

What Works Clearinghouse



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WWC Quick Review of the Report “Reengaging High School Dropouts: Early Results of the National Guard Youth Challenge Program Evaluation”[†]

What is this study about?

The study examined whether participating in the *National Guard Youth Challenge Program* improved the educational and other outcomes of at-risk youth.

The study analyzed data on about 1,000 16- to 18-year-old high school dropouts enrolled in 10 *Challenge* programs throughout the country.

After completing an initial screening, applicants were randomly assigned to either a treatment group that could participate in the *Challenge* program or a control group that could not.

Information on educational attainment, involvement with the criminal justice system, and physical and mental health were gathered through surveys administered nine months after random assignment.

What did the study authors report?

The *Challenge* program increased the percentage of youth who had earned a high school diploma or GED nine months after random assignment (46 percent, compared with 10 percent for the control group).

In addition, after nine months, the program had increased the rate at which youth were employed and enrolled in college and had reduced their likelihood of arrest.

Features of the *National Guard Youth Challenge Program*

Program for dropouts that begins with a 22-week quasi-military residential phase, followed by a year of mentoring services

During residential phase, participants live in barracks, wear uniforms, and are subject to military-style discipline; they attend academic and life-skills classes, participate in physical training, and meet with counselors

During post-residential phase, participants meet weekly with a trained adult mentor

Sponsored by the National Guard Bureau in the U.S. Department of Defense

Does not require military service during or after the program

WWC Rating

The research described in this report is consistent with WWC evidence standards

Strengths: This is a well-implemented randomized controlled trial.

Cautions: In this analysis, the study authors examined program effects nine months after random assignment. Many sample members were still enrolled in school at this point. Impacts on educational attainment may change with longer follow-up.

[†]Bloom, D., Gardenhire-Crooks, A., & Mandsager, C. (2009). *Reengaging high school dropouts: Early results of the National Guard Youth Challenge Program evaluation*. New York, NY: MDRC.