarter, sample members are classified in one of four mutually exclusive categories defined by their employment and AFDC receipt status. Impacts were estimated for each of these four categories by subtracting the percentage of control group members in that category from the comparable percentage of the program group.

The top panel of Table 6.3 shows that Project Independence reduced the fraction of "not employed and received AFDC" by approximately 4 percentage points in each quarter. With the exception of quarter 2, most of the decline in the "not employed and received AFDC" category was attributable to growth in two other categories: "employed and did not receive AFDC" and "not employed and did not receive AFDC." On average, across all four quarters of follow-up, approximately half of the people who moved out of the category "not employed and received AFDC" (accounting for 2.0 of the 4.1 percentage

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<sup>9</sup>This assumes that the average monthly AFDC grant amounts of individuals who left the rolls as a result of Project Independence were not very different from the average monthly grant amounts for all sample members who received AFDC.

TABLE 6.3

**FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS ON COMBINED EMPLOYMENT AND WELFARE RECEIPT STATUS  
FOR THE FULL SAMPLE**

Outcome and Follow-up Period	Program Group (%)	Control Group (%)	Difference
<b>Not employed and received AFDC</b>			
Quarter 2	53.3	57.1	-3.8 ***
Quarter 3	49.5	53.9	-4.4 ***
Quarter 4	46.8	50.9	-4.1 ***
Quarter 5	45.1	49.1	-4.0 ***
Average rate (quarters 2-5)	48.7	52.8	-4.1 ***
<b>Employed and received AFDC</b>			
Quarter 2	26.3	24.5	1.8 **
Quarter 3	22.7	22.4	0.3
Quarter 4	19.9	20.7	-0.8
Quarter 5	19.2	19.4	-0.2
Average rate (quarters 2-5)	22.0	21.7	0.3
<b>Employed and did not receive AFDC</b>			
Quarter 2	10.2	9.2	1.0 **
Quarter 3	14.5	12.4	2.1 ***
Quarter 4	16.7	14.2	2.5 ***
Quarter 5	17.3	14.9	2.4 ***
Average rate (quarters 2-5)	14.7	12.7	2.0 ***
<b>Not employed and did not receive AFDC</b>			
Quarter 2	10.2	9.1	1.1 **
Quarter 3	13.3	11.4	1.9 ***
Quarter 4	16.6	14.2	2.4 ***
Quarter 5	18.4	16.5	1.9 ***
Average rate (quarters 2-5)	14.6	12.8	1.8 ***
Sample size (total = 18,233)	13,509	4,724	

SOURCE: Table 6.1.

NOTES: In addition to the following, see Table 6.1 for notes.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the program and control groups.  
Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

points) stopped receiving AFDC and secured jobs. However, most of the remainder (accounting for 1.8 of the 4.1 percentage points) left AFDC without securing or keeping employment.<sup>10</sup>

#### **IV. Overall 18-Month Impacts for the Early Cohort**

This section describes the 18-month impacts for the members of the research sample who were randomly assigned during the period July 1990 through December 1990 (the "early cohort"). The results provide some indication of whether the full sample impacts will persist into the second year. However, these 18-month impacts may not be representative of the entire sample, for several reasons. First, the characteristics of the early cohort may be somewhat different from those of the entire sample. In particular, certain counties (i.e., Bay, Broward, and Dade) have larger shares of the early cohort because they began random assignment first.

Second, several Project Independence policies were modified after the early cohort had been randomly assigned. In particular, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, access to child care was substantially cut back beginning in January 1991. More generally, Project Independence's resources per program group member declined over time as the caseload expanded and hiring freezes went into effect.

Collectively, these early-late cohort differences may have resulted in different impacts. Whether they did or not is addressed below through a comparison of the 12-month impacts for the early cohort and the full sample.

##### **A. Earnings**

The early cohort's 18-month earnings impacts were \$392, which is two-thirds larger than the 12-month earnings impacts (\$234) for this group (see Figure 6.4). The earnings impacts for the early cohort grew from \$72 in quarter 5 to \$93 in quarter 6 – surpassing the previous peak of \$88 in quarter 2 – and then declined to \$65 in quarter 7.

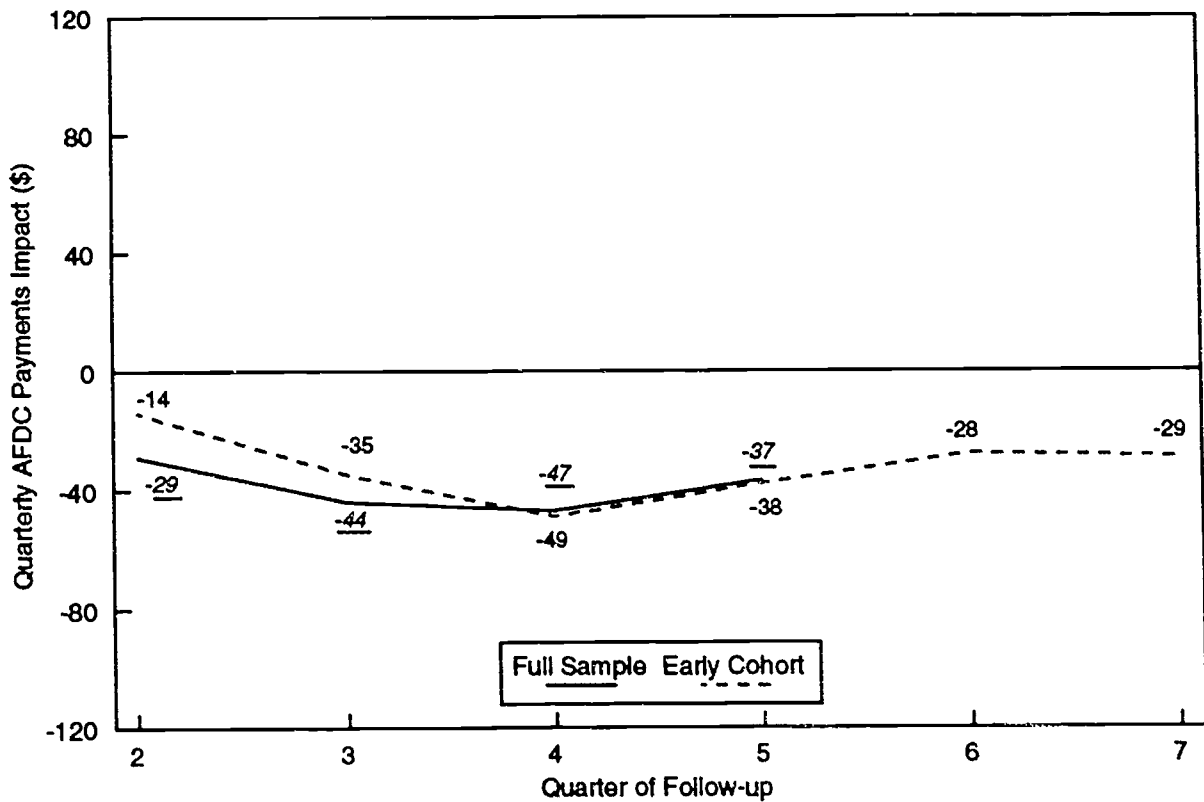
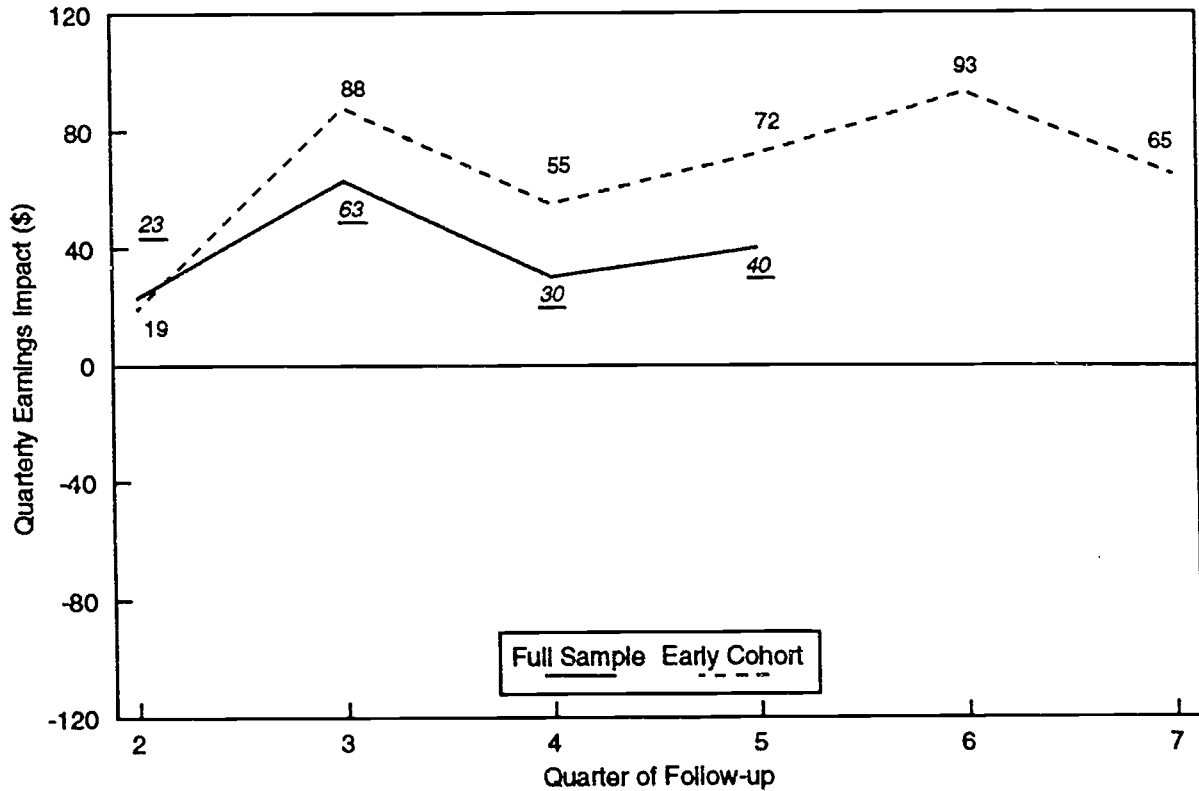
The early cohort's earnings impacts were larger in quarters 3 through 5 than those achieved for the full sample during the same quarters. As a result, as noted above, the early cohort's cumulative earnings impact over the first 12 months of follow-up was \$234 (compared to \$157 for the full sample). This suggests that the longer-term follow-up for the early cohort may not be indicative of the results for

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<sup>10</sup>Note that persons who were "not employed and did not receive AFDC" may have received support from a variety of sources including Food Stamps, jobs that were not covered by the Unemployment Insurance system, or assistance from family members.

FIGURE 6.4

IMPACTS ON QUARTERLY EARNINGS AND AFDC PAYMENTS  
FOR THE FULL SAMPLE AND THE EARLY COHORT



SOURCES: See Figure 6.1.

NOTES: In addition to the following, see Figure 6.1.

Numbers for the full sample are italicized and underlined.

the full sample. (However, the difference in 12-month earnings impacts between the early and late cohorts was not statistically significant.)<sup>11</sup>

### **B. AFDC Payments**

The total AFDC impact over the entire 18 months was \$193, which is 42 percent larger than the total for the first 12 months (\$136 for the early cohort), suggesting a fairly stable pattern of impacts into the second year. The early cohort's AFDC impacts in quarters 6 and 7 were somewhat smaller than those in quarters 3 through 5. However, the impacts remained statistically significant.

Figure 6.4 indicates that the AFDC payments impacts for the early cohort during the first four quarters of follow-up were similar to those for the full sample in size and timing. (The one exception is quarter 2, for which the early cohort's AFDC impact was somewhat smaller than that for the full sample.) This suggests that the AFDC impact results for the early cohort may be representative of those that will be achieved for the full sample.

The question of Project Independence's longer-term effects will be clarified in the final report, when two full years of follow-up data will be available for the full sample and up to 30 months of follow-up data will be available for the early cohort.

### **V. Impacts by the Age of the Youngest Child**

As previously discussed, the impact results by the age of the youngest child are particularly important, given the fact that the Family Support Act of 1988 mandated for the first time at the federal level that single parents with children between the ages of three and five must participate in welfare-to-work programs. A key policy question is whether JOBS programs can generate significant earnings or AFDC impacts for single parents with children under age six, given this subgroup's special child care needs.

Table 6.4 presents the first-year impacts on employment, earnings, AFDC receipt, and AFDC payments for the two subgroups defined by the age of the youngest child. It shows that Project Independence produced statistically significant impacts for both subgroups on first-year employment rates and AFDC payments. It also shows that the program's impacts on first-year earnings were concentrated among those whose youngest child was age six or older.

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<sup>11</sup>The difference between the early and late cohorts' 12-month earnings impacts declines when one controls for the fact that the cohorts have somewhat different demographic characteristics and were drawn from a different mix of counties. In particular, if one controls for the variation in the program's effect across counties and key subgroups, this inter-cohort impact difference declines by about 40 percent.



TABLE 6.4

FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS ON EMPLOYMENT, EARNINGS, AFDC RECEIPT, AND AFDC PAYMENTS FOR SUBGROUPS DEFINED BY AGE OF YOUNGEST CHILD

Outcome and Follow-up Period	Youngest Child, 3-5 Years Old			Youngest Child, 6 or More Years		
	Program Group	Control Group	Percentage Change	Program Group	Control Group	Percentage Change
Ever employed (%)						
Quarter 2	35.4	32.4	3.0 **	38.2	34.4	3.8 ***
Quarter 3	35.9	33.3	2.6 **	38.8	35.1	3.7 ***
Quarter 4	34.8	33.3	1.5	38.6	36.0	2.6 **
Quarter 5	34.8	33.2	1.6	38.0	34.9	3.1 ***
Total (quarters 2-5)	54.8	51.6	3.2 ***	56.5	52.6	3.9 ***
Average total earnings (\$)						
Quarter 2	459	445	14	550	505	45 *
Quarter 3	563	524	39	711	618	93 ***
Quarter 4	600	603	-3	744	675	69 **
Quarter 5	644	619	25	772	699	73 **
Total (quarters 2-5)	2,266	2,192	74	2,777	2,497	280 ***
Ever received any AFDC payments (%)						
Quarter 2	82.1	83.8	-1.7 *	79.1	81.2	-2.1 **
Quarter 3	75.3	79.2	-3.9 ***	70.2	77.5	-4.4 ***
Quarter 4	70.3	74.3	-4.0 ***	64.2	69.8	-5.6 ***
Quarter 5	68.3	71.1	-2.8 **	61.1	66.6	-5.5 ***
Total (quarters 2-5)	87.5	88.2	-0.7	83.9	86.3	-2.4 ***
Average total AFDC payments received (\$)						
Quarter 2	666	692	-26 **	595	619	-24 ***
Quarter 3	585	627	-42 ***	500	549	-49 ***
Quarter 4	565	606	-41 ***	476	530	-54 ***
Quarter 5	563	588	-25 **	463	511	-48 ***
Total (quarters 2-5)	2,379	2,513	-134 ***	2,034	2,209	-175 ***
Sample size (total = 16,286)	5,145	1,829		6,926	2,386	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Florida Unemployment Insurance records and AFDC records.

NOTES: In addition to the following, see Table 6.1 for notes.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

There are three major reasons one should be careful in interpreting the subgroup findings.<sup>12</sup> First, the statistical significance of the impact estimates is sensitive to sample size. For example, a \$100 impact on earnings that is statistically significant for the full sample may not be statistically significant for subgroups. Second, some of the demographic data that define the subgroups are missing for various portions of the sample.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the weighted average of the impacts for the age of the youngest child subgroups is not equal to the full sample impacts.<sup>14</sup> Third, and perhaps most important, the differences in first-year impacts between the age of the youngest child subgroups were not statistically significant.

#### **A. Employment and Earnings**

The 12-month earnings impact was \$280 for those whose youngest child was six years old or older, an impact that was statistically significant (see Table 6.4). By contrast, the subgroup whose youngest child was between three and five years old realized a small earnings impact (\$74), which was not statistically significant. (However, the difference in impacts between these two subgroups was not statistically significant.)

Like the full sample earnings impacts, those achieved for the subgroup whose youngest child was six years old or older were largest in quarter three (\$93). Although it declined slightly after quarter 3, this subgroup's earnings impact remained statistically significant in quarters 4 and 5. By contrast, the subgroup whose youngest child was between three and five years old had no quarterly impacts that were statistically significant.

Despite their small earnings impacts, the subgroup with preschoolage children did achieve statistically significant first-year employment impacts, although they were concentrated in the first two quarters of follow-up. The fact that the first-year employment impacts for the group with younger children were larger than their earnings impacts may be attributable to some loss of employment during the first year, which is indicated in Table 6.4 by the declining employment rates of the program group. This is also supported by Appendix Table D.1, which shows that program group members who were

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<sup>12</sup>These cautions apply also to the impacts for the other subgroups (defined by job-readiness, prior AFDC receipt, and county), which are discussed in the following sections.

<sup>13</sup>Just over 10 percent of the sample could not be classified in terms of the age of their youngest child; consequently, the data for these persons were not included in the analysis of impacts described in this section.

<sup>14</sup>There were substantially smaller earnings impacts for the group that could not be classified according to the age of their youngest child. This implies that the impacts for one or both subgroups defined by the age of the youngest child would be somewhat smaller if the full sample had no missing data.

employed had lower average earnings than did employed control group members (this difference was approximately 4 percent).

Table 6.4 shows that those with older children had a statistically significant employment impact during each of the four quarters of follow-up. In addition, Appendix Table D.1 shows that, for the group with older children, the employed program group members achieved slightly higher earnings than did employed members of the control group.

Appendix Table D.1 provides some additional information on how the program differentially affected the earnings distributions of those with younger and older children. Within the subgroup with children three to five years old, the program increased the fraction in each of the non-zero income classes, with the notable exception of the highest earnings class – those earning \$7,000 or more – where there was a small decline.<sup>15</sup> By contrast, for those with older children, there was growth in all of the non-zero income classes *including* the top one. In fact, the increase in this highest income class for the subgroup with older children was the largest and only statistically significant change in their income distribution.

As suggested above, one potential explanation for the small earnings impacts for those with younger children is that this subgroup encountered more formidable labor market barriers as a result of their need for child care. If this were true, one would expect the average earnings for control group members with children three to five years old to have been considerably smaller than those of their counterparts with older children. Although there was a difference between these groups' average earnings, it was not very large: Control group members whose youngest child was six years old or older had average earnings of \$2,497 during the first year of follow-up compared to \$2,192 for the group with preschoolage children (see Table 6.4).<sup>16</sup> This suggests that the variation in impacts by the age of the youngest child may not be attributable to the labor market barriers encountered by those with preschoolage children.

### **B. AFDC Receipt and Payments**

The 12-month AFDC payments impact for those with children between three and five years old was only slightly smaller than that for program group members with older children – \$134 and \$175, respectively. Both of these impacts were statistically significant (see Table 6.4).

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<sup>15</sup>The only statistically significant change was in the \$3,000-\$6,999 class.

<sup>16</sup>The income distributions for these two groups were slightly different. As indicated in Appendix Table D.1, 27.8 percent of controls with children six years old or older earned \$3,000 or more. This was approximately three percentage points more than the comparable fraction of controls with younger children.

The impact on AFDC receipt in quarter 5 was smaller for the subgroup with children between three and five years old (-2.8 percent) than the impact for the subgroup with older children (-5.5 percent).<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, they were both statistically significant.

There were only moderate differences in the levels of AFDC payments for the two control groups defined by the age of the youngest child. Whereas control group members with children between three and five years old received \$2,513 during the first year of follow-up, the comparable figure for those with older children was \$2,209.

### C. Impacts by Random Assignment Cohort and the Age of the Youngest Child

As suggested above, one reason that the full sample's earnings impacts may have been smaller than those of the early cohort was the change in the availability of child care services and other resources beginning in January 1991. As indicated in Chapter 5, the decline in child care services may have been felt to a greater extent by those with younger children.<sup>18</sup> This raises the question of whether the earnings impacts for program group members with younger children were larger and statistically significant during the early period, when child care resources were more plentiful.

In an effort to shed light on these issues, the impacts by age of the youngest child and cohort subgroups are presented in Table 6.5. The table indicates that the earnings impact for those who were both in the early cohort and had younger children was indeed larger than the impact for those who were in the late cohort and had younger children. These inter-cohort differences were most apparent and were statistically significant during quarter 5: In this quarter, the early cohort with younger children had an earnings impact of \$94, while the comparable figure for the same subgroup in the late cohort was -\$22. By contrast, none of the differences in early versus late cohort earnings impacts were statistically significant for the group with children six years old or older. The fact that those with younger children experienced the greatest inter-cohort differences in impacts suggests that this group, as expected, may have been more affected by the change in the child care policy. However, these results should be interpreted with caution because the differences in the full first-year impacts among the four subgroups were not statistically significant.

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<sup>17</sup>The difference between these two impacts was not statistically significant.

<sup>18</sup>As noted in Chapter 5, the rate of orientation attendance fell for the subgroup with preschoolage children (from 80 percent in the early cohort to 72 percent in the late cohort), while it rose for those whose youngest child was age six or older (from 78 percent to 83 percent). Similarly, differences between the two age of the youngest child subgroups in rates of participation in activities also increased over the two cohorts. These trends may have been attributable to the differential effects of the change in child care resources.

**TABLE 6.5**  
**FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS ON EARNINGS AND AFDC PAYMENTS**  
**FOR SUBGROUPS DEFINED BY RANDOM ASSIGNMENT COHORT AND AGE OF YOUNGEST CHILD**

Cohort, Subgroup, and Follow-up Period	Percent of Sample	Average Earnings			Average AFDC Payments Received		
		Program Group (\$)	Control Group (\$)	Difference (\$)	Program Group (\$)	Control Group (\$)	Difference (\$)
<b>Early cohort (July-December 1990)</b>							
Youngest child, 3-5 years old	19.0%						
Quarter 5		661	567	94 *	537	565	-28 *
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,275	2,100	175	2,327	2,416	-89 *
							Percentage Change
							-5.0%
							-3.7%
<b>Youngest child, age 6 or older</b>							
Quarter 5	23.1%	744	707	37	422	464	-42 ***
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,704	2,426	278 *	1,906	2,058	-153 ***
							Percentage Change
							-9.1%
							-7.2%
<b>Late cohort (January-August 1991)</b>							
Youngest child, 3-5 years old	24.6%						
Quarter 5		632	654	-22	583	606	-23
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,267	2,235	32	2,417	2,590	-173 ***
							Percentage Change
							-3.8%
							-6.7%
<b>Youngest child, age 6 or older</b>							
Quarter 5	33.3%	793	691	102 **	492	545	-53 ***
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,833	2,530	303 **	2,123	2,314	-192 ***
Sample size (total = 16,523)							-8.1%

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Florida Unemployment Insurance records and AFDC records.

NOTES: In addition to the following, see Table 6.1 for notes.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

## VI. Impacts for Other Key Subgroups

### A. Job-Readiness

One would expect different impacts for the two subgroups defined by Project Independence on the basis of job-readiness. Not only did these subgroups have very different education and job histories, but they were also treated differently by Project Independence. The small subgroup classified as not job-ready was not required to participate in job search and job club as their first activity. Indeed, as indicated in Chapter 5, the not job-ready subgroup did exhibit higher rates of participation in education and training activities, although many members of this subgroup also participated in job search and job club activities. The combined effects of this differential treatment and different socioeconomic characteristics may have led to different impacts for the job-ready and not job-ready subgroups. The first set of findings discussed below employs the definition of job-readiness in effect during the period when the research sample was randomly assigned (July 1990 through August 1991).<sup>19</sup>

The impact findings for the job-readiness subgroups are presented in Table 6.6, which shows that both the first-year earnings and the first-year AFDC payments impacts were concentrated in the job-ready subgroup. As indicated in the top panel of Table 6.6, the first-year earnings impact for the job-ready subgroup was \$207, a figure that was statistically significant. By contrast, the first-year earnings impact for the not job-ready subgroup was \$12 (and not statistically significant). The first-year impact on AFDC payments for the job-ready subgroup was \$176, which was statistically significant. The comparable impact for the not job-ready subgroup was \$106, bigger than this subgroup's earnings impact but still not statistically significant. (However, the difference between the two subgroups' impacts was not statistically significant.)

Chapter 5 examined whether those defined as job-ready under Project Independence's original job-readiness criteria, but who did not have a high school diploma or GED, received different services than the remainder of the job-ready subgroup and the subgroup defined as not job-ready. It concluded that the subgroup defined as job-ready under the original criteria, but who were lacking a high school diploma or GED, had the lowest overall participation rates and the lowest rates of participation in job search and education activities. The following analysis examines the program's impacts on earnings and AFDC payments for this portion of the job-ready subgroup in order to determine whether the program (as it

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<sup>19</sup>As noted earlier, this definition was subsequently revised. For a description of the original and revised criteria, see Chapter 5, Section II.

TABLE 6.6

FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS ON EARNINGS AND AFDC PAYMENTS  
FOR SUBGROUPS DEFINED BY JOB-READINESS STATUS

Subgroup and Follow-up Period	Percent of Sample	Average Earnings				Average AFDC Payments Received				
		Program		Control		Program		Control		
		Group (\$)	Group (\$)	Difference (\$)	Percentage Change	Group (\$)	Group (\$)	Difference (\$)	Percentage Change	
<u>Job-ready (a)</u>	89.2%									
Quarter 5		775	719	56 **	7.8%	492	538	-46 ***	-8.6%	
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,762	2,555	207 ***	8.1%	2,119	2,295	-176 ***	-7.7%	
<u>Not job-ready (a)</u>	10.8%									
Quarter 5		282	288	-6	-2.1%	566	586	-20	-3.4%	
Total (quarters 2-5)		1,027	1,015	12	1.2%	2,446	2,552	-106	-4.2%	
Sample size (total = 16,750)										

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Florida Unemployment Insurance records and AFDC records.

NOTES: In addition to the following, see Table 6.1 for notes.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

(a) Sample members are defined as "job-ready" if they had completed at least 10th grade or were employed for at least 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. Sample members are defined as "not job-ready" if they had not completed 10th grade and were employed for less than 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. These definitions are based on the criteria used by Project Independence during the random assignment period.



operated prior to the change in the job-readiness criteria) was effective for them.<sup>20</sup>

Appendix Table D.2 presents the first-year impacts on earnings and AFDC payments for three subgroups defined by combinations of the original and modified job-readiness criteria. The first subgroup includes those who would be defined as job-ready using either set of criteria. The second subgroup includes those who would be defined as job-ready using the original criteria, but would be defined as not job-ready using the new criteria because they had no high school diploma or GED.<sup>21</sup> The latter subgroup represents 13 percent of the full program group sample and 16 percent of the job-ready subgroup (as defined by the original criteria). The third subgroup includes those who would be defined as not job-ready using either set of criteria.

Did Project Independence produce impacts for the middle subgroup? The findings presented in Appendix Table D.2 indicate that there were no statistically significant impacts on first-year earnings for the subgroup who would originally have been defined as job-ready but who would now be defined as not job-ready. In particular, the first-year impact on earnings for this subgroup was \$36 (compared to \$245 for the remainder of the job-ready subgroup and \$12 for the not job-ready subgroup). The first-year impact on AFDC payments for this middle subgroup (-\$28) was much smaller than the impact for the not job-ready subgroup (-\$106). The overall differences in impacts among the three subgroups were not statistically significant. Nevertheless, the small impacts for the middle group are consistent with the relatively low participation rates reported for that group in the previous chapter. This suggests that impacts for the middle group may increase if their participation levels can be raised.

### **B. Prior AFDC Receipt**

This section addresses the question of whether Project Independence's impacts varied for subgroups defined on the basis of their prior AFDC history. This issue has taken on particular importance because the Family Support Act of 1988 requires states to focus more than half of their resources on target groups that include longer-term AFDC recipients.

Several previous evaluations of welfare-to-work programs have examined impacts for subgroups defined by prior AFDC receipt patterns. These evaluations have found that applicants with no prior

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<sup>20</sup>Recall that the change in the job-readiness criteria occurred in October 1991 (three months after random assignment ended) and meant that this group would have been targeted for education and training services if they had entered the program after that point.

<sup>21</sup>It was not possible to define research sample members according to the complete set of revised job-readiness criteria because the BIFs only collected data on employment in the previous 36 months (in accordance with the original job-readiness criteria), not the previous 24 months.

AFDC receipt have generally produced below-average earnings gains and AFDC reductions.<sup>22</sup> This is because many first-time applicants find jobs and leave AFDC fairly quickly even without program assistance. The ability of a program to *increase* job-finding and welfare case closure, above and beyond normal behavior, is therefore limited for this subgroup. The impacts for those with some previous AFDC receipt have varied, depending on the program and the outcome measure. Long-term AFDC recipients have usually accounted for a major share of AFDC reductions (in programs that had any welfare impacts), but have not as consistently obtained sizable earnings gains. Long-term AFDC recipients often tend to remain on AFDC for several years into the future, so any program-induced changes in their behavior can result in relatively large AFDC reductions. However, the very low skills levels of many long-termers reduce their ability to sustain employment over the long run. These low levels of skills may partly explain the lack of consistent earnings impacts for this subgroup in the low- to moderate-cost programs of the past.

As in Chapter 5, the research sample is divided into three subgroups: (1) first-time applicants, (2) applicants and recipients each of whom had a total of less than two years of prior AFDC receipt, and (3) applicants and recipients each of whom had a total of two years or more of prior AFDC receipt.

Consistent with previous studies, first-time applicants realized a small and not statistically significant earnings impact: \$59 over the first year of follow-up (see Table 6.7). Those who had two years or more of prior AFDC receipt generated the largest first-year earnings impact (\$418). The earnings impact for those with less than two years of prior AFDC receipt was in between these two figures (\$150) and not statistically significant. The differences in the earnings impacts among these three subgroups *were* statistically significant.

Despite their larger impacts, the average earnings levels of program group members with two years or more of previous AFDC receipt remained substantially smaller than the earnings of those with fewer months of past AFDC receipt. The average 12-month earnings of program group members with longer prior AFDC receipt were \$1,966 compared to \$2,505 for those with less than two years of AFDC receipt and \$2,957 for first-time applicants.

The AFDC payments impacts for the three subgroups were considerably closer in size and were not correlated with the subgroup variation in earnings impacts. The first-year impacts on AFDC payments were \$177 for those with two years or more of receipt, \$209 for those with less than two years

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<sup>22</sup>See Friedlander, 1988; Gueron and Pauly, 1991; and Friedlander, Riccio, and Freedman, 1993. One exception was the San Diego Saturation Work Initiative Model (SWIM) program, which generated substantial impacts for first-time applicants. See Friedlander and Hamilton, 1993.

TABLE 6.7

FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS ON EARNINGS AND AFDC PAYMENTS  
FOR SUBGROUPS DEFINED BY PRIOR AFDC RECEIPT

Subgroup and Follow-up Period	Percent of Sample	Average Earnings			Average AFDC Payments Received		
		Program Group (\$)	Control Group (\$)	Difference (\$)	Program Group (\$)	Control Group (\$)	Difference (\$)
<b>First-time applicant</b>	42.1%						
Quarter 5		845	842	3	412	452	-40 ***
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,957	2,898	59	1,818	1,974	-156 ***
<b>Less than 2 years (a)</b>	30.5%						
Quarter 5		676	642	34	528	572	-44 ***
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,505	2,355	150	2,240	2,449	-209 ***
<b>2 years or more (a)</b>	27.3%						
Quarter 5		553	431	122 ***	620	669	-49 ***
Total (quarters 2-5)		1,966	1,548	418 ***	2,618	2,795	-177 ***
Sample size (total = 16,901)							
							Percentage Change
							-8.8%
							-7.9%
							-7.7%
							-8.5%
							-7.3%
							-6.3%

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Florida Unemployment Insurance records and AFDC records.

NOTES: In addition to the following, see Table 6.1 for notes.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the program and control groups. Statistical significance levels

are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

(a) This subgroup includes both applicants and recipients, and refers to the total number of months accumulated from one or more spells on an individual's own or spouse's AFDC case. It does not include AFDC receipt under a parent's name.

of receipt, and \$156 for first-time applicants. The differences among the three subgroups in these impacts on AFDC payments were not statistically significant.

Each of the two subgroups with prior AFDC receipt can be divided into two further subgroups: those who were applicants and not receiving AFDC at random assignment and those who were ongoing recipients. Combined with the first-time applicants, this leads to a five-way breakdown of the sample. The impacts for each of these five subgroups are reported in Appendix Table D.3. This table reveals that the applicants with some prior AFDC receipt tended to experience large earnings impacts.<sup>23</sup> This finding is consistent with prior research.<sup>24</sup> The AFDC impacts were fairly similar for each of the five groups.

## VII. First-Year Impacts by County

Table 6.8 presents the quarter 5 and first-year impacts on earnings and AFDC payments for each of the nine research counties and for the full research sample. Table 6.8 shows that the impacts on first-year earnings were positive for all the counties except Duval, although they were statistically significant only in Orange and Broward. Although not statistically significant, the first-year impacts on earnings for Lee and Bay (the counties with the smallest research samples) were fairly large (and larger than those in Broward). Table 6.8 also shows that first-year AFDC payments declined for all nine research counties and that these were statistically significant for Broward, Dade, Duval, Hillsborough, Lee, and Orange. Broward, Lee, and Orange achieved the largest AFDC reductions. Earnings gains exceeded AFDC payments reductions in all counties except Duval and Hillsborough.

It is important to note that the differences among counties in first-year impacts were not statistically significant. This means that much of the apparent variation in county impact estimates displayed in Table 6.8 may well stem from chance rather than from real differences in county performance. Thus, the differences among counties displayed in Table 6.8 should not be interpreted as reliable estimates of the relative effectiveness of the county-specific Project Independence programs. There may, however, be important reasons why some county impact estimates are relatively high and others relatively low.

This report does not attempt to identify the causes of variation in county impacts. However, it is

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<sup>23</sup>Collectively, the differences in first-year earnings impacts among the five subgroups were statistically significant. However, the only pair-wise differences in these impacts that were statistically significant included: (1) the differences between those for applicants with two years or more of prior AFDC receipt and those for first-time applicants, and (2) the differences between those for applicants with two years or more of prior AFDC receipt and those for recipients with less than two years.

<sup>24</sup>See Friedlander, 1988.

TABLE 6.8  
FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS ON EARNINGS AND AFDC PAYMENTS, BY COUNTY

County and Follow-up Period	Percent of Sample	Average Earnings			Average AFDC Payments Received				
		Program Group (\$)	Control Group (\$)	Difference (\$)	Percentage Change	Program Group (\$)	Control Group (\$)	Difference (\$)	Percentage Change
Bay	2.5%								
Quarter 5		626	561	65	11.6%	410	441	-31	-7.0%
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,531	2,150	381	17.7%	1,913	2,095	-182	-8.7%
Broward	12.3%								
Quarter 5		853	743	110	14.8%	438	484	-46 **	-9.5%
Total (quarters 2-5)		3,104	2,734	370 *	12.3%	1,806	2,009	-203 ***	-10.1%
Dade	33.0%								
Quarter 5		636	606	30	5.0%	593	621	-28 **	-4.3%
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,184	2,074	110	5.3%	2,519	2,605	-86 **	-3.3%
Duval	11.1%								
Quarter 5		625	720	-95	-13.2%	560	591	-31	-5.2%
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,217	2,510	-293	-11.7%	2,303	2,451	-148 **	-6.0%
Hillsborough	13.2%								
Quarter 5		709	691	17	2.5%	467	512	-45 **	-8.7%
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,466	2,437	29	1.2%	2,073	2,274	-201 ***	-8.6%
Lee	3.8%								
Quarter 5		768	730	38	5.2%	403	467	-64	-13.7%
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,937	2,448	489	20.0%	1,705	2,027	-322 ***	-15.9%
Orange	9.6%								
Quarter 5		815	688	128 *	18.6%	476	528	-52 **	-9.8%
Total (quarters 2-5)		3,073	2,509	564 **	22.5%	2,027	2,331	-304 ***	-13.0%
Pinellas	9.5%								
Quarter 5		834	765	69	9.0%	423	443	-20	-4.5%
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,970	2,719	251	9.2%	1,927	2,019	-92	-4.6%
Volusia	5.0%								
Quarter 5		658	576	82	14.2%	435	480	-45	-9.4%
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,325	2,160	165	7.6%	2,036	2,121	-85	-4.0%
All counties	100.0%								
Quarter 5		713	673	40 *	5.9%	507	543	-36 ***	6.7%
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,540	2,383	157 **	6.6%	2,174	2,331	-157 ***	6.7%
Sample size (total = 18,233)									

SOURCES: MDCRC calculations from Florida Unemployment Insurance records and AFDC records.

NOTES: In addition to the following, see Table 6.1 for notes.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.



worth noting that there are no obvious or consistent relationships between the level of county-specific impacts and county characteristics such as labor market conditions, program operating strategies, or program participation patterns. This can be seen by comparing the county-specific impacts in Table 6.8 with the county-specific participation, labor market, and program operating information in Table 5.5. It may be that a combination of these factors, or some other factor altogether, explains the variation in county impacts. In general, however, no conclusions can be drawn from the evidence presented in this report about the true magnitude, source, or policy importance of county variation in impacts.

#### **VIII. A Comparison with the First-Year Impacts Generated by California's GAIN Program**

To provide a context for gauging the magnitude of Project Independence's first-year impacts, it is useful to compare them with those generated by other JOBS programs. Another important random assignment evaluation of a JOBS program for which there are comparable data is the study of California's Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) Program, which is being conducted by MDRC. Table 6.9 presents both programs' first-year impacts on earnings and AFDC payments for single-parent AFDC applicants and recipients. However, one must be very cautious in making this comparison because there are several important differences in the research designs used, program models, and the environments of the two states. These are discussed briefly below.

First, as noted earlier in this chapter, random assignment for the Project Independence evaluation took place at the point of AFDC application or redetermination, whereas in the GAIN evaluation, random assignment took place at orientation. As discussed previously, it is not clear whether the earlier point of random assignment used in the Project Independence evaluation served to increase the impact estimate (by capturing the full effect of the program) or to "water down" the impacts (by including in the research sample individuals who did not attend orientation and thus did not participate in activities). In any case, the Project Independence research sample includes individuals who did not attend orientation and so would not have become part of the GAIN sample. In addition, control group members in the Project Independence evaluation were given access to subsidized child care and tuition assistance under the same guidelines and priorities as program group members. This was not the case in the GAIN evaluation.

Second, the research samples for GAIN and Project Independence differed in several important respects. The Project Independence evaluation research sample included single-parent AFDC applicants and recipients whose youngest child was between the ages of three and five (as well as those whose youngest child was six years old or older), whereas the research sample for the GAIN evaluation did not

TABLE 6.9

**A COMPARISON OF FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS  
FOR PROJECT INDEPENDENCE AND CALIFORNIA'S GAIN PROGRAM,  
FOR SAMPLE MEMBERS WHOSE YOUNGEST CHILD WAS AGE SIX OR OLDER**

Program, Outcome, and Follow-up Period	Program Group (\$)	Control Group (\$)	Difference (\$)	Percentage Change
<b><u>Project Independence (a)</u></b>				
Average total earnings Quarters 2-5	2,777	2,497	280 ***	11.2%
Average total AFDC payments received Quarters 2-5	2,034	2,209	-175 ***	-7.9%
<b><u>GAIN (a)</u></b>				
Average total earnings Quarters 2-5	1,908	1,642	266 ***	16.2%
Average total AFDC payments received Quarters 2-5	5,964	6,247	-283 ***	-4.5%

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Florida and California Unemployment Insurance records and AFDC records.

NOTES: The sample used to analyze Project Independence's impacts is slightly smaller than the full research sample. Dollar averages include zero values for sample members not employed and for sample members not receiving welfare. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics of sample members. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

For all measures, the quarter of random assignment (quarter 1) refers to the calendar quarter in which random assignment occurred. Because the quarter of random assignment may contain some earnings and AFDC payments from the period prior to random assignment, it is excluded from the summary measures of follow-up.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

(a) In Project Independence, random assignment occurred at the Public Assistance Unit, prior to orientation. In GAIN, random assignment occurred at orientation.



include this group.<sup>25</sup> As a result, the comparison of first-year impacts for the two programs presented in this section focuses only on the group they have in common: single-parent AFDC applicants and recipients whose youngest child was age six or older at the time of random assignment. The Project Independence research sample also includes a much higher proportion of AFDC applicants and reapplicants than does the GAIN research sample. Applicants and reapplicants make up 88 percent of the Project Independence research sample compared to 22 percent of the GAIN research sample.<sup>26</sup> This means that the research sample members in the Project Independence evaluation may be somewhat less "disadvantaged," on average, than those in the GAIN research sample. This is also illustrated, in part, by the employment rates during the first year of follow-up in each sample for the control group members whose youngest child was six years old or older. In the Project Independence evaluation, 52.6 percent of this group were employed at some point during the first year of follow-up (see Table 6.4) compared to 35.5 percent of the comparable group in the GAIN evaluation.<sup>27</sup> This difference in first-year employment rates between the two research samples may also be due, in part, to differences in the states' labor markets and AFDC programs.

Third, Florida and California differ in their AFDC grant levels, with Florida ranking in the lower range of states across the country and California ranking among the highest in the country. For example, in January 1991, the basic AFDC grant in Florida for a family of three was \$294; 35 states had higher grant levels. In that same month, the basic AFDC grant for a family of three in California was \$607; only Alaska had a higher grant level. This difference means that the Project Independence and GAIN participants faced very different incentives and opportunities to supplement or replace welfare with earnings.

Finally, Project Independence and GAIN differed in terms of the relative emphasis they placed on immediate labor force attachment and human capital development beginning with basic education. GAIN's overall emphasis on the latter<sup>28</sup> (and the fact that many program group members were still

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<sup>25</sup>Two counties in the GAIN evaluation – Riverside and Tulare – did include a sizable number of sample members whose youngest child was between the ages of three and five. Information about the program's effects on them will be presented in the GAIN evaluation's final report.

<sup>26</sup>The percentage of AFDC applicants and reapplicants in the GAIN research sample was calculated as the average of the percentages in each of the six GAIN research counties, which were weighted equally (see Table 1.2 in Friedlander, Riccio, and Freedman, 1993). Two of these counties did not include any AFDC applicants or reapplicants in their research samples and only included long-term AFDC recipients.

<sup>27</sup>The first-year employment rate for control group members in the GAIN evaluation was calculated as the average of the percentages in each of the six GAIN research counties, which were weighted equally (see Table 2.1 in Friedlander, Riccio, and Freedman, 1993).

<sup>28</sup>Although GAIN's service emphasis varied substantially by county, on average, the program placed a greater emphasis on basic education relative to Project Independence (see Riccio and Friedlander, 1992).

participating in the program at the end of the first year of follow-up) means that the effects of the program may not have been captured fully at the end of only one year.<sup>29</sup> The fact that a large proportion of program group members in the Project Independence evaluation participated in individual job search suggests that impacts on employment and earnings may be realized more quickly than in GAIN.

The above cautions should be kept in mind when examining Table 6.9.<sup>30</sup> It shows that Project Independence and GAIN produced quite similar increases in first-year earnings for single-parent AFDC applicants and recipients whose youngest child was age six or older: \$280 for Project Independence compared to \$266 for GAIN. The percentage increase in first-year earnings generated by Project Independence (11.2 percent) was somewhat smaller than the percentage increase generated by GAIN (16.2 percent). This is because, as noted above, the average first-year earnings of the Project Independence control group (\$2,383) were substantially larger than those of the GAIN control group (\$1,642).

Project Independence's impact on reducing first-year AFDC payments (\$175) was smaller than that produced by GAIN (\$283). However, the percentage decrease in first-year AFDC payments generated by Project Independence (7.9 percent) was larger than the percentage decrease generated by GAIN (4.5 percent). This is because, as noted above, the Florida AFDC grant levels were substantially smaller than the California AFDC grant levels and because control group members were more likely to leave AFDC on their own in Florida. Thus, average first-year AFDC payments were much lower for the control group in Project Independence than in GAIN. A given dollar reduction, therefore, made for a greater percentage reduction in Florida.

Because of the differences noted above, Table 6.9 should not be used to judge the relative effectiveness of the two states' programs. It does, however, provide a general indication that two large state JOBS programs both produced encouraging first-year results. The final report from the Project Independence evaluation will examine whether in Florida, as in California, impacts increased after the first year and will also compare benefits and costs.

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<sup>29</sup>In fact, GAIN's impacts on both earnings and AFDC payments increased substantially in the second year of follow-up (see Friedlander, Riccio, and Freedman, 1993).

<sup>30</sup>The impact estimates in Table 6.9 for GAIN reflect the average of the impacts for each of the six evaluation counties, which were equally weighted. There was considerable variation among the six counties, with Riverside standing out with consistently large impacts, and Tulare with consistently negligible impacts (see Table 2.1 in Friedlander, Riccio, and Freedman, 1993). The impact estimates in Table 6.9 for Project Independence reflect impacts for the pooled sample across all nine research counties.

**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**  
**SUPPLEMENTAL TABLES FOR CHAPTER 2**

**TABLE A.1**  
**SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF AFDC APPLICANTS**  
**AND OF APPLICANT SUBGROUPS DEFINED BY RESEARCH STATUS,**  
**AT THE TIME OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT**

Characteristic and Subgroup	Sample Size	All AFDC Applicants	Subgroups, by Research Status	
			Program Group	Control Group
<b>Ethnicity (%)</b>				
White, non-Hispanic	5,583	34.9	35.1	34.5
Black, non-Hispanic	5,755	36.0	36.1	35.8
Hispanic	3,639	22.8	22.7	23.0
Other	180	1.1	1.1	1.3
Data not available	832	5.2	5.1	5.5
<b>Primary language (%)</b>				
English	12,168	76.1	76.3	75.5
Spanish	2,893	18.1	18.1	18.2
Other	264	1.7	1.5	2.0 **
Data not available	664	4.2	4.1	4.3
<b>Average age (years)</b>	15,989	32.3	32.3	32.2
<b>Number of children (%)</b>				
1 child	7,087	44.3	44.6	43.4
2 children	4,921	30.8	30.4	32.0 *
3 or more children	3,112	19.5	19.7	18.8
Data not available	869	5.4	5.3	5.9
<b>Age of youngest child (%)</b>				
Ages 3 to 5	5,958	37.3	37.3	37.3
Ages 6 or older	8,607	53.8	53.9	53.7
Data not available	1,424	8.9	8.9	9.1
<b>Total prior AFDC receipt (a) (%)</b>				
First-time applicant	7,120	44.5	44.5	44.7
Applicant with less than 2 years (b)	4,373	27.4	27.5	26.8
Applicant with 2 years or more (c)	3,593	22.5	22.5	22.4
Data not available	903	5.7	5.5	6.1
<b>Education (%)</b>				
High school diploma or GED	8,499	53.2	53.3	52.9
No high school diploma or GED	6,508	40.7	40.8	40.3
Data not available	982	6.1	5.9	6.9 **
<b>Any earnings during the prior year (%)</b>	15,989	60.8	60.5	61.9
<b>Job-readiness status (d) (%)</b>				
Job-ready	13,328	83.4	83.5	83.0
Not job-ready	1,539	9.6	9.7	9.5
Data not available	1,122	7.0	5.8	7.5
<b>Random assignment cohort (%)</b>				
Early cohort (July-December 1990)	6,705	41.9	41.9	42.1
Late cohort (January-August 1991)	9,284	58.1	58.1	57.9
<b>Sample size</b>		15,989	11,946	4,043

(continued)

TABLE A.1 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Background Information Forms and Florida Unemployment Insurance records.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100.0 percent because of rounding.

A chi-square test or two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between subgroups defined by research status. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

(a) This refers to the total number of months accumulated from one or more spells on an individual's own or spouse's AFDC case. It does not include AFDC receipt under a parent's name.

(b) This subgroup is referred to in the report as "short-term" applicants.

(c) This subgroup is referred to in the report as "long-term" applicants.

(d) Sample members are defined as "job-ready" if they had completed at least 10th grade or were employed for at least 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. Sample members are defined as "not job-ready" if they had not completed 10th grade and were employed for less than 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. These definitions are based on the criteria used by Project Independence during the random assignment period.

**TABLE A.2**  
**SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF AFDC RECIPIENTS**  
**AND OF RECIPIENT SUBGROUPS DEFINED BY RESEARCH STATUS,**  
**AT THE TIME OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT**

Characteristic and Subgroup	Sample Size	All AFDC Recipients	Subgroups, by Research Status	
			Program Group	Control Group
<b>Ethnicity (%)</b>				
White, non-Hispanic	535	23.8	23.6	24.4
Black, non-Hispanic	1,123	50.0	49.8	50.4
Hispanic	405	18.0	18.1	17.9
Other	27	1.2	1.3	1.0
Data not available	158	7.0	7.3	6.3
<b>Primary language (%)</b>				
English	1,719	76.5	76.0	77.5
Spanish	339	15.1	15.4	14.4
Other	39	1.7	1.6	2.1
Data not available	151	6.7	7.0	6.0
<b>Average age (years)</b>	2,248	30.5	30.5	30.5
<b>Number of children (%)</b>				
1 child	773	34.4	34.6	33.9
2 children	654	29.1	29.8	27.5
3 or more children	685	31.5	29.7	32.2
Data not available	136	6.1	5.9	6.5
<b>Age of youngest child (%)</b>				
Ages 3 to 5	1,253	55.7	55.5	56.4
Ages 6 or older	709	31.5	31.5	31.7
Data not available	286	12.7	13.1	11.9
<b>Total prior AFDC receipt (a) (%)</b>				
Recipients with less than 2 years (b)	790	35.1	35.9	33.5
Recipients with 2 years or more (c)	1,029	45.8	44.0	49.9 ***
Data not available	429	19.1	20.2	16.6 **
<b>Education (%)</b>				
High school diploma or GED	938	41.7	42.8	39.4
No high school diploma or GED	1,035	46.0	45.1	48.3
Data not available	275	12.2	12.2	12.3
<b>Any earnings during the prior year (%)</b>	2,248	63.0	63.4	62.0
<b>Job-readiness status (d) (%)</b>				
Job-ready	1,608	71.5	72.2	70.0
Not job-ready	277	12.3	12.3	12.5
Data not available	363	16.2	15.6	17.5
<b>Random assignment cohort (%)</b>				
Early cohort (July-December 1990)	806	35.9	39.1	28.5 ***
Late cohort (January-August 1991)	1,442	64.2	60.9	71.5 ***
<b>Sample size</b>		2,248	1,567	681

(continued)



TABLE A.2 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Background Information Forms and Florida Unemployment Insurance records.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100.0 percent because of rounding.

A chi-square test or two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between subgroups defined by research status. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

(a) This refers to the total number of months accumulated from one or more spells on an individual's own or spouse's AFDC case. It does not include AFDC receipt under a parent's name.

(b) This subgroup is referred to in the report as "short-term" recipients.

(c) This subgroup is referred to in the report as "long-term" recipients.

(d) Sample members are defined as "job-ready" if they had completed at least 10th grade or were employed for at least 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. Sample members are defined as "not job-ready" if they had not completed 10th grade and were employed for less than 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. These definitions are based on the criteria used by Project Independence during the random assignment period.

**TABLE A.3**  
**SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FULL SAMPLE AND**  
**OF SUBGROUPS DEFINED BY JOB-READINESS STATUS,**  
**AT THE TIME OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT**

Characteristic and Subgroup	Sample Size	Full Sample	Subgroups, by	
			Job-Readiness Status (a)	
			Job-Ready	Not Job-Ready
<b>Ethnicity (%)</b>				
White, non-Hispanic	6,118	33.5	33.7	32.1
Black, non-Hispanic	6,878	37.7	39.5	21.6 ***
Hispanic	4,044	22.2	20.0	41.6 ***
Other	207	1.1	1.0	2.1 ***
Data not available	990	5.4	5.7	2.6 ***
<b>Primary language (%)</b>				
English	13,887	76.1	78.1	58.5 ***
Spanish	3,232	17.7	15.6	37.2 ***
Other	303	1.7	1.4	3.6 ***
Data not available	815	4.5	4.9	0.7 ***
<b>Average age (years)</b>				
	18,237	32.1	32.1	32.8 ***
<b>Number of children (%)</b>				
1 child	7,860	43.1	42.3	42.0
2 children	5,575	30.6	30.5	30.8
3 or more children	3,797	20.8	20.3	25.2 ***
Data not available	1,005	5.5	2.0	5.9 ***
<b>Age of youngest child (%)</b>				
Ages 3 to 5	7,211	39.5	39.3	42.0 **
Ages 6 or older	9,316	51.1	50.9	52.5
Data not available	1,710	9.4	9.8	5.5 ***
<b>Total prior AFDC receipt (b) (%)</b>				
First-time applicant	7,120	39.0	39.5	34.6 ***
Applicant with less than 2 years (c)	4,373	24.0	23.9	24.3
Recipient with less than 2 years (d)	790	4.3	4.2	5.2 *
Applicant with 2 years or more (e)	3,593	19.7	19.2	24.5 ***
Recipient with 2 years or more (f)	1,029	5.6	5.5	7.3 ***
Data not available	1,332	7.3	7.7	4.1 ***
<b>Education (%)</b>				
High school diploma or GED	9,437	51.7	57.5	0.0 ***
No high school diploma or GED	7,543	41.4	34.9	100.0 ***
Data not available	1,257	6.9	7.7	0.0 ***
<b>Any earnings during the prior year (%)</b>				
	18,237	61.1	61.2	60.2
<b>Job-readiness status (a) (%)</b>				
Job-ready	14,936	81.9	100.0	0.0 ***
Not job-ready	1,816	10.0	0.0	100.0 ***
Data not available	1,485	8.1	0.0	0.0
<b>Research sample status (%)</b>				
Program group	13,513	74.1	74.1	74.3
Control group	4,724	25.9	25.9	25.7
<b>Random assignment cohort (%)</b>				
Early cohort (July-December 1990)	7,511	41.2	40.7	45.3 ***
Late cohort (January-August 1991)	10,726	58.8	59.3	54.7 ***
<b>Sample size</b>		<b>18,237</b>	<b>14,983</b>	<b>1,816</b>

(continued)

TABLE A.3 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Background Information Forms and Florida Unemployment Insurance records.

NOTES: Sample sizes for subgroups defined by job-readiness status do not add to the full sample size because of missing data. Therefore, the weighted average of the percentages of the subgroups within a characteristic does not equal the percentage for the full sample.

Distributions may not add to 100.0 percent because of rounding.

A chi-square test or two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between subgroups defined by job-readiness status. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

(a) Sample members are defined as "job-ready" if they had completed at least 10th grade or were employed for at least 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. Sample members are defined as "not job-ready" if they had not completed 10th grade and were employed for less than 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. These definitions are based on the criteria used by Project Independence during the random assignment period.

(b) This refers to the total number of months accumulated from one or more spells on an individual's own or spouse's AFDC case. It does not include AFDC receipt under a parent's name.

(c) This subgroup is referred to in the report as "short-term" applicants.

(d) This subgroup is referred to in the report as "short-term" recipients.

(e) This subgroup is referred to in the report as "long-term" applicants.

(f) This subgroup is referred to in the report as "long-term" recipients.

**TABLE A.4**  
**SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FULL SAMPLE AND**  
**OF SUBGROUPS DEFINED BY PRIOR AFDC RECEIPT,**  
**AT THE TIME OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT**

Characteristic and Subgroup	Sample Size	Full Sample	Subgroups, by Prior AFDC Receipt (a)		
			None	Less Than 2 Years	2 or More Years
<b>Ethnicity (%)</b>					
White, non-Hispanic	6,118	33.5	39.9	36.1	26.5 ***
Black, non-Hispanic	6,878	37.7	26.7	41.4	55.8 ***
Hispanic	4,044	22.2	29.7	19.7	15.6 ***
Other	207	1.1	1.8	0.8	0.6 ***
Data not available	990	5.4	1.9	2.0	1.5
<b>Primary language (%)</b>					
English	13,887	76.1	72.8	82.5	86.1 ***
Spanish	3,232	17.7	24.4	15.1	11.8 ***
Other	303	1.7	2.2	1.5	1.3 ***
Data not available	815	4.5	0.7	0.9	0.8
Average age (years)	18,237	32.1	32.9	31.1	31.7 ***
<b>Number of children (%)</b>					
1 child	7,860	43.1	51.4	44.6	39.9 ***
2 children	5,575	30.6	30.4	32.9	32.3 ***
3 or more children	3,797	20.8	15.8	20.6	31.5 ***
Data not available	1,005	5.5	2.5	1.9	1.3 ***
<b>Age of youngest child (%)</b>					
Ages 3 to 5	7,211	39.5	37.1	44.0	43.6 ***
Ages 6 or older	9,316	51.1	56.2	49.9	51.5 ***
Data not available	1,710	9.4	6.7	6.1	4.9 ***
<b>Total prior AFDC receipt (a) (%)</b>					
First-time applicant	7,120	39.0	100.0	0.0	0.0 ***
Applicant with less than 2 years (b)	4,373	24.0	0.0	84.7	0.0 ***
Recipient with less than 2 years (c)	790	4.3	0.0	15.3	0.0 ***
Applicant with 2 years or more (d)	3,593	19.7	0.0	0.0	77.7 ***
Recipient with 2 years or more (e)	1,029	5.6	0.0	0.0	22.3 ***
Data not available	1,332	7.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Education (%)</b>					
High school diploma or GED	9,437	51.7	59.3	53.8	46.0 ***
No high school diploma or GED	7,543	41.4	37.3	43.3	50.5 ***
Data not available	1,257	6.9	3.4	2.9	3.6
Any earnings during the prior year (%)	18,237	61.1	61.2	61.2	60.5
<b>Job-readiness status (f) (%)</b>					
Job-ready	14,936	81.9	87.3	85.1	82.3 ***
Not job-ready	1,816	10.0	8.8	10.4	12.5 ***
Data not available	1,485	8.1	3.9	4.5	5.2 ***
<b>Research sample status (%)</b>					
Program group	13,513	74.1	74.6	74.6	73.0
Control group	4,724	25.9	25.4	25.4	27.0
<b>Random assignment cohort (%)</b>					
Early cohort (July-December 1990)	7,511	41.2	41.3	42.1	42.1
Late cohort (January-August 1991)	10,726	58.8	58.7	57.9	57.3
Sample size		18,237	7,120	5,163	4,622

(continued)

TABLE A.4 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Background Information Forms and Florida Unemployment Insurance records.

NOTES: Sample sizes for subgroups defined by prior AFDC receipt do not add to the full sample size because of missing data. Therefore, the weighted average of the percentages of the subgroups within a characteristic does not equal the percentage for the full sample.

Distributions may not add to 100.0 percent because of rounding.

An F test was applied to differences among subgroups defined by prior AFDC receipt. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

(a) This refers to the total number of months accumulated from one or more spells on an individual's own or spouse's AFDC case. It does not include AFDC receipt under a parent's name.

(b) This subgroup is referred to in the report as "short-term" applicants.

(c) This subgroup is referred to in the report as "short-term" recipients.

(d) This subgroup is referred to in the report as "long-term" applicants.

(e) This subgroup is referred to in the report as "long-term" recipients.

(f) Sample members are defined as "job-ready" if they had completed at least 10th grade or were employed for at least 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. Sample members are defined as "not job-ready" if they had not completed 10th grade and were employed for less than 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. These definitions are based on the criteria used by Project Independence during the random assignment period.

**APPENDIX B**

**SUPPLEMENTAL TABLE FOR CHAPTERS 3 AND 4**

TABLE B.1

ITEMS USED TO CREATE SCALES FOR THE STAFF SURVEY  
AND CRONBACH'S ALPHA FOR THE SCALES

Timeliness of monitoring information (a)

Cronbach's Alpha (b) = .84

- H4 Suppose a client has been assigned to job club but has only attended it one day. How likely is it that the client's P.I. worker would contact the client within two weeks? ("Very Unlikely" to "Very Likely")
- H5A Suppose a client has been assigned to basic education (ABE, GED, ESL) and *has not attended it at all*, how long, on average, would it take for the client's P.I. worker to learn about this situation? (c)
- H5B If a client has been assigned to vocational education or training and *has not attended it at all*, how long, on average, would it take for the client's P.I. worker to learn about the situation? (c)
- H6A Suppose a client has been regularly attending basic education (ABE, GED, ESL) for a month but is not well motivated and has not been participating effectively. *By the end of the month*, how likely is it that the client's P.I. worker would have contacted the client to talk about the situation? ("Very Unlikely to Make Contact Within a Month" to "Very Likely to Make Contact Within a Month")
- H6B Suppose a client has been regularly attending vocational education or training for a month but is not well motivated and has not been participating effectively. *By the end of the month*, how likely is it that the client's P.I. worker would have contacted the client to talk about the situation? ("Very Unlikely to Make Contact Within a Month" to "Very Likely to Make Contact Within a Month")
- H7A Suppose some clients have part-time jobs which deferred them from other P.I. obligations. How closely would you say your agency is monitoring whether clients quit or lose part-time jobs? ("Not Very Closely" to "Very Closely")
- H7B Suppose some clients have part-time jobs which deferred them from other P.I. obligations. Once your agency learned that a client lost or quit a part-time job, how long on average would it take before the client was assigned to another P.I. component? (d)
- H8 Suppose a client was attending a basic education program but stopped attending. How closely would you say your agency is monitoring situations like this one? ("Not Very Closely" to "Very Closely")

(continued)



H11A Suppose a client has completed his or her first activity in P.I. and is available for a second assignment. How likely is it in your unit that this client will remain unassigned for the rest of his or her time in P.I.? ("Very Unlikely" to "Very Likely")

H11B Suppose a client has completed his or her first activity in P.I. and is available for a second assignment. How long, on average, would the period be from the end of his or her old P.I. activity to the start of his or her new P.I. activity? (e)

**Worker morale and job satisfaction (a)**

Cronbach's Alpha (b) = .78

- A1 All things considered, how satisfied are you with your current job? (g)
- A2 How would you describe worker morale among the staff who work on the P.I. program? (h)
- A3 I feel that the people who are running Economic Services give a really high priority to P.I. and are really trying to support this program. ("Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree")
- A4 If I were offered a job with equal pay and security, I would leave welfare work. ("Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree")
- A5 Do you find the paperwork that you need to do on your job not very burdensome or very burdensome? ("Not Very Burdensome" to "Very Burdensome")
- A10 In my unit, what the rules say we should be doing with clients and what we are actually doing with clients are two different things. ("Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree")
- A17 I don't understand the reasoning behind many of the decisions that affect my job. ("Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree")
- B4 If someone really does not want to get off welfare, contact with our P.I. program will not usually change this attitude. ("Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree")
- B6 How easy is it in your unit for *mandatory* P.I. clients to stay on welfare and make no effort to get off? ("Very Easy" to "Very Difficult")
- B8 In trying to help clients, how often do you feel frustrated by the rules of P.I.? ("Rarely" to "Very Often")
- D4 I have too many clients to do my job well. ("Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree")

(continued)

Service emphasis (a)

Cronbach's Alpha (b) = .85

- E7 Think about the mandatory job-ready clients in your unit who are actually referred to a P.I. activity. About what proportion go to testing and assessment so they can do education or training as their first activity, instead of doing job search first? (i)
- E8A In your unit, what are the reasons a mandatory, job-ready client would be sent to education or training instead of job search as a first assignment? Is the reason that the client prefers education or training to job search? ("Rarely a Reason" to "Often a Reason")
- E8B In your unit, what are the reasons a mandatory, job-ready client would be sent to education or training instead of job search as a first assignment? Is the reason that the client has no strong preference, but staff feel that it would be better for the client to do education or training first? ("Rarely a Reason" to "Often a Reason")
- E12A Suppose a client with a high school diploma or GED and more than two years of recent work experience wanted to go to education or training rather than job search first. How likely is it that staff would do what the client wanted? ("Not Very Likely" to "Very Likely")
- E12B Suppose a client with a high school diploma or GED and more than two years of recent work experience had *no* strong preference for job search or education. How likely is it that staff would try to persuade the client to go into education/training? ("Not Very Likely" to "Very Likely")
- E13A Suppose a client with a high school diploma or GED but less than one year of recent work experience wanted to go to education or training rather than job search first. How likely is it that staff would do what the client wanted? ("Not Very Likely" to "Very Likely")
- E13B Suppose a client with a high school diploma or GED but less than one year of recent work experience had *no* strong preference for job search or education. How likely is it that staff would try to persuade the client to go into education/training? ("Not Very Likely" to "Very Likely")
- E14A Suppose a client with less than a tenth-grade education but more than two years of recent work experience wanted to go to education or training rather than job search first. How likely is it that staff would do what the client wanted? ("Not Very Likely" to "Very Likely")
- E14B Suppose a client with less than a tenth-grade education but more than two years of recent work experience had *no* strong preference for job search or education. How likely is it that staff would try to persuade the client to go into education/training? ("Not Very Likely" to "Very Likely")

(continued)

**Emphasis on quick employment (a)**

Cronbach's Alpha (b) = .80

- I1 After a short time in P.I., an average welfare mother is offered a low-skill, low-paying job that would make her slightly better off financially. Assume she has two choices: either to take the job and leave welfare OR to stay on welfare and wait for a better opportunity. If you were asked, what would your *personal advice* to this client be? ("Take the Job and Leave Welfare" to "Stay on Welfare to Wait for a Better Opportunity")
- I2 What advice do you feel most of the P.I. staff in your unit would give a client of this type? ("Take the Job and Leave Welfare" to "Stay on Welfare to Wait for a Better Opportunity")
- I3 What advice would your supervisor want you to give to a client of this type? ("Take the Job and Leave Welfare" to "Stay on Welfare to Wait for a Better Opportunity")
- I7 In this unit, we are supposed to encourage clients to take a job even if they do not feel ready to work. ("Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree")

**Emphasis: requirement or opportunity? (a)**

Cronbach's Alpha (b) = .59

- E1 During orientation and initial screening, what does your unit want staff to emphasize to clients: what they are required to do or what opportunities are available to them in P.I.? ("Emphasize Requirements" to "Emphasize Opportunities")
- E2 During orientation and initial screening, what do staff actually tend to emphasize to clients: what they are required to do or what opportunities are available to them in P.I.? ("Emphasize Requirements" to "Emphasize Opportunities")
- H16 How do you feel the staff of your unit who monitor clients are viewed by those clients? ("More as a Rule Enforcer" to "More as a Helper or Counselor")
- J8 While working with the client on the employability plan, what do staff in your unit tend to emphasize to clients: what they are required to do or what opportunities are available to them in P.I.? ("Emphasize Requirements" to "Emphasize Opportunities")
- K6G We are interested in cases where mandatory clients could be legally and rightly sanctioned under the state's rules. However, their case manager has not yet requested sanctions. In your unit, could the fact that sometimes staff lose track of cases be a reason why staff have delayed requesting a sanction? ("Rarely a Reason" to "Frequently a Reason")

(continued)

**Mandatory emphasis (a)**

Cronbach's Alpha (b) = .81

- P3A Is the goal to make continuous participation in P.I. mandatory, rather than voluntary, strongly emphasized by your unit? ("Not Emphasized by My Unit" to "Strongly Emphasized by My Unit")
- P3B How important do you feel the goal of making continuous participation in P.I. mandatory, rather than voluntary, should be? ("Should NOT Be an Important Objective in My Opinion" to "Should Be a Very Important Objective in My Opinion")
- P3C How strong an effect do you feel P.I. has had on making continuous participation mandatory rather than voluntary? ("P.I. Has No Effect" to "P.I. Has a Strong Effect")
- P6A Is the goal to make requirements for welfare more demanding strongly emphasized by your unit? ("Not Emphasized by My Unit" to "Strongly Emphasized by My Unit")
- P6B How important do you feel the goal of making requirements for welfare more demanding should be? ("Should NOT Be an Important Objective in My Opinion" to "Should Be a Very Important Objective in My Opinion")
- P6C How strong an effect do you feel P.I. has had on making requirements for welfare more demanding? ("P.I. Has No Effect" to "P.I. Has a Strong Effect")

**Availability of P.I. services (a)**

Cronbach's Alpha (b) = .89

- M1A How available are programs for adult basic education to P.I. clients in your region today? ("Normally Unavailable" to "Normally Available")
- M2A How available are programs for English as a Second Language to P.I. clients in your region today? ("Normally Unavailable" to "Normally Available")
- M3A How available are programs for high school equivalency certificates to P.I. clients in your region today? ("Normally Unavailable" to "Normally Available")
- M4A How available are job club programs to P.I. clients in your region today? ("Normally Unavailable" to "Normally Available")
- M5A How available are skills training and vocational education programs to P.I. clients in your region today? ("Normally Unavailable" to "Normally Available")
- M6A How available are post-secondary education programs (college and community college) to P.I. clients in your region today? ("Normally Unavailable" to "Normally Available")

(continued)

Quality of P.I. services (a)

Cronbach's Alpha (b) = .87

- M1B For clients who were assigned to programs for adult basic education in your unit, how worthwhile is it to them in helping them become self-supporting? ("Normally Not Worthwhile for Assigned Clients" to "Normally Very Worthwhile for Assigned Clients")
- M2B For clients who were assigned to programs for English as a Second Language in your unit, how worthwhile is it to them in helping them become self-supporting? ("Normally Not Worthwhile for Assigned Clients" to "Normally Very Worthwhile for Assigned Clients")
- M3B For clients who were assigned to programs for high school equivalency certificates in your unit, how worthwhile is it to them in helping them become self-supporting? ("Normally Not Worthwhile for Assigned Clients" to "Normally Very Worthwhile for Assigned Clients")
- M4B For clients who were assigned to job club programs in your unit, how worthwhile is it to them in helping them become self-supporting? ("Normally Not Worthwhile for Assigned Clients" to "Normally Very Worthwhile for Assigned Clients")
- M5B For clients who were assigned to skills training and vocational education programs in your unit, how worthwhile is it to them in helping them become self-supporting? ("Normally Not Worthwhile for Assigned Clients" to "Normally Very Worthwhile for Assigned Clients")
- M6B For clients who were assigned to post-secondary education programs (college and community college) in your unit, how worthwhile is it to them in helping them become self-supporting? ("Normally Not Worthwhile for Assigned Clients" to "Normally Very Worthwhile for Assigned Clients")

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SOURCE: MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey.

NOTES: The letters and numbers before each item refer to their location in the questionnaire, which is available from MDRC. On the survey given to supervisors, the wording of some items was changed to make it appropriate to their role.

(a) All responses were on a 7-point scale unless otherwise noted. The range of responses are shown in parentheses following each item unless otherwise noted.

(b) The calculation of Cronbach's Alpha, a statistical measure of a scale's reliability, is based upon data from both the P.I. staff and supervisors.

(c) Respondents could choose a number of weeks from "1 or Less" to "5 or More"; an additional response was "Not Likely to Find Out," which was coded as 7, and "Don't Know," which was coded as 9.

(d) Respondents could choose a number of weeks from "1 or Less" to "8 or More"; an additional response was "Don't Know," which was coded as 9.

(e) Respondents could choose a number of weeks from "1 or Less" to "13 or More"; an additional response was "Don't Know," which was coded as 9.

(f) This item used a 5-point scale, with the points labeled: Very Satisfied, Somewhat Satisfied, Neutral, Somewhat Dissatisfied, and Very Dissatisfied.

(g) This item used a 5-point scale, with the points labeled: Very High, High, Medium, Low, and Very Low.

(h) This item used a 7-point scale, with the points labeled: None, 1-10 percent, 11-20 percent, 21-30 percent, 31-40 percent, 41-50 percent, More Than 50 percent; an additional response was "Don't Know," which was coded as 9.

**TABLE B.2**  
**SELECTED REFERRAL AND PARTICIPATION ENFORCEMENT STRATEGIES**  
**AND THE SERVICE EMPHASIS, BY COUNTY**

Variable	All Counties (%)	Bay (%)	Broward (%)	Dade (%)	Duval (%)	Hillsborough (%)	Lee (%)	Orange (%)	Pinellas (%)	Volusia (%)
<b><u>Role of Public Assistance Specialists</u></b>										
Staff rating of the role of the Public Assistance Specialist in Project Independence referrals										
Very effective	9.3	0.0	506.0	1506.0	12.5	4.2	33.3	30.0	0.0	0.0
Somewhat effective	42.8	0.0	38.9	51.6	25.0	50.0	66.7	25.0	55.6	16.7
Not effective	48.0	100.0	55.6	32.8	62.5	45.8	0.0	75.0	44.4	83.3
<b><u>Use of sanctioning</u></b>										
Staff rating of the likelihood that they would request a sanction for noncompliance										
Very likely	62.8	75.0	76.5	42.1	69.6	76.0	100.0	58.3	70.6	100.0
Somewhat likely	27.4	25.0	11.8	40.4	30.4	16.0	0.0	33.3	23.5	0.0
Not likely	9.8	0.0	11.8	17.5	0.0	8.0	0.0	8.3	5.9	0.0
Staff rating of sanctioning as an effective enforcement measure										
Very effective	40.1	50.0	33.3	46.7	43.5	32.0	66.7	25.0	31.3	50.0
Somewhat effective	35.3	50.0	27.8	26.7	39.1	44.0	0.0	58.3	43.8	33.3
Not effective	24.6	0.0	38.9	26.7	17.4	24.0	33.3	16.7	25.0	16.7
<b><u>Message communicated during orientation</u></b>										
Staff rating of orientation's emphasis on opportunities versus requirements										
High emphasis on opportunities	6.4	0.0	0.0	13.9	0.0	8.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
High emphasis on requirements	10.4	25.0	16.7	6.2	16.0	8.7	0.0	25.0	0.0	14.3
Equal emphasis on both	83.2	75.0	83.3	80.0	84.0	82.6	100.0	75.0	100.0	85.7
Staff who strongly emphasized continuous participation	50.3	66.7	33.3	54.1	56.0	36.8	100.0	54.5	50.0	40.0

2  
(continued)

TABLE B.2 (continued)

Variable	All Counties (%)	Bay (%)	Broward (%)	Dade (%)	Duval (%)	Hillsborough (%)	Lee (%)	Orange (%)	Pinellas (%)	Volusia (%)
<b>Service emphasis</b>										
Staff rating of the likelihood that they would make an exception to the job--readiness criteria										
Very likely	21.4	0.0	5.3	32.4	18.5	7.7	0.0	8.3	41.2	16.7
Somewhat likely	59.9	50.0	68.4	50.2	63.0	61.5	66.7	41.7	58.9	50.0
Not likely	18.7	50.0	26.3	7.4	18.5	30.8	33.3	50.0	0.0	33.3
Staff rating of emphasis on immediate job placement										
High	36.1	25.0	33.3	39.1	33.3	40.7	0.0	53.8	18.8	33.3
Moderate	51.9	75.0	61.1	49.3	55.6	44.5	66.7	46.2	56.2	50.0
Low	12.0	0.0	5.6	11.6	11.1	14.8	33.3	0.0	25.0	16.7

SOURCE: MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey.

NOTES: The sample includes Project Independence staff employed at the time that MDRC's Staff Activities and Attitudes Survey was administered (September--October 1991). It includes supervisors, HRS employment counselors and interviewers, and LES employment specialists and representatives. It does not include HRS support staff.

Distributions may not add to 100.0 percent because of rounding.



**APPENDIX C**  
**SUPPLEMENTAL TABLES FOR CHAPTER 5**

TABLE C.1

**PROJECT INDEPENDENCE FIRST-YEAR PARTICIPATION PATTERNS  
FOR ALL PROGRAM GROUP MEMBERS AND FOR SUBGROUPS  
DEFINED BY AGE OF YOUNGEST CHILD AND RANDOM ASSIGNMENT COHORT**

Sample and Participation Measure	All Program Group Members	Early Cohort: Age of Youngest Child		Late Cohort: Age of Youngest Child	
		Ages 3 to 5	Age 6 or Older	Ages 3 to 5	Age 6 or Older
<b><u>All program group members</u></b>					
Attended orientation (%)	77.2	79.8	78.3	71.7	83.2 **
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (a) (%)	42.9	39.3	42.7	38.8	56.6 ***
Ever participated in any job search or job club activity (%)	32.3	31.6	30.5	31.0	43.7 **
Ever participated in any education or training activity (b) (%)	17.6	13.8	17.9	18.6	18.7
Sanctioning (c)					
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	24.2	28.5	17.0 **	30.8	24.3
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	3.1	0.9	2.4	4.8	4.0
Average number of months registered (c)	7.8	8.2	7.1	8.1	8.2
Average number of months participating (c)	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.7
Sample size	725	155	237	141	131
<b><u>Program group members who attended orientation</u></b>					
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (a) (%)	55.5	49.2	54.6	54.1	68.0 **
Ever participated in any job search or job club activity (%)	41.8	39.6	39.0	43.2	52.5
Ever participated in any education or training activity (b) (%)	22.8	17.3	22.9	25.9	22.5
Sanctioning (c)					
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	17.5	22.3	12.5 **	19.0	19.3
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	2.6	1.1	1.6	3.5	4.7
Average number of months registered (c)	8.4	8.7	7.7	9.0	8.6
Average number of months participating (c)	2.0	2.1	1.8	2.1	2.0
Sample size	555	120	184	103	108
<b><u>Program group members who did not attend orientation</u></b>					
Sanctioning (c)					
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	50.4	53.7	35.3	65.7	51.5
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	5.1	0.0	5.4	8.9	0.0
Average number of months registered (c)	5.5	6.1	4.4	5.4	6.2
Was registered at end of follow-up period and had never received a sanction notice (e) (%)	9.8	15.7	6.2	1.9	13.3 *
Sample size	292	35	53	38	23

(continued)

TABLE C.1 (continued)

SOURCE: Program flow subsample.

NOTES: The early cohort was randomly assigned between July 1990 and December 1990, and the late cohort between January 1991 and August 1991.

Sample sizes for subgroups defined by random assignment cohort and the age of the youngest child do not add to the sample size for all program group members because of missing data. Therefore, the weighted average of the percentages of the subgroups within a measure does not equal the percentage for all program group members.

A chi-square test or two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between subgroups defined by the age of the youngest child within each random assignment cohort. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

(a) Includes self-initiated activities that were approved by Project Independence.

(b) Includes both program-arranged and self-initiated ABE, GED preparation, ESL, vocational training, and community college courses.

(c) Data for this measure were available only from Project Independence casefiles; therefore, members of the program flow subsample for whom casefiles could not be obtained were not included in the calculations.

(d) Includes sanction referrals for missing an orientation, activity, or other appointment.

(e) This refers to a program group member's status at the end of the 12-month follow-up period. Individuals were not necessarily in this status for the full 12 months.

**TABLE C.2**  
**PROJECT INDEPENDENCE FIRST-YEAR PARTICIPATION PATTERNS**  
**FOR ALL PROGRAM GROUP MEMBERS AND FOR SUBGROUPS**  
**DEFINED BY JOB-READINESS STATUS**

Sample and Participation Measure	All Program Group Members	Subgroups, by Job-Readiness Status		
		Job-Ready (High School Diploma or GED)	Job-Ready (No High School Diploma or GED)	Not Job-Ready
<b><u>All program group members</u></b>				
Attended orientation (%)	77.2	77.4	75.1	83.4
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (a) (%)	42.9	45.4	32.8	40.6 *
Ever participated in any job search or job club activity (%)	32.3	33.3	22.9	26.3
Ever participated in any education or training activity (b) (%)	17.6	17.3	12.6	24.2
Sanctioning (c)				
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	24.2	25.4	30.2	14.9
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	3.1	3.1	5.0	1.4
Average number of months registered (c)	7.8	7.7	8.0	8.2
Average number of months participating (c)	1.6	1.6	1.3	1.1
Sample size	725	524	87	68
<b><u>Program group members who attended orientation</u></b>				
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (a) (%)	55.5	58.7	43.6	48.7 **
Ever participated in any job search or job club activity (%)	41.8	44.4	36.0	33.0
Ever participated in any education or training activity (b) (%)	22.8	22.4	16.8	29.0
Sanctioning (c)				
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	17.5	18.2	25.1	12.5
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	2.6	2.8	3.7	1.6
Average number of months registered (c)	8.4	8.3	8.7	8.4
Average number of months participating (c)	2.0	2.0	1.6	1.3
Sample size	555	402	66	55
<b><u>Program group members who did not attend orientation</u></b>				
Sanctioning (c)				
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	50.4	52.1	48.4	--
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	5.1	4.3	9.8	--
Average number of months registered (c)	5.5	5.5	5.5	--
Was registered at end of follow-up period and had never received a sanction notice (c,e) (%)	9.8	6.0	23.7	--
Sample size	292	122	21	13

(continued)

TABLE C.2 (continued)

SOURCE: Program flow subsample.

NOTES: Sample members are defined as "job-ready" if they had completed at least 10th grade or were employed for at least 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. Sample members are defined as "not job-ready" if they had not completed 10th grade and were employed for less than 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. These definitions are based on the criteria used by Project Independence during the random assignment period.

Sample sizes for subgroups defined by job-readiness status do not add to the sample size for all program group members because of missing data. Therefore, the weighted average of the percentages of the subgroups within a measure does not equal the percentage for all program group members.

Dashes indicate that the calculation was omitted because the sample size is less than 20.

An F test was applied to differences among subgroups defined by job-readiness status. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

(a) Includes self-initiated activities that were approved by Project Independence.

(b) Includes both program-arranged and self-initiated ABE, GED preparation, ESL, vocational training, and community college courses.

(c) Data for this measure were available only from Project Independence casefiles; therefore, members of the program flow subsample for whom casefiles could not be obtained were not included in the calculations.

(d) Includes sanction referrals for missing an orientation, activity, or other appointment.

(e) This refers to a program group member's status at the end of the 12-month follow-up period. Individuals were not necessarily in this status for the full 12 months.

**TABLE C.3**  
**PROJECT INDEPENDENCE FIRST-YEAR PARTICIPATION PATTERNS**  
**FOR ALL PROGRAM GROUP MEMBERS AND FOR SUBGROUPS**  
**DEFINED BY PRIOR AFDC RECEIPT**

Sample and Participation Measure	All Program Group Members	Subgroups, by Prior AFDC Receipt				
		None	Applicant, Less Than 2 Years	Recipient, Less Than 2 Years	Applicant, 2 Years or More	Recipient, 2 Years or More
<b><u>All program group members</u></b>						
Attended orientation (%)	77.2	75.3	75.3	77.1	8.0	92.9
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (a) (%)	42.9	44.2	41.0	30.7	41.6	52.7
Ever participated in any job search or job club activity (%)	32.3	32.4	33.5	11.3	29.8	43.9 *
Ever participated in any education or training activity (b) (%)	17.6	18.8	14.8	19.4	18.3	20.8
Sanctioning (c)						
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	24.2	23.6	28.7	14.8	26.9	25.5
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	3.1	2.2	4.6	1.9	5.3	0.0
Average number of months registered (c)	7.8	7.3	8.0	8.7	7.6	9.2 **
Average number of months participating (c)	1.6	1.7	1.3	2.4	1.4	1.6
Sample size	725	284	178	31	153	47
<b><u>Program group members who attended orientation</u></b>						
Ever participated in any activity, excluding orientation and assessment (a) (%)	55.5	58.8	54.4	39.8	52.0	56.7
Ever participated in any job search or job club activity (%)	41.8	43.0	44.5	14.6	37.2	47.2 *
Ever participated in any education or training activity (b) (%)	22.8	24.9	19.7	25.2	22.9	22.4
Sanctioning (c)						
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	17.5	16.6	21.9	17.3	17.6	21.4
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	2.6	1.8	3.0	2.2	5.7	0.0
Average number of months registered (c)	8.4	7.9	8.9	9.2	7.9	9.3 **
Average number of months participating (c)	2.0	2.2	1.7	2.9	1.7	1.7
Sample size	555	208	135	25	120	42
<b><u>Program group members who did not attend orientation</u></b>						
Sanctioning (c)						
Received sanction notice (d) (%)	50.4	47.0	52.7	--	64.9	--
Ever deregistered with a sanction enforced (%)	5.1	3.6	10.1	--	3.8	--
Average number of months registered (c)	5.5	5.2	4.9	--	6.3	--
Was registered at end of follow-up period and had never received a sanction notice (e) (%)	9.8	6.1	7.8	--	11.2	--
Sample size	292	76	43	6	33	5

(continued)

TABLE C.3 (continued)

SOURCE: Program flow subsample.

NOTES: "Prior AFDC receipt" refers to the total number of months accumulated from one or more spells on an individual's own or spouse's AFDC case. It does not include AFDC receipt under a parent's name.

Sample sizes for subgroups defined by prior AFDC receipt do not add to the sample size for all program group members because of missing data. Therefore, the weighted average of the percentages of the subgroups within a measure does not equal the percentage for all program group members.

Dashes indicate that the calculation was omitted because the sample size is less than 20.

An F test was applied to differences among subgroups defined by prior AFDC receipt. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

(a) Includes self-initiated activities that were approved by Project Independence.

(b) Includes both program-arranged and self-initiated ABE, GED preparation, ESL, vocational training, and community college courses.

(c) Data for this measure were available only from Project Independence casefiles; therefore, members of the program flow subsample for whom casefiles could not be obtained were not included in the calculations.

(d) Includes sanction referrals for missing an orientation, activity, or other appointment.

(e) This refers to a program group member's status at the end of the 12-month follow-up period.

Individuals were not necessarily in this status for the full 12 months.



**APPENDIX D**  
**SUPPLEMENTAL TABLES FOR CHAPTER 6**

**TABLE D.1**  
**FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF EARNINGS**  
**FOR SUBGROUPS DEFINED BY AGE OF YOUNGEST CHILD**

Outcome and Subgroup	Youngest Child, 3 to 5 Years Old		Youngest Child, 6 or More Years Old		Difference
	Program Group (%)	Control Group (%)	Program Group (%)	Control Group (%)	
Average total earnings (quarters 2-5)					
None	45.2	48.4	43.5	47.4	-3.9 ***
\$1-\$999	15.4	14.4	13.8	13.2	0.6
\$1,000-\$2,999	13.5	12.5	12.2	11.6	0.6
\$3,000-\$6,999	14.8	13.3	15.1	14.1	1.0
\$7,000 or more	11.1	11.4	15.4	13.7	1.7 **
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0
Sample size (total = 16,286)	5,145	1,829	6,926	2,386	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Florida Unemployment Insurance records.

NOTES: In addition to the following, see Table 6.1 for notes.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

TABLE D.2

FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS ON EARNINGS AND AFDC PAYMENTS  
FOR SUBGROUPS DEFINED BY JOB-READINESS STATUS

Subgroup and Follow-up Period	Percent of Sample	Average Earnings			Average AFDC Payments Received				
		Program Group (\$)	Control Group (\$)	Difference (\$)	Percentage Change	Program Group (\$)	Control Group (\$)	Difference (\$)	Percentage Change
<b>Job-ready</b>									
<b>(high school diploma or GED) (a)</b>									
Quarter 5	74.9%	851	790	61 **	7.7%	470	521	-51 ***	-9.8%
Total (quarters 2-5)		3,033	2,788	245 ***	8.8%	2,036	2,241	-205 ***	-9.1%
<b>Job-ready</b>									
<b>(no high school diploma or GED) (a)</b>									
Quarter 5	14.3%	380	346	34	9.8%	607	628	-21	-3.3%
Total (quarters 2-5)		1,348	1,312	36	2.7%	2,555	2,583	-28	-1.1%
<b>Not job-ready (a)</b>									
Quarter 5	10.8%	282	288	-6	-2.1%	566	586	-20	-3.4%
Total (quarters 2-5)		1,027	1,015	12	1.2%	2,446	2,552	-106	-4.2%
Sample size (total = 16,748)									

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Florida Unemployment Insurance records and AFDC records.

NOTES: In addition to the following, see Table 6.1 for notes.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

(a) Sample members are defined as "job-ready" if they had completed at least 10th grade or were employed for at least 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. Sample members are defined as "not job-ready" if they had not completed 10th grade and were employed for less than 12 of the 36 months prior to random assignment. These definitions are based on the criteria used by Project Independence during the random assignment period.

TABLE D.3

FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS ON EARNINGS AND AFDC PAYMENTS FOR SUBGROUPS DEFINED BY PRIOR AFDC RECEIPT

Subgroup and Follow-up Period	Percent of Sample	Average Earnings			Average AFDC Payments Received			Percentage Change
		Program Group (\$)	Control Group (\$)	Difference (\$)	Program Group (\$)	Control Group (\$)	Difference (\$)	
<u>First-time applicant</u>	42.1%							
Quarter 5		845	842	3	412	452	-40 ***	-8.8%
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,957	2,898	59	1,818	1,974	-156 ***	-7.9%
<u>Applicant, less than 2 years</u>	25.9%							
Quarter 5		711	654	57	510	549	-39 ***	-7.1%
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,625	2,382	243 *	2,165	2,366	-201 ***	-8.5%
<u>Recipient, less than 2 years</u>	4.7%							
Quarter 5		482	560	-78	625	712	-87 ***	-12.2%
Total (quarters 2-5)		1,862	2,075	-213	2,647	2,932	-285 ***	-9.7%
<u>Applicant, 2 years or more</u>	21.2%							
Quarter 5		610	473	137 ***	559	614	-55 ***	-9.0%
Total (quarters 2-5)		2,169	1,692	477 ***	2,404	2,585	-181 ***	-7.0%
<u>Recipient, 2 years or more</u>	6.1%							
Quarter 5		352	271	81	831	867	-36	-4.2%
Total (quarters 2-5)		1,260	990	270 *	3,368	3,530	-162 **	-4.6%
Sample size (total = 16,901)								

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Florida Unemployment Insurance records and AFDC records.

NOTES: In addition to the following, see Table 6.1 for notes.

"Prior AFDC receipt" refers to the total number of months accumulated from one or more spells on an individual's own or spouse's AFDC case. It does not include AFDC receipt under a parent's name.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

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### WELFARE-TO-WORK PROGRAMS

*From Welfare to Work* (Russell Sage Foundation). Book. 1991. Judith M. Gueron, Edward Pauly. A synthesis of research findings on the effectiveness of welfare-to-work programs. Chapter 1, which is the summary of the book, is also published separately by MDRC.

*Reforming Welfare with Work* (Ford Foundation). Monograph. 1987. Judith M. Gueron. A review of welfare-to-work initiatives in five states.

### Working Papers

*Child Support Enforcement: A Case Study*. 1993. Dan Bloom.

*Learning from the Voices of Mothers: Single Mothers' Perceptions of the Trade-offs Between Welfare and Work*. 1993. LaDonna Pavetti.

*Unpaid Work Experience for Welfare Recipients: Findings and Lessons from MDRC Research*. 1993. Thomas Brock, David Butler, David Long.

### Papers for Practitioners

*Assessing JOBS Participants: Issues and Trade-offs*. 1992. Patricia Auspos, Kay Sherwood. Lessons from employment and training programs for assessment in JOBS.

*Linking Welfare and Education: A Study of New Programs in Five States*. 1992. Edward Pauly, David Long, Karin Martinson. Key issues in providing education services to welfare recipients.

*Improving the Productivity of JOBS Programs*. Forthcoming. Eugene Bardach. Lessons about managing JOBS programs by creating "high-expectations" environments for welfare recipients and staff.

### The GAIN Evaluation

An evaluation of California's Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) Program, which is currently operating as the state's JOBS program and features upfront basic education as well as job search and other activities.

*GAIN: Planning and Early Implementation*. 1987. John Wallace, David Long.

*GAIN: Child Care in a Welfare Employment Initiative*. 1989. Karin Martinson, James Riccio.

*GAIN: Early Implementation Experiences and Lessons*. 1989. James Riccio, Barbara Goldman, Gayle Hamilton, Karin Martinson, Alan Orenstein.

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*GAIN: Two-Year Impacts in Six Counties*. 1993. Daniel Friedlander, James Riccio, Stephen Freedman.

*GAIN: Basic Education in a Welfare-to-Work Program*. Forthcoming. Karin Martinson, Daniel Friedlander.

### The JOBS Evaluation

An evaluation of welfare-to-work programs operating under the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) provisions of the Family Support Act of 1988.

*From Welfare to Work* (Russell Sage Foundation). Book. 1991. Judith M. Gueron, Edward Pauly. See description above.



### **The Saturation Work Initiative Model (SWIM)**

A test of the feasibility and effectiveness of an ongoing participation requirement in a welfare-to-work program.

*Final Report on the Saturation Work Initiative Model in San Diego.* 1989. Gayle Hamilton, Daniel Friedlander.  
*The Saturation Work Initiative Model in San Diego: A Five-Year Follow-up Study.* 1993. Daniel Friedlander, Gayle Hamilton.

### **The Demonstration of State Work/Welfare Initiatives**

A test of the feasibility and effectiveness of various state employment initiatives for welfare recipients.

**Arizona:** *Preliminary Management Lessons from the WIN Demonstration Program.* 1984. Kay Sherwood.

**Arkansas:** *Interim Findings from the Arkansas WIN Demonstration Program.* 1984. Janet Quint.

*Final Report on the WORK Program in Two Counties.* 1985. Daniel Friedlander, Gregory Hoerz, Janet Quint, James Riccio.

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## About MDRC

The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) is a nonprofit social policy research organization founded in 1974 and located in New York City and San Francisco. Its mission is to design and rigorously field-test promising education and employment-related programs aimed at improving the well-being of disadvantaged adults and youth, and to provide policymakers and practitioners with reliable evidence on the effectiveness of social programs. Through this work, and its technical assistance to program administrators, MDRC seeks to enhance the quality of public policies and programs. MDRC actively disseminates the results of its research through its publications and through interchange with policymakers, administrators, practitioners, and the public.

Over the past two decades – working in partnership with more than forty states, the federal government, scores of communities, and numerous private philanthropies – MDRC has developed and studied more than three dozen promising social policy initiatives.

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224

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