



COMMUNITY  
VOICES HEARD  
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communities

## COMMUNITY VOICES HEARD RESEARCH REPORTS

(In Reverse Chronological Order)

- 📄 ***Democracy (In)Action: How HUD, NYCHA and Official Structures Undermine Resident Participation in New York City Public Housing (January 2010).*** By Vincent Villano with Sondra Youdelman.

The report evaluates the extent to which the official NYC resident participation system offers public housing residents the opportunity to meaningfully participate in policy decisions. It highlights the findings from over 1100 surveys of public housing residents across the five boroughs as well as five in-depth focus groups and a review of three years worth of minutes to meetings between official resident leaders and NYCHA. It also makes recommendations on how this system and residents can better hold NYCHA and HUD accountable to a democratic policymaking process that actively involves public housing residents.

- 📄 ***Missing the Mark: An Examination of NYC's Back to Work Program and Its Effectiveness In Meeting Employment Goals for Welfare Recipients (November 2008).*** By Alexa Kasdan with Sondra Youdelman.

This report, a follow-up study to *The Revolving Door* (2005), explores HRA's Back to Work (BTW) Program, focusing on how it compares to the Employment Services and Placement (ESP) Program and what impact the program changes have and on clients and vendors. The BTW Program was designed to serve both applicants and recipients of public assistance – providing assessment, case management, and job development services. Contracts for the BTW Program were signed in July 2005 and NYC allocated \$159.6 million over three years to implement the BTW Program and serve approximately 12,800 individuals per month. The research draws from short conversations with 954 BTW participants at sites across the city, 50 focus group participants, 152 phone survey respondents, in-depth interviews with 10 organizations that serves as BTW contractors or subcontractors, and HRA contracts, policy manuals, training materials, site visit summaries, and Vendor Stat Reports.

- 📄 ***Failure to Comply: The Disconnect Between Design and Implementation in HRA's WeCARE Program (March 2007).*** By Alexa Kasdan with Sondra Youdelman.

In early 2005, the NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA) implemented the Wellness, Comprehensive Assessment, Rehabilitation and Employment (WeCARE) Program to determine which public assistance recipients and applicants have multiple and complex barriers to employment and provide them with specialized services that were not available under HRA's previous support and training programs. Based on discussions from June 2005 through August 2006 with over 700 welfare recipients in WeCARE, as well as in-depth focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and phone surveys with 100 of those participants, this report is a study of how the WeCARE program is supposed to work and whether or not it is providing the support and specialized services it is designed to deliver to public assistance recipients with disabilities. The report lays out the policies put in place by New York City to serve public assistance recipients with disabilities, relays findings based on participants' first-hand experiences with the program and offers recommendations for systemic and service delivery improvements.

- 📄 ***Parks Opportunity Program (POP) External Monitoring Report (March 2006).*** By Sondra Youdelman.

This report shares results from Community Voices Heard's ongoing monitoring of the Parks Opportunity Program (POP), the largest paid transitional jobs program in New York City. The research documents the experiences of Job Training Participants (JTPs) who participated in POP in FY04 and FY05. It builds upon CVH's earlier research of FY01 and FY02 POP participants, looking concretely into changes in the program (collapsing of the varied entry-level job titles into one distinct "training participant" category, union status elimination, wage reduction, welfare case maintenance, etc.) and how these have impacted program participants. The report is based on ongoing discussions with 1,320 JTP workers, 130 field surveys, 4 focus groups, and 9 extensive individual interviews.

- 📄 ***The Revolving Door: Research Findings on NYC's Employment Services and Placement System and Its Effectiveness In Moving People from Welfare to Work (July 2005).*** By Sondra Youdelman with Paul Getsos.

This report documents the results of a comprehensive examination of the Employment Services and Placement (ESP) System, a key program developed and administered by the Human Resources Administration (HRA) to further its work-first approach. The renewal contracts, established by the start of 2003, allocated up to \$130 million for program services over three years – estimating that the program would service almost 80,000 people in that time period. At each ESP site, a combination of job readiness, job skills training, and job search assistance is offered to prepare individuals for and connect them to jobs; services are then provided to help participants retain jobs. Combining 600 client surveys, 19 provider interviews, and 2004 monthly performance data tracked by HRA, the research looks at whether or not job readiness and job placement programs accomplish what they set out to, what stands in their way, and how they might be improved to better serve the needs of the clients, the providers and the system at large.

📄 ***Wages Work! An Examination of New York City's Parks Opportunity Program (POP) and Its Participants (March 2004).*** By Sondra Youdelman with Paul Getsos.

The Parks Opportunity Program (POP) is the largest public sector paid transitional jobs program in the country. When initiated in March of 2001, the POP Program, along with other Transitional Jobs Programs in New York City, represented a significant shift away from forcing welfare recipients to perform unpaid workfare assignments (known as WEP) toward paying people a wage for working in city agencies on a transitional basis. This report uncovered the experiences of a random sample of 100 of the first program participants through intensive one-on-one interviews, comparing participants' experiences in both POP and WEP. Participant responses, in addition to findings from other transitional jobs research, welfare to work studies, and documents generated by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and Human Resources Administration, tell an important story about the value of paid transitional jobs over WEP and the policy and programmatic challenges yet to be addressed.

📄 ***Time Limits or Time Bomb? Assessing New York City Welfare as the Five-Year Time Limits Approach (August 2001).*** By Sondra Youdelman with Paul Getsos.

In December of 2001, over 76,000 New York State families receiving public assistance were set to reach their five-year time limits on federal public assistance. Of these, over 40,000 were based in New York City. An additional, 26,232 New York City families were to reach their time limits by September 2002. From October 2000 to March 2001, Community Voices Heard administered a survey to 595 individuals at over 30 welfare centers around the City, in an effort to evaluate the services and information they were receiving in advance of the time limits. This report documents the findings from this research, including a look at confusion among clients of the system as to what the time limits actually mean, challenges of accessing vital programs and supports, inefficient application processes and unjust sanction practices, and benefit loss that drives families deeper into poverty.

📄 ***WEP: Work Experience Program...New York City's Public Sector Sweat Shop Economy (2000).*** By Laura Wernick, John Krinsky and Paul Getsos.

In the summer of 1999, at the peak of NYC's unpaid workfare program, Community Voices Heard initiated a research project to determine what workfare workers were doing at their Work Experience Program (WEP) assignments in New York City. Members were increasingly reporting being forced to do more detailed work and perform significant work responsibilities at their work sites. Between June 1999 and February 2000, CVH members, staff and interns interviewed 649 WEP workers at 131 worksites in Manhattan and the Bronx. Descriptions of entry-level union job titles were used as the basis for the questionnaire and as a point of comparison between job tasks. This report demonstrates that workfare is displacing paid union entry level employees with a second tier of unpaid workfare workers who are doing a substantial portion, if not the entire workload, of formerly paid entry-level employees working in New York City's public agencies. The survey results also show that the incentives for the city to use workfare labor instead of unionized workers making a decent salary is such that workfare workers are unlikely ever to get real wages for the jobs they do, as long as WEP remains in place.

📄 ***Welfare to Work: Is it Working? The Failure of Current Welfare-to-Work Strategies To Move The Hardest To Employ Into Jobs - A Case for Public Job Creation (1999).*** By Andrew Stettner.

In the summer of 1998, Community Voices Heard surveyed 483 people on welfare at workfare worksites, welfare centers and social service agencies in Northern Manhattan and throughout the city. Contrary to stereotypes, survey results demonstrated that people on welfare want to work, have worked in the past, and are actively searching for work. This report evaluates welfare-to-work strategies (e.g. workfare, job creation and job search assistance), looks at how welfare recipients look for and find work, and analyzes barriers to employment among welfare recipients. The study concluded that people on welfare remain unemployed because of a lack of jobs, personal barriers to employment and the failure of New York City's welfare to work programs to adequately serve "hard-to-employ" welfare participants. The results from the survey make a case for community job creation. Unlike workfare, bona-fide jobs are voluntary (employers and employees match interests), pay a cash income (and qualify individuals for the federal Earned Income Tax Credit) and ensure all labor rights such as sick leave, prevailing wage, a grievance procedure and the right to join a union.

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<http://www.CVHaction.org/reports>

**For more information, please contact us at:**

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