

Executive Summary

The Revolving Door

Research Findings on NYC's Employment
Services and Placement System and Its Effectiveness
In Moving People from Welfare to Work

By Sondra Youdelman with Paul Getsos

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The Failure of a Work-First Approach in Challenging Times

In August 1996, President Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) into law, eliminating the federal entitlement to public assistance, imposing time limits on the provision of assistance to poor families, and requiring states to impose strict work participation requirements. At the same time in New York City, Mayor Giuliani moved aggressively to dismantle one of the country's strongest social safety nets – placing primary emphasis on work and diversion. At both the local and national levels, a strong work-first approach was the philosophy that guided the development of new policies and programs associated with welfare reform.

In New York City, the Human Resources Administration (HRA) instituted a comprehensive work-first policy – transforming welfare centers into job centers, expanding the local unpaid Work Experience Program (WEP) to cover tens of thousands of single mothers, instituting intensive job search activities for people on welfare, and aggressively sanctioning non-participating welfare recipients. The NYC welfare system was hailed as a national model. Indeed, city welfare rolls dropped an eye-opening 50 percent between 1996 and 2000, and the percentage of single mothers with jobs rose in the city as it did nationwide.

The rapid economic growth and robust job creation of the late 1990s presented ideal labor conditions for welfare-to-work programs. A growing economy provided jobs for many who were forced away from public assistance. Unemployment rates fell to 30-year lows and wage rates for less skilled workers rose briskly.¹ When recession hit in 2001, however, higher unemployment rates signaled that competition for available jobs would become much sharper.

In New York City, the impact of the recession was severe. Unemployment rates peaked in 2003 with an average overall rate of 8.5 percent. Higher still were the unemployment rates for people of color in NYC: 12.9 percent for African-Americans and 9.6 percent for Latinos. While the economy slowly began to show signs of recovery in 2004, unemployment rates have yet to return to their 2000 levels.²

With the change in circumstances, the many flaws of the New York City approach – and the strict national work-first model – have become evident. The hardest to employ, those with significant barriers to employment, have not benefited from “work-first.” Due to a variety of reasons – including low levels of education, limited English proficiency, inadequate access to childcare and supportive services – many recipients are still stuck in a welfare system that pushes them to move to work, even if they do not yet possess what they need to get and keep a job and move beyond the public assistance system.

This report documents the results of a comprehensive examination of a key program developed and administered by the Human Resources Administration (HRA) to further their work-first approach: the Employment Services and Placement (ESP) System. The research set out to uncover whether or not currently operating 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. Our findings point to a failure of this work-first model in achieving its main goal – moving people from welfare to work, into jobs and toward economic independence.

Client Profile / Jackie Smith*

I've been through the system – I was homeless and living in shelters for a while. I went through the “Women in Need” program [for homeless families] and my experience there led me to my choice of a career – I want to be an HIV/AIDS and substance abuse counselor.

When I was in the WIN program, I completed an 8-week training course with perfect attendance towards my certification as a counselor. When I got an apartment and got on public assistance, after leaving the shelter, I wanted to continue my education.

I presented HRA with my education plan to attend CASAC for six months. They wanted documentation from the school that I provided. Finally, HRA approved my education plan and assigned me to attend class three days a week and go to [an ESP] the other two days.

When I got there [to the ESP], they made me go through the entire testing process, that HRA had already put me through, again – they also asked me to get the same paperwork that I had already gotten for HRA.

I did all of that because I really wanted to go to school.

Once I provided them with everything, I thought it was all set. On the first day of school, I got pulled out of class because public assistance hadn't sent a check for my tuition like they said they would.

I went [back to my ESP] and asked them what was going on, and the supervisor there told me that I wouldn't be able to attend school because the program was too long. [It was 6 months.]

Instead, she gave me a WEP assignment in the parks for six months. I don't understand why I couldn't be in school for that time!

I had plans and I'd been accepted. In six months I could have been off of public assistance with a good job doing what I love. Instead, I'm going to be working in the parks.

It seems like they don't really want people to succeed. I feel like I'm climbing a sliding wall with grease on it – I'm climbing but I'm not getting anywhere.

At the time of this interview, Ms. Smith had just been designated as having Failed to Comply (FTC) by her ESP Site for an issue ultimately decided in her favor. Still, she had to be re-assigned to another similar site, where she began the employment services process all over again. At the time of publication of this report, she was finally enrolled in a training program.

*Name changed and ESP Site removed.

The Employment Services & Placement (ESP) System and How it Works

Since 1999, New York City’s main strategy for moving work-ready welfare recipients to employment and self-sufficiency has been “Full Engagement” – job readiness and job search activities two days a week, coupled with unpaid work experience the other three.

Employment services for welfare recipients are provided by two main contracts: **Employment Services and Placement (ESP)** contracts for the general population and **Special Populations** contracts for recipients with particular needs due to specialized circumstances such as homelessness or a history of drug abuse. **Skills Assessment and Job Placement (SAP)** contracts were also set up to serve applicants to public assistance, as they wait for their cases to open.

This report focuses on the services provided by the Employment Services and Placement System. 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.

From the beginning, ESP contracts were solely performance-based. Vendors only were paid for results: job placement, 3-month retention, and 6-month retention. Most contractors can receive a maximum

payment of \$5,500 per client when someone they place in a job remains employed at 6 months.

There are currently 9 vendors that hold ESP contracts. Collectively, the vendors now operate 26 sites throughout the city. Current vendors include a combination of for-profit corporations, large not-for-profit agencies, community-based organizations, and the City University of New York (CUNY).

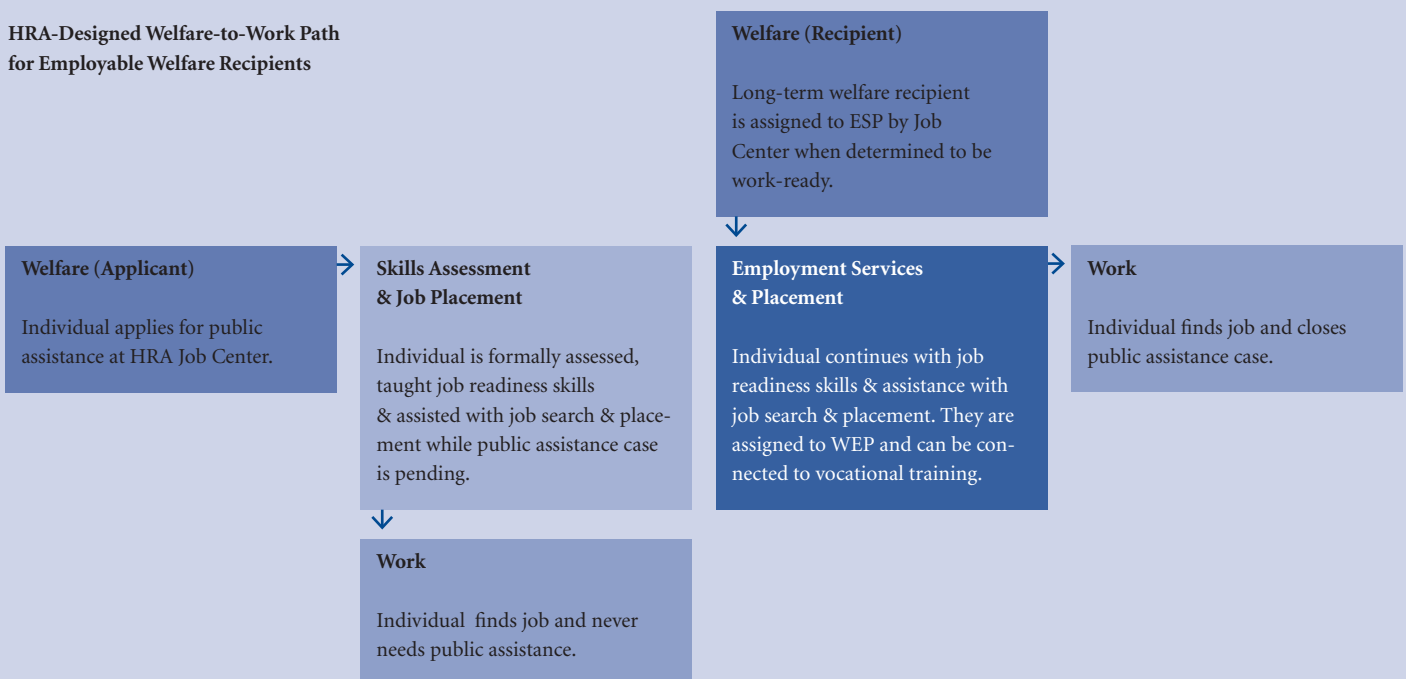
Each vendor is referred a different percentage of the overall ESP population, based on their original contract and current capacity (see table below). According to HRA’s December 2004 three-month average figures, an average of 4,100 individuals are referred across the 26 sites each month, or close to 50,000 per year.

ESP vendors are contracted to move people from welfare to work (see figure below). At each ESP site, a combination of job readiness, job skills training, and job search assistance is offered to prepare individuals for and to connect them to jobs; services are then provided to help participants retain jobs.

Current NYC ESP Vendors, % of Population Referred to Vendor

ACS-Inc. (New York Job Partners)	7%
America Works of NY	8%
Career Educational Consultants (CEC)	10%
Federation Employment & Guidance Service (FEGS)	5%
Goodwill Industries of Greater NY	15%
Non-Profit Assistance Corporation (N-PAC)	16%
NY Association for New Americans (NYANA)	4%
Research Foundation of the City University NY (CUNY)	12%
Wildcat Service Corporation	23%

HRA-Designed Welfare-to-Work Path for Employable Welfare Recipients



Research Finding 1

The ESP System is Inadequate at Meeting its Primary Goal of Connecting Welfare Recipients to Long-Term Employment

While the primary goal of the ESP System is to move people into jobs and off of welfare, less than 1 in 10 welfare recipients referred to the ESP System are placed in jobs within six months. Within another six months, almost 1 in 3 of those individuals return to public assistance.

The primary goal of the Human Resources Administration is moving people off of welfare and into employment. The ESP System is one of the strategies used for accomplishing this goal. ESP vendors are held accountable for both job placement and job retention. They receive their first payment when they place people into jobs, and subsequent payments as people retain those jobs for three and six months.

Research findings show that the ESP System is inadequate at connecting welfare recipients to jobs and achieving retention within the six-month period vendors are allotted.

Client Outcomes

Based on three-month average figures reported in HRA's December 2004 VendorStat Reports:

- Only 8 percent of those referred to the ESP System are placed in jobs within six months (see figure below).

Of those placed in jobs:

- 35 percent still hold those jobs six months later.

- 29 percent return to public assistance.
- 36 percent remain unaccounted for.

Systemic Problems

Research pointed to certain program dynamics that contributed to the low placement and retention rates:

- **Conflicts with the Work Experience Program:** Problems inherent in the Work Experience Program (WEP), as well as a lack of coordination between WEP & ESP Sites, impede program success. Some vendors critiqued the Work Experience Program (WEP) for interfering with their ability to accomplish their programmatic goal of job placement.

It's crazy. People get FTCed (Failure to Comply) for not attending WEP, even though they were at an interview!
—ESP Provider

The client survey showed that 83 percent of ESP clients are engaged in WEP. Vendors spoke of challenges that emerged due to clients not being released from WEP for interviews, and with clients they were serving being more loyal to WEP sites than to job searching. They also identified the false hopes of long-term employment in WEP assignments as discouraging some clients from looking for work.

- **Lack of a Strategic Approach to Workforce Development for Welfare Recipients:** The absence of a strategic approach to workforce development for welfare recipients impairs program effectiveness. Clients spoke of job developers that lacked connections to good employers and pushed them toward jobs limited in scope and quality. Vendor inter-

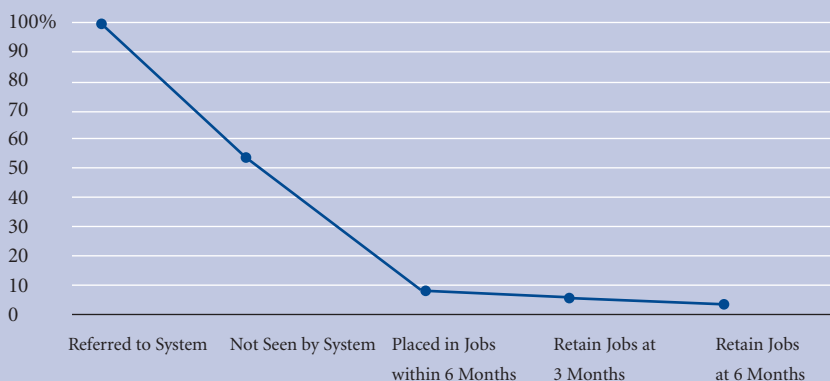
views pointed to the challenges faced by job developers left to make connections with little city support. HRA-sponsored employment services are developed on a site-by-site basis and have no strategic linkage to labor market realities.

The job developers try to give you a temporary job that only pays \$5 an hour...I don't want a three-week job that only pays \$5 an hour. As soon as you have one of these terrible temporary jobs, your benefits get cut and then you have to start the process all over again once the three weeks is up. I have a family to support – I need a real job.
—ESP Client

- **No Coordination between HRA and the Department of Small Business Services (SBS):** A lack of coordination between the City agency that focuses on linking workforce development to economic development, and the Human Resources Administration that services welfare recipients and the ESP System, was evident. Clients either knew nothing about SBS' Workforce1 Career Centers or critiqued not being able to choose to use their services rather than those of their ESP. Vendors mentioned that their job developers and those of the Workforce1 Career Centers operated completely independently. ESP sites are at times marginalized from economic development initiatives that could offer jobs for their clients.

Job Placement & Retention Relative to Referrals

(Based on 3-Month Averages from HRA's Dec '04 Vendor Stat Report)



Research Finding 2

The ESP System Fails to Offer Individuals the Training and Education Critical for Long-Term Self-Sufficiency

Even though a lack of education and training was identified as a major barrier for a vast majority of ESP clients, only 18 percent of clients were able to access education and training programs; 1 in 3 clients did not know that education and training might satisfy a portion of their work requirements and that vouchers were available to cover the costs of these programs.

Within the ESP program context, preparing individuals for work includes two key components: providing job readiness support on-site and connecting people to vocational training off-site when appropriate. Past studies have demonstrated that a programmatic mix of job search and adult basic education is more effective in promoting sustained employment than programs that focus exclusively on job search or work experience.³ Research findings from this study show that most individuals are not being provided with the training and education they need to move toward self-sufficiency.

They [the ESP Site] never tried to send people to education and training – they just kept talking about how many people would have to approve the program and made it sound really hard.
–ESP Client

Client Access

The representative client survey revealed high levels of educational challenges among

ESP clients:

- 43 percent of ESP clients have less than a high school diploma and 50 percent have only a high school diploma or GED.

However, despite the fact that many ESP clients could benefit from education and training, the client survey also showed that few who want it are able to access it through the system:

- Only 18 percent of ESP clients were able to access vocational education and training to better prepare them for work.
- 71 percent of those not participating in education and training said they would like to do so.

Many clients did not know about their rights to education and training and funds to support them:

- 39 percent were not told that attending Adult Basic Education and/or vocational education could partly or entirely satisfy their work requirements.
- 36 percent did not know that vouchers were available to cover costs of such training.

Certain vendors were less likely to inform their clients about education and training rights than others (see figure below).

Systemic Problems

Research revealed two particular program design issues that seemed to discourage vendors from referring people to education and training:

• Limitations of the ITA Voucher System:

Though there seems to be no limit on the availability of ITA Vouchers for client training, the slow and difficult process for obtaining them, as well as the lack of information regarding the variety of training programs that exist and the quality of them, appears to discourage vendors from encouraging client enrollment. Clients and vendors considered the application system for ITA Vouchers tedious, and commented that the delay in approval for vouchers often leads to lost clients and/or lost interest. The fact that the processing of a client’s voucher application is instantly canceled when a client receives a sanction is yet another reason why vendors hesitate to invest energy in assisting clients to apply for them. Additionally, vendors and clients alike critiqued the prioritization of short-term training over quality training.

Theoretically, they’re good [vouchers for training], but in practice there’s a need for closer monitoring. Because if you can’t trust sending someone to a provider that has integrity, then there’s a problem. The eligibility criteria is too flexible now.

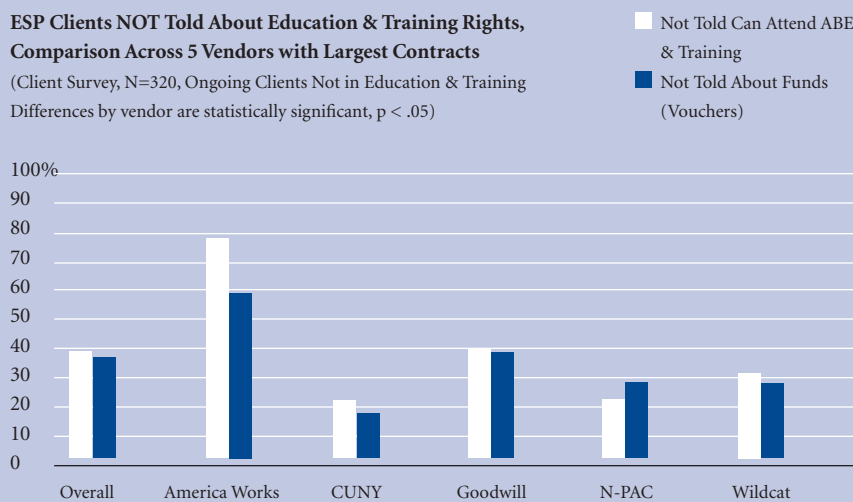
–ESP Provider

• Performance-Based Contracts Undermine Education and Training:

The structure of the ESP contracts provides no incentive for connecting clients to education and training. With payment contingent on placement within six months, vendors with short-term cash flow concerns have more incentive to push participants into quick employment than to promote choices that might be better for clients in the long run.

ESP Clients NOT Told About Education & Training Rights, Comparison Across 5 Vendors with Largest Contracts

(Client Survey, N=320, Ongoing Clients Not in Education & Training)
Differences by vendor are statistically significant, $p < .05$)



Research Finding 3

The ESP System Does Not Support the Provision of Services Needed by a Large Proportion of Individuals Referred to It

According to the representative sample of clients surveyed, over half (55 percent) had been through multiple HRA job readiness / job search programs. HRA VendorStat Reports confirmed that 92 percent of those referred to the ESP System do not have their needs met by it – instead, clients are perpetually recycled through a system that fails to address their needs.

The ESP System was designed under a work-first philosophy. Clients referred to it are considered ready to work, and the assumption is that the system simply needs to help connect them to jobs. The reality, however, emerges as quite different. Some clients never arrive, some arrive wrongly assessed, and some come with multiple barriers. Research revealed that the ESP System does not meet the real needs of large numbers of participants – and that the great majority of individuals find themselves going around and around in circles instead of heading forward on a path toward long-term employment and self-sufficiency.

Client Status

Based on figures from HRA’s December 2004 VendorStat Reports, 8 percent of those referred to the ESP System are placed in jobs. The large majority of those referred, however, never receive the services intended (see figure below):

- 30 percent of those referred to the ESPs each month Fail to Report (FTR).
- 14 percent are sent back to HRA each month due to a wrong initial referral.
- 46 percent end up in receipt of a Failure to Comply / Cooperate (FTC).

All of these individuals are taken off the roster of the ESP site, are made to report to an HRA Job Center to discuss their situation, and are then re-assigned to the same site or a different

site (or program) to begin the process again. According to the client survey, 55 percent of those in the ESP system had already been through other HRA job readiness / job search programs. Not served by one, they were cycled on to the next.

Why continue to send people to the same program if it's not working?...HRA tells us to FTC them, but why? They are just sent to another ESP Site. We're known for keeping people on our roster for too long. But, if we FTC everyone, we wouldn't have anyone. The whole system is a recycling process.
–ESP Provider

Systemic Problems

Research uncovered three particular program design problems that contribute to the continuous cycling of clients and the ineffectiveness in meeting their needs:

- **Poor Assessment and Referral Processes:** HRA’s assessment and referral system fails to connect people to appropriate services. Assessments done at the SAP Sites prior to ESP referral are often either inadequate or are ignored at the next step along the line, leading to inappropriate referrals. Even if a good assessment is done, rarely do ESP Sites gain full access to assessments. ESP Sites must fill in and begin again. Since the assessment process was not supposed to be core to the ESP System, little has been done to develop it adequately. Vendors are each left to figure out the appropriate way to assess on their own, beyond HRA’s standardized check list, and great variation exists in how thoroughly it is done. Nearly half (44 percent) of the random sample surveyed said they did not feel that the assessment effectively captured their background and interests, and whether or not the subsequent Employment Plan was linked to the assessment was in question.
- **High Propensity to Sanction:** The ESP System focuses on sanctioning those that do not comply, rather than addressing barriers

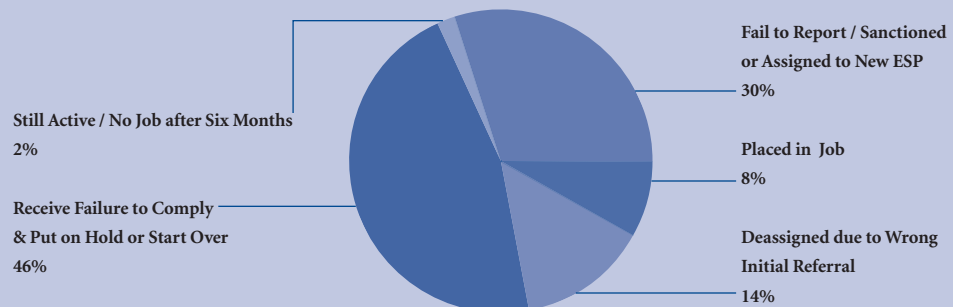
and working to engage client problems and issues. The system’s work-first prioritization over barrier removal is a likely contributing factor to the high rates of no-shows and FTCs. The system focuses on sanctioning those that do not comply, rather than figuring out the reasoning behind their non-compliance and working with people to help address their barriers and become engaged. While 77 percent of clients that identified barriers to employment said that workers at their ESP site are aware of the barriers they face, only 52 percent felt the ESP program is able to help them deal with the barriers. Vendors are quick to explain that they are discouraged from working with clients for the length of time often necessary to address barriers and are instead encouraged to sanction them. Clients spoke of their perpetual problems with being FTCed, or nearly FTCed. They often spoke of bad communication and bad record keeping, by HRA and the contracted programs, which led to unjust sanctioning.

My case has been closed almost ten times. They always send me letters telling me I am close to being cut off – I've filed for Fair Hearings so many times that the judge knows me by name. And, every time, I get assigned to another ESP Site.
–ESP Client

- **Contract Incentives Discourage Service Provision:** Contract incentives contribute to the lack of provision of services critical to moving people off welfare and into work. While it is expected that ESPs will need to provide comprehensive services in order to achieve high levels of placement and retention, there are neither incentives nor additional resources provided to truly address the barriers that people face in finding and keeping jobs, or to tackle problems underlying non-compliance. The incentives are structured in a way that encourages vendors to work with those easiest to place quickly, and leave behind those that need more support and more time to achieve initial placement. Clients realize this and grow wary of a system that is failing to meet their needs.

Percent Referred to the ESP System That Are Served by It

(Based on 3-Month Averages from HRA’s Dec ‘04 Vendor Stat Report)



Conclusion: Systemic Failure and A Revolving Door

Based on the above findings, we conclude that the Employment Services and Placement (ESP) System has failed to achieve its goals of moving people from welfare to work, and instead maintains people in a continuous cycle – in and out of the doors of different HRA offices and programs – destined never to have their real needs addressed.

The Employment Services and Placement (ESP) System emerges in the research as a program that fails to move people from welfare to work. Perhaps at one time, in a more robust economy and when there were more work-ready individuals in the system, it met the needs of more individuals referred to it. However, this is not the context within which it currently operates. Our research finds that systemic problems cause the program to fail to meet the needs of those it currently is meant to serve.

These systemic problems include the following:

- NYC lacks a strategic coordinated workforce development approach for welfare recipients,
- WEP fails to prepare people for work and sets up a paradigm that discourages job searching or sends people in circles for non-compliance,
- The ITA voucher system is structured in a way that discourages enrollment in training,
- Education and training providers are neither monitored nor evaluated,
- HRA's assessment process fails to refer the right people to the right services,
- The welfare system prioritizes sanctioning of clients over addressing their barriers, and
- The contracting system rewards placement and retention without supporting working with those that face more challenges to employment.

We recognize that a small percentage of individuals find success within this approach. However, we have found that the great majority seem stuck in a procedural maze – scrambling from one vendor to the next, from one set of services to another, but ultimately getting nowhere, except recycled into another employment program. Given the amount of federal, state, and local funding that is being spent on this system, we must ask if this is the best use of limited governmental resources. When you add on the additional good will, energy, and countless hours of people power that is invested by government agencies and employees, the private sector, and community based organizations – not to mention the personal investment of hopes and aspirations that the clients themselves put into getting a job and getting off of welfare – we must question the efficacy of a system that so many are invested in and yet produces so few results. Many vendors are doing what they can given the constraints under which they operate.

About 30% of the people benefit from the model we're dictated to run. But then there are different types of individuals – 10% of these, 15% of these, 20% of these. It would be good to designate resources to design programs to help people at different levels.
–ESP Provider

A focus on designing a system wherein vendors can be more effective, and more clients can have their needs addressed, is critical. It is based on our findings, on the lack of results of the current system, that we put forward our list of recommendations.

Research Design

Community Voices Heard began formal exploration of the Employment Services and Placement (ESP) System in 2004. It was decided early on that a comprehensive look into the system would require information from a variety of perspectives: clients, vendors, and the Human Resources Administration (HRA).

In the course of our research we sought to examine if there were differences in the success of different models or vendors. Research revealed that sites had noticeably different philosophies of service, facilities and resources, staff attitudes toward clients, case management services, job leads, educational opportunities, etc. However, based on the parameters set up by the contracts, the strengths of one site versus another were not made use of strategically, and none of this appeared ultimately to matter in terms of outcomes.

In this report, we highlight differences across vendors when particularly revealing or statistically significant. However, further research is necessary in NYC to explore service variations and determine how they might improve program outcomes, given more flexibility.

The research team utilized five main categories of data in the research:

- 1. HRA Documents & Meetings:** FOIA requests provided information including solicitations for proposals, policy directives, and CUNY Family Independence Administration curricula. The new RFP was obtained and the pre-proposal conference attended.
- 2. Client Surveys:** Utilizing a proportionate stratified sampling technique, 600 client surveys were carried out during the fall of 2004 outside 25 different ESP sites across the City.
- 3. Provider Interviews & Materials:** Interviews were conducted with 19 providers, representing 8 of the 9 vendors. In addition to interviews, provider websites and brochures were reviewed.
- 4. HRA VendorStat Reports:** HRA's monthly performance evaluation reports from January through December 2004 were analyzed. These reports track placement, retention, recidivism, and enrollment for each site, vendor, and the entire system.
- 5. Client Interviews:** In depth interviews were conducted with 12 clients from four sites representing a variety of vendor types: for-profit, large not-for-profit, community based organization, and university.

Recommendations to Improve Employment Services for Welfare Recipients

At the close of 2005, HRA's ESP contracts will come to an end after two, three-year cycles. HRA has just collected proposals from agencies interested in being contracted for its new employment services program – *HRA Works* – which collapses three current employment services contracts into one. HRA deserves credit for the time and effort it has put into reflecting on what worked and what failed to work in their last contracting cycle as they structured their new RFP. However, they have not gone far enough.

With \$63 million in annual funding allocated to service an estimated 12,800 people per month in this new employment services program, the time for correcting both the program design and the program contracting is now. This research points to a number of recommendations that will help get at the root of the programmatic challenges uncovered. For purposes of this Executive Summary, a few such recommendations are presented here. More information on these recommendations, as well as some additional ones, can be found in the full-length copy of this report.

To meet the goal of connecting more welfare recipients to long-term employment, city government should:

1. Coordinate HRA and SBS in Crafting a Single Workforce Development Strategy

One strategic approach should drive workforce development efforts for all NYC's unemployed and underemployed. HRA and SBS should work together to develop a common analysis of the labor sector growth areas in the City and the pathways and programs individuals must use to advance within them.

2. Develop Career-Ladder Programs that Reflect Real Labor Market Needs

Targeted training programs can prepare individuals for entry into and advancement within the economic sectors with the most potential for future growth. NYC should expand a number of initiatives that have begun to do this, broadening participation to include welfare recipients.

3. Create Industry and/or Occupation Employment Services Hubs for Welfare Recipients

Career-oriented employment services hubs should be created in addition to the geographically based ones that HRA is proposing for its next round of contracts. Staff at industry hubs could focus their employer

connections and training knowledge around particular industries and occupations. Clients would benefit from more targeted placement assistance connected to their interests.

To facilitate access to education and training among welfare recipients, city government should:

4. Eliminate Sanctions and FTCs as Barriers to ITA Voucher Applications

Once a vendor helps a client apply for an ITA Voucher, it should not be bumped out of the system due to an FTC or sanction status. This discourages vendors from assisting clients with voucher applications and distances clients from the training they need to get off the system.

5. Monitor and Identify Effective Training Programs

Clients will continue to be denied access to education and training if efforts are not made to better identify effective training programs and encourage vendors to place people in them. The city should conduct a centralized evaluation of approved sites and distribute results to vendors.

6. Add Payment Milestones that Encourage Placement in Training

HRA should revise performance-based contracts to include incentives that encourage vendors to help people get training and education. Two additional milestones should be added to the contracts: one compensated milestone for placing a client in training, and another one upon the client's completion of it.

To more adequately meet the needs of a diverse population seeking assistance, city government and the Human Resources Administration should:

7. Develop an Assessment Process that is Broad in Scope

The assessment process should include more than completion of a TABE Test and a checkbox employment plan form. Efforts should be made to learn from more holistic techniques being utilized by some, gather information on additional ones, and support vendors in implementing new methods.

8. Establish a Separate Sanction Trouble-Shooting Program

HRA should eliminate its current sanctioning approach, with its assumption of fault and a need for punishment. In its place, the agency

should create a special unit (or provide adequate resources to vendors) to reach out to individuals that Fail to Comply, find out what prevents their compliance, and work with them toward reengagement.

9. Create Line Item Funds or Additional Milestones for Service Provision

So that vendors can have funds to provide the intensive services needed by many clients, some line item funding is critical. Alternatively, the agency could set up additional payment milestones to reward assisting people with securing housing, setting up childcare arrangements, special referrals, etc.

10. Expand Paid Transitional Jobs into Other City Agencies

For individuals lacking recent work experience, a short-term paid subsidized job opportunity can help propel them back into the workforce. The establishment of NYC's Parks Opportunity Program (POP) has replaced WEP and begun to fulfill this need for some. The program should be expanded into other city agencies to provide similar opportunities in a variety of occupations.

11. Create a Supported Work Program for the Hardest to Employ

A supported work program provides intensive support and services to hard-to-employ individuals in an accepting work environment: on-site employment supervision, case management (addressing personal, family, and vocational needs) and job coaching. Resources should be invested into creating such a program for welfare recipients with the most barriers to employment.

To ensure that we can really learn what works in moving people from welfare-to-work, city government should:

12. Contract an Outside Entity to Evaluate HRA Works

With a new program set to kick off in October 2005, now is the perfect moment to initiate an evaluation. Learning more about program design and implementation at the vendor level, as well as what services work to produce what outcomes, could help HRA fine-tune the program along the way and solicit better results.

Glossary of Abbreviations

ESP: Employment Services and Placement

Contracts that NYC welfare agency has with private for-profit and not-for-profit entities to provide job readiness and job search assistance to mandated work-ready welfare recipients.

FTC: Failure to Comply / Cooperate

Term used when welfare recipients do not fulfill various requirements placed on them for receipt of their benefits. If individuals are non-exempt, and FTCed, they may be denied benefits or have their benefits reduced. FTCs can be given for a variety of reasons, including not participating in work activities, exhibiting inappropriate behavior, not accepting a job offered, etc.

FTR: Failure to Report

Term used to designate when a welfare recipient does not show up at a mandatory appointment, such as an appointment with an ESP vendor, the first day of orientation at a program, etc.

HRA: Human Resources Administration

Agency that administers NYC's welfare program. Provides help to eligible individuals and families with social service and economic needs. HRA services include the provision of cash assistance, Medicaid, Food Stamps, etc.

ITA: Individual Training Account

Financial assistance voucher for up to \$2500 available to help cover the costs of job training. ITAs are available for welfare recipients through HRA vendors and to other eligible unemployed and underemployed individuals through the One Stop Centers run by SBS.

SA(J)P: Skills Assessment and (Job) Placement

Contracts that NYC welfare agency has with private entities to assess welfare applicants, and assist work-ready applicants in developing employment plans and looking for work, while their applications are pending.

SBS: Department of Small Business Services

NYC Agency that works to link economic development to workforce development by providing services to support small businesses throughout the City, administering the City's One Stop Centers that provide workforce development support to unemployed and underemployed individuals, sponsoring Business Improvement Districts to help make neighborhoods better support small businesses, and more.

WEP: Work Experience Program

Program operated by City's welfare agency. Puts work-ready welfare recipients into unpaid structured work assignments in City agencies for three days a week to "work off their benefits". After orientation at an ESP, welfare recipients generally move into a concurrent schedule of 3 days/week at WEP and 2 days/week at ESP.

Notes

1. Mark Levitan and Robin Gluck, *Job Market Realities and Federal Welfare Policy* (New York: Community Service Society, September 2003), p. 14.

2. Mark Levitan, *Unemployment and Joblessness in New York City, 2004: Better, But Still a Long Way to Go* (New York: Community Service Society, February 2005), p.7.

3. Gayle Hamilton, *Moving People from Welfare to Work: Lessons from the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies* (New York: MDRC, July 2002).



Community Voices Heard is a membership organization of low-income individuals, mostly women with experience on public assistance, working together to build the power of our families, our communities and low-income people. We are working to accomplish this through a multi-pronged strategy which includes community organizing, public education, public-policy work, grassroots-driven research, coalition building, leadership development, training low-income people about their rights, political education and direct-action issue campaigns.

We are led, directed, run and being built by low-income people ourselves. While we were founded by women on public assistance to impact the welfare system, we now focus on economic justice. We broadly define this to be multi-issue, and thus must include concerns related to welfare, education, our children's schools, job training, living-wage jobs, housing, economic development and other important community issues.

For additional information, including copies of the full report, please contact Community Voices Heard at 212 860 6001, or visit our website at www.cvhaction.org.

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