



What Works:

Comparing the Effectiveness of Welfare-to-Work Programs in Los Angeles

by Stephen V. Monsma and
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Comparing the Effectiveness of Welfare-to-Work Programs in Los Angeles

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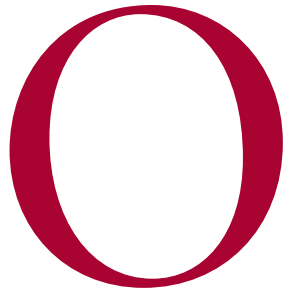
Conducting research of the nature reported here is a humbling experience. It is humbling because of the formidable difficulties and challenges one faces when studying what is happening to real people in the real world. But we found it to be humbling in a less expected, but perhaps even more basic way. We could not have even begun this research without the willing cooperation of hundreds of persons into whose lives we intruded. We are profoundly grateful to them. We are thinking here, first of all, of the hundreds of clients of welfare-to-work programs who were willing to take time out of what no doubt were for them much more pressing concerns to fill out a questionnaire and later to respond on two additional occasions to telephone surveys. We also were dependent upon, and therefore thankful for, the many agency directors, staff members, and government officials who took time to help us track down the welfare-to-work programs in Los Angeles, to fill out our initial questionnaire, to meet with us and share their perspectives, and to allow us to observe their programs and meet with their clients. We hereby express our deepest appreciation to them, and hope that the report being published here will in some small measure help them in their efforts to serve those who are most needy among us.

We also wish to thank the officers and board of The John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation of Los Angeles for their generous support of the research being reported here. They provided the primary funding for this study, and without that support we could not have conducted this ground-breaking study. Also, the Smith Richardson Foundation of Westport, Connecticut, and the faculty research fund at Pepperdine University provided additional financial support for the study. We also wish to thank them for their support.

Our gratitude also goes out to our associate researcher, Carolyn C. Mounts, who played the primary role in assembling the list of welfare-to-work programs in Los Angeles County and in obtaining the baseline data from program clients. She also played supportive roles in other parts of the research. She did all this with skill, dedication, conscientiousness, and invariable good cheer. Our home university, Pepperdine University, was also helpful at numerous stages of this research. We were given course reductions to spend time on this project. Pepperdine students provided valuable research assistance at several key points, and as mentioned earlier a faculty research grant helped with the funding. Special mention should be made of one student, Louis Dezseran, who conscientiously inputted all the data from the baseline questionnaire. We also wish to thank the Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion (ISR) at Baylor University, and its director, Byron Johnson, for their role in the production of this report.

In spite of the contributions made by many others, we also wish to make clear that we are solely responsible for the analyses and conclusions contained in this report. Any errors are our responsibility.

Our hope in presenting this report to the public is that it will clarify key issues in regard to often-asked questions concerning the comparative effectiveness of welfare-to-work programs sponsored by different types of organizations, will help both to stimulate and to guide additional research in this area, and will contribute to more practicable public policies that will help those struggling—often against seemingly overwhelming odds—with poverty and economic dependence.



On December 12, 2002 President George W. Bush signed into law the Equal Protection of the Laws for Faith-based and Community Organizations, an Executive Order designed to enable faith-based and community groups to compete on a level playing field for government money to provide public services. President Bush's action reflected a growing conviction among politicians, policymakers, and academics that nongovernmental entities are able to provide social services as effectively as their governmental counterparts. However, while many anecdotal stories boast of the effectiveness of particular programs, what is largely missing from the debate are studies that systematically test how successful different program types are at providing social services.

This study explores that question by comparing the effectiveness of five different types of welfare-to-work programs in urban Los Angeles County: government run, for-profit, nonprofit/secular, and two types of faith-based programs, segmented and integrated. The data for the study comes from a three-wave survey of clients who participated in one of seventeen programs representing the five program types. In the first wave, 436 clients completed questionnaires while participating in a welfare-to-work program. In addition to gaining information on clients' demographic characteristics, this baseline survey elicited responses on various factors that might impact a client's ability to successfully find a job, including employment history, educational attainment, and level of personal optimism. This was followed by telephone interviews with these same clients six and twelve months later that asked about their employment situation, income level, welfare dependency, and personal evaluation of the programs in which they had participated. Among the study's key findings are:

- The clients in the five program types are largely similar in terms of their skills, life situation, and level of personal optimism. There is little evidence that a particular program type systematically "creamed" only those clients with whom success was most likely.
- There is no clear and consistent pattern of any one of the five program types in doing a more effective job in working with welfare-to-work clients. Each program type did particularly well on some measures, but worse on others.
- Both types of faith-based providers and nonprofit/secular providers did best in client evaluations of staff and program empathy (staff interest in them, caring about their problems, and understanding their situation in life). Two-thirds of the respondents from these providers rated their program very high on these empathy questions.
- Nearly half of the clients from faith-based/integrated programs reported many contacts with their program's staff at the six-month interview, which compared favorably to an overall average of just 23 percent. At twelve months the faith-based/integrated clients reported fewer contacts with their programs, but still reported more contacts than the clients of any other program type.

- Clients from government providers were more likely than any other program type to rate their programs' instrumental effectiveness (staff knowledge and helpfulness of the program) as high (59 percent), although at least half of the clients from nonprofit/secular and faith-based/integrated programs also rated their programs' instrumental effectiveness as high.
- Less than one-third (31 percent) of all respondents who were unemployed at the baseline were employed full-time 12 months later. For-profit programs did the best among the program types on this measure; 59 percent of their clients who were unemployed at the baseline were fully employed at 12 months.
- For-profit programs also fared well in moving clients off TANF. Seventy-three percent of clients from the for-profit providers who were receiving TANF at the baseline were no longer doing so 12 months later.
- Both types of faith-based providers and government providers were, however, more successful than the other program types in enabling their clients who were already employed to maintain employment. More than eighty percent of the clients from a faith-based or government program who were already employed at the baseline were still employed 12 months later.
- Faith-based integrated programs were also the most effective among the program types at increasing clients' sense of hope and optimism, with 80 percent of their clients having more optimistic attitudes at 12 months than they had at the baseline.
- This study offers no reason to systematically exclude faith-based providers from government-funded programs.
- The different strengths and weaknesses of the five program types suggest that the ideal welfare-to-work program is one that makes greater use of collaborative or partnership approaches, instead of relying primarily on only one type of provider.

Recent years have witnessed a rising chorus of voices calling for government to form partnerships with a variety of nongovernmental entities in order to provide needed social services. These voices have claimed that for-profit, faith-based, nonprofit, and community-based organizations are providing those services as effectively—and perhaps even more effectively—than their governmental counterparts. The argument, therefore, is that by government cooperating with and helping to finance the social services of these nongovernmental entities, more persons will receive more effective services.

George W. Bush’s creation of an Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives early in his presidency demonstrates his administration’s commitment to governmental partnerships with small community-based and faith-based social service providers. This emphasis on governmental collaborations with faith-based service organizations is not a monopoly of conservatives or Republicans, however. Four times President Bill Clinton signed legislation containing charitable choice provisions,¹ Democratic Senator Joe Lieberman has introduced legislation aimed at encouraging the provision of services by faith-based organizations,² and during his campaign for the presidency the Democratic candidate, Vice President Al Gore, declared:

As long as there is always a secular alternative for anyone who wants one, and as long as no one is required to participate in religious observances as a condition for receiving services, faith-based organizations can provide jobs and job training, counseling and mentoring, food and basic medical care. They can do so with public funds—and without having to alter the religious character that is so often the key to their effectiveness.³

Others, such as Stephen Goldsmith and David Osborne, have called for government to make greater use of for-profit firms to deliver public services.⁴ As one scholar has written: “Looking across fields, I started to realize that a sea of change is at work...Private and market-style mechanisms are increasingly employed to provide what government had taken as duties. Religious groups join secular nonprofit and for-profit providers of services paid for or sought by government.”⁵

Proposals for greater use of public-private partnerships in social welfare provision have proven to be highly controversial. Some fear for-profit firms will put profits ahead of the needs of those whom they are serving. Others worry that governmental partnerships with faith-based organizations will lead to church-state violations and the infringement of needy persons’ religious freedom. Yet others suspect that many small organizations with roots deep in the communities they serve will not have the size and professionalism needed to work with government. Earlier studies by one of the authors of this report, among others, have shed some additional light on a number of these questions.⁶

But one of the most contentious issues has received almost no attention by researchers. It is whether or not nongovernmental entities can provide basic social services, as some have claimed, more effectively than do

their governmental counterparts. Often, anecdotal stories claim great success among such programs in areas where governmental programs have struggled. But systematic studies of the comparative effectiveness of different types of service programs are almost non-existent.

There are good reasons why there are so few studies of agency effectiveness. This may be the most difficult of all social science research areas. Three major challenges immediately come to mind:

1. One is the very basic matter of defining effectiveness. “Effectiveness” is anything but a self-defining term. Should it be defined in terms of client evaluations and reactions? After all, the intended beneficiaries of the services should be in the best position to judge whether or not they received effective, helpful services. Or should effectiveness be defined purely in terms of outcomes or results—in terms of drug-free clients, employed welfare recipients, or housed homeless persons? If this is the definition of effectiveness, is movement towards success to be counted as a positive outcome, or does one only count fully achieved positive results? Also, many of the needy face multiple problems or challenges. This opens the possibility of what could be termed “niche effectiveness,” that is, effectiveness defined in terms of positive outcomes in regard to one facet of a multi-faceted problem.⁷ A program might, for example, be very effective in helping alcohol-addicted homeless men deal with their alcohol addiction, but not effective in dealing with unemployment, a sense of hopelessness, or other aspects of their homeless condition.
2. The next challenge is measuring effectiveness, however one has defined it. Most public records relate more to services rendered and clients served than to outcomes. Even when public records focus on outcomes, they are notoriously inaccurate and incomplete. Often they are based on only a very limited time period. Reporting formats vary widely from one jurisdiction to another, making comparisons impossible. Most programs keep very poor records of their clients once they have left their programs. Interviewing clients is not only an expensive and time-consuming process, but also a significant challenge because of confidentiality concerns and difficulty in following up with clients who often do not have a stable residence.
3. A third challenge may be the most difficult of all. It is holding constant variables that may affect the outcomes experienced by the clients of a program. The severity of the problems faced by the clients, their motivation to improve their situation, and the skills and resources they bring to the task of overcoming their problems—as well as many other factors relevant to clients’ likelihood of success—inevitably vary from one program to another. One is far from a pristine laboratory situation where one can carefully control all of the relevant variables. Double blind studies, as is possible with the study of drug effectiveness, are impossible to do. Clients cannot randomly be assigned to faith-based versus nonfaith-based programs due to religious liberty norms. Moreover, clients will know what type of program they are in and this in itself can affect program outcomes.

Nevertheless we are convinced that there can be systematic study of program effectiveness. It is only by beginning the process of analyzing program effectiveness that important information will be uncovered that will help guide policy makers now and will serve as the foundation for future studies.

This study systematically explores the effectiveness of five different types of welfare-to-work programs in Los Angeles County. We do not claim it is a definitive study that answers once-and-for-all the question of the relative effectiveness of different types of welfare-to-work programs, even in Los Angeles County. We do claim that it throws important additional light on this question. In doing so it offers some guidance to policy makers now and may help to pave the way for additional studies of social service program effectiveness.

The Study

The findings reported in this essay are based on the study of 17 welfare-to-work programs and their clients in the Los Angeles area.⁸ The research was conducted in four basic stages.

Identifying all Welfare-to-Work Programs in Los Angeles

The first step was to compile a list of all of the welfare-to-work programs in urban Los Angeles County.⁹ We defined welfare-to-work programs as any program providing one or more of the following services to welfare recipients: literary education, English as a second language (ESL) education, GED preparation, vocational training, life skills, work preparedness, job search, job placement, job internships or apprenticeships, client assessment, and mentoring.

We compiled the list of welfare-to-work programs by using published directories, formal and informal lists of programs, consulting with knowledgeable community leaders, attending meetings of collaborative councils of programs, and conducting innumerable phone calls. We identified 511 welfare-to-work programs in urban Los Angeles County.

Using a Mail Questionnaire to Obtain Basic Program Information

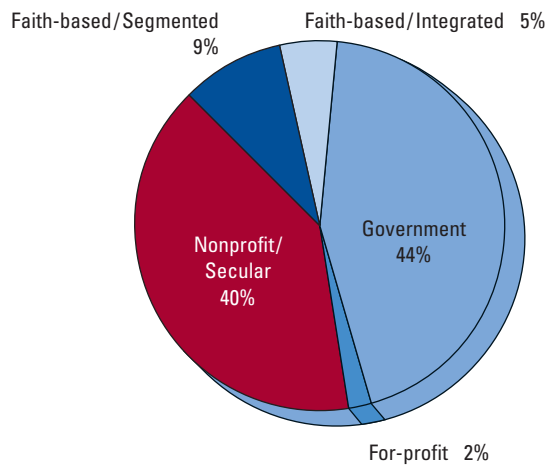
The second stage of our research involved mailing a questionnaire to all of the identified welfare-to-work programs in order to obtain basic information about the programs. The questionnaires elicited such information as the services provided, size, sponsoring entity, faith-based or secular character, funding sources, and contacts with government agencies. A total of 211 were mailed back to us for a good response rate of 41.3 percent. Eleven of the returned questionnaires indicated they did not provide welfare-to-work programs and thus were eliminated from our analysis. Four of the questionnaires were incomplete, resulting in 196 programs that could be included in our analyses.

Classifying the Programs and Selecting Seventeen for Intensive Study

The third stage of our research involved, first, classifying the 196 programs into five categories: government-run, for-profit, nonprofit/secular, faith-based/segmented, and faith-based/integrated. The first two categories are self-explanatory and programs were placed in these categories based on their self-identification as a government or a private, for-profit program. The nonprofit programs were placed in the nonprofit/secular category if they self-identified themselves either as “a private, nonprofit program with no religious base or history” or as “a private, nonprofit program that at one time had a religious orientation, but today has evolved into a program that is largely secular in nature.” Programs were placed in one of the faith-based categories if they self-identified themselves as “a private, nonprofit program that continues to have a clear religious base and orientation.” The segmented versus integrated distinction was based on the faith-based programs’ responses to a question that listed 10 potential religiously-rooted practices, plus one additional “other” category. A scale was developed depending on the number and the nature of the religiously-rooted practices in which the programs reported engaging. Those practices that had a more integrative nature—such as “using religious values or motivations to encourage clients to change attitudes or values” and “hiring only staff in agreement with your religious orientation”—were weighed more heavily than less integrative practices—such as “placing religious symbols or pictures in the facility where your program is held” and “using religious values as a guiding motivation for staff in delivering services.”¹⁰ Those faith-based programs whose religious elements were implicit and in the background were placed into the

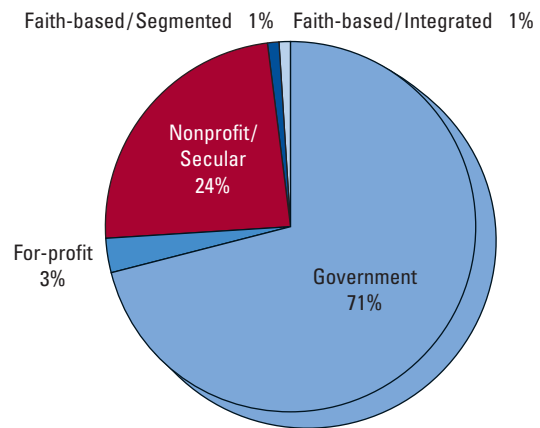
Figure 1. Comparison of the Number of Programs and the Number of Full-Time Employees, by Organization Type

Percentage of Programs by Organization Type*



*The percentages are based on the total number of programs in the study (N=196).

Percentage of Full-Time Employees by Organization Type*



*The percentages are based on the total number of full-time, paid employees working for the programs in the study (N=5,021).

segmented category, and those whose religious elements were explicit and incorporated into the services they provided were placed in the integrated category.

Of the 196 useable questionnaires, 86 (44 percent) fell into the government category, 4 (2 percent) in the for-profit category, 79 (40 percent) in the nonprofit/secular category, 17 (9 percent) in the faith-based/segmented category, and 10 (5 percent) in the faith-based/integrated category. In order to understand the research being reported here, it is important to understand that most of the faith-based programs were very small. Figure 1 compares the proportion of the five types of programs to the proportion of full-time, paid staff members employed by each of the five types of programs. We believe the number of full-time staff members is the best measure we have of program size. Other measures, such as the number of clients served and budget size, proved less reliable measures of program size. One can clearly see that the faith-based programs were very small. Two-thirds of both the segmented and integrated programs had 3 or fewer full-time employees. The other three types of programs, and especially the government-run programs, were much larger. The secular nonprofit programs also play a large role in the provision of Los Angeles welfare-to-work services.

Out of the 196 responding welfare-to-work programs we selected 17 for intensive study. Of these 17, 4 were government programs, 2 were for-profit programs, 3 were nonprofit/secular, 4 were faith-based/segmented, and 4 were faith-based/integrated. Given the small number of programs with which we were working, we did not attempt to select them at random. Instead, we determined several basic characteristics that tended to mark programs in that category, such as size, age, percentage of welfare recipients, and number of services offered. Next, we selected programs that on those characteristics were near the norm for that category of program. Thus the programs selected for intensive study are representative of the other programs in that category.¹¹

Obtaining Individual Client Data at Selected Programs

The fourth stage of our research involved two separate efforts. One was obtaining more detailed information about the 17 programs via site visits. All 17 programs were visited by one of the primary researchers or our professional,

T A B L E 1 .

Completed Interviews at Baseline, Six Months, and Twelve Months, by Program Type

Program Type	Baseline		Six Months		Twelve Months	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Government	141	32.3	96	29.4	75	28.3%
For-profit	113	25.9	91	27.8	72	27.2%
Nonprofit/Secular	80	18.3	66	20.2	61	23.0%
Faith-based/Segmented	51	11.7	36	11.0	27	10.2%
Faith-based/Integrated	51	11.7	38	11.6	30	11.3%
Total	436	100%	327	100%	265	100%

full-time associate researcher.¹² These on-site visits involved interviews with key staff members and observations of welfare-to-work classes and activities. We kept extensive notes and key interviews were recorded and transcribed.

A second, parallel effort consisted of obtaining baseline data from clients currently participating in the 17 programs' welfare-to-work activities. A written questionnaire was prepared (in English and Spanish versions) and administered in person by the associate researcher at each of the 17 sites. Participation by the clients was purely voluntary and each signed a confidentiality statement. Respondents were told they would be called back for more information after 6 months and again after 12 months. Gift cards to Target stores were offered as an incentive for those who decided to take part in the study. A few clients who were approached declined to take part in the study, but almost all elected to take part in it. A total of 436 completed baseline questionnaires were obtained.

These clients were called back after six months and those that we reached after six months were again called after another six months. Each time another Target gift card was used as an incentive for participation. Table 1 reveals the response rates that we obtained for each of the five types of programs. Excellent response rates of 75 percent at six months and 81 percent at twelve months were obtained, and the response rates did not vary notably among the five program types.

The original, baseline questionnaires were filled out from late January to mid-March, 2002, the six-month telephone interviews were completed from mid-August to early-October, 2002, and the twelve-month telephone interviews were completed from mid-February to early April, 2003. The unemployment rate in Los Angeles-Long Beach metropolitan area went from 6.8 percent in February, 2002, to 7.0 percent in August, 2002, to 6.7 percent in February, 2003. Thus the employment situation during the time of our study was holding steady, but unemployment was higher than the national average, making it difficult for clients in the programs to find employment. Under more favorable economic conditions this study might have found more positive outcomes in terms of employment and wage levels, but there is no reason to believe that the relative differences among the five types of programs were affected by the economic conditions.

The Seventeen Programs

Following is a brief description of each of the 17 programs included in our study. It will prove helpful in interpreting the results of our study to have some insight into the nature of the programs whose clients we surveyed. The names of the following programs have all been changed in order to protect the confidentiality of the programs and, most importantly, of the clients.

Government Programs

Responsible Fathers. Responsible Fathers is a program run by Community and Senior Services of Los Angeles County. It is designed to help non-custodial parents who are behind on support payments to become more accountable in financially supporting their children, and, more broadly, to encourage them to take a more responsible approach to their role as parents. It is a large program, serving over a thousand clients annually at multiple locations. Most of the clients are males and many are under court order to pay back child support. Most are unemployed or are employed “off-the-books.” The program assigns clients to peer support classes that stress improving attitudes, life skills, and basic educational skills (ESL, that is, English as a second language, classes or GED preparation). Once clients are deemed job ready, they are assigned to a counselor from a for-profit company with whom Responsible Fathers has a contract to provide job search and job placement services. The 13 respondents included in our study were drawn from two different peer support classes.

Bay City College. Bay City College is a community college that offers an employment program specifically for CalWORKs clients (clients of the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids program, which is the California version of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF). It is funded with CalWORKs funds. The program consists largely of classes designed to teach certain marketable skills, such as training in child care, nursing assistance, and forklift operation. Some GED preparation and ESL classes are also offered. In addition, there are counselors available to help with assessment and problem-solving for the clients. It is a very large program with about 3,000 clients passing through the program annually. Of the 50 Bay City College respondents included in our study, 26 were drawn from a certified nursing assistant class, 10 from a child care training class, 7 from a GED preparation class, and 7 from an ESL class.

Suburban Community College. Suburban Community College is a community college in a suburban setting in Los Angeles County. It offers similar programs for CalWORKs (TANF) clients as does Bay City College. It offers skills training in a number of areas, as well as counseling and personal case management services. It has about 1,000 clients annually. Of the 23 respondents included in our study from Suburban Community College, 13 were from a training program in early child care and 10 in several other associate of arts programs. This is a well-funded program with impressive supportive services such as case management and a state-of-the-art child care facility.

Center for Adult Education. The center is run by the Division of Adult and Career Education of the Los Angeles Unified School District. It offers a wide variety of vocational and basic education classes. Some are specifically designed for CalWORKs (TANF) recipients. Soft skills training is also offered (interviewing techniques, personal presentation, job preparedness, etc.). The 10 respondents from the Center for Adult Education included in our study were students in a computer keyboarding class.

For-Profit Programs

People-at-Work. People-at-Work is a national, for-profit corporation that has existed for over 20 years and has provided workforce development services in 20 different states. It holds welfare-to-work contracts with several southern California governmental entities. We studied a large one-stop career center in the city of Los Angeles run by People-at-Work. It provides a resource center, case management, and various training classes and workshops. The 36 persons from People-at-Work who took part in our survey were from an office assistant class in which the actual instruction was provided by the Los Angeles Unified School District under contract to People-at-Work.

Western College. Western College is a propriety vocational college, specializing in training for medical careers. It has several campuses in Los Angeles County. Among other programs, it runs a welfare-to-work program, receiving referrals from several one-stop centers. It had a contract with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services, but that contract has recently not been renewed. Costs for its welfare-to-work students are typically covered by funds from several sources such as one-stop centers, Pell grants, and Supplemental Educational Opportunity grants. Western College is a fairly small operation, with a total of 800 students, only some of whom are in the welfare-to-work program. Of the 55 respondents included in our study, 35 were from a medical assistant class and 20 from a dental assistant class.

Nonprofit/Secular Programs

Eastern One-Stop. Eastern One-Stop is a career center run by a nonprofit organization in eastern Los Angeles that has been in existence for over 30 years. It has contracts under the Work Investment Act and with the Department of Labor to provide employment services for welfare recipients and other low-income persons. It provides such services as assessment, job search, GED classes, and skills training. It closely collaborates with a number of government agencies, such as the Department of Public Social Services and the Los Angeles Unified School District, and receives all of its funding from governmental sources. The one-stop and other welfare-to-work services are only one of many community economic development services Eastern One-Stop provides. The 39 respondents included in our study were from a job search class.

Opportunity-for-All. Opportunity-for-All is a large nonprofit organization with offices in a number of cities around the country. It specializes in providing resettlement services to immigrants and refugees, and runs job clubs, employment counseling, and training classes. Almost all of its funding comes from various government sources including, until recently, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services. Only three respondents were from Opportunity-for-All and they were from a job club class.

Together-We-Win. Together-We-Win is a nonprofit organization in south central Los Angeles that seeks to be a multicultural center serving its community. Both staff and clients are predominantly African American. It provides case management, child care, life skills, and (through the Los Angeles Unified School District) training in the use of computers. Serving about 200 clients a year, it is medium sized with one site and 10 employees. It receives partial government funding, but also works to maintain its own private sources of funds. The 24 respondents included in our study were drawn from an office computer training class.

Faith-Based/Segmented Programs

Ellis Center. Ellis Center is a program of Catholic Charities that at the time of our study was running a Department of Labor Welfare-to-Work program. It was a small program with about 36 clients, all of whom had been receiving TANF or some other form of welfare assistance for three years or more. It primarily provides supportive services so that clients can find and maintain employment. They work on needs such as job preparedness skills, child care, and emergency assistance. All 10 of the Ellis Center respondents were drawn from its welfare-to-work program.

New Beginnings Center. New Beginnings Center is a legally incorporated, nonprofit entity run by a predominantly African-American Protestant church in a very economically depressed area. The Center is located in the church building. It offers a range of services for welfare recipients and other low-income persons, including a hot meals program, a homeless shelter, computer classes (taught by instructors from the Los Angeles Unified School

District), and a program for noncustodial fathers. New Beginnings Center runs a small program, with about 40 to 50 clients a year, not counting the much larger number of persons served hot meals. A majority, but not all, of its funding comes from government sources. Of the 15 New Beginnings Center respondents included in our study, 11 were from two different computer classes and 4 were from the noncustodial fathers program.

Our Father's House. Our Father's House is run directly by a mainline Protestant church. It grew out of a food bank and has added programs over the years as community needs were identified. It seeks to find immediate work for those in need, but also provides skills training in office computers. It is a small program with one full-time and three part-time employees. It receives some, but very little, government funding. Of the 8 Our Father's House respondents included in our study, 5 came from an office computer class and 3 from the immediate employment program.

Olsen Center. The Olsen Center is a south central Los Angeles community center sponsored by a mainline Protestant denomination. It has a recreation program (its building contains a gym), a food distribution program, a clothes closet, a seniors program, and ESL and computer classes. It serves a very economically depressed area that is largely African American and Latino. It receives no government funding. The 3 respondents included in our study were from an ESL class for Spanish-speaking persons.

Faith-Based/Integrated

Love and Life Center. Love and Life Center is a residential program for unmarried, expectant mothers. It initially grew out of a conservative Protestant church, but is now an independent nonprofit entity supported by individuals. It receives no government funding. Most of the women with whom it works are receiving assistance under the CalWORKs (TANF) program. In addition to providing residential care, Love and Life Center provides case management, life skills, health care, parenting education, Bible study classes, and personal counseling. It has a program for former residents that seeks to follow-through with them and offers additional help. It largely does referrals to other programs for employment services. It is a small program, with only 6 mothers or expectant mothers in residence at any one time. However with its efforts to maintain continuing contacts with former residents, it is in touch with and seeking to support over 80 women at any given time. The 16 respondents from the Love and Life Center included clients who were in residence at the time or who had recently left the residential portion of the program.

New Skills Center. The New Skills Center is a nonprofit entity sponsored by a church in the west Los Angeles County area. It provides life skills classes, mentoring (by members of the sponsoring church), and computer skills classes. It has a strong emphasis on career planning and career choice. In the past, it had received no government funding, but recently received a state grant. It is a small program, with 10 to 15 clients in a class that the center runs twice a year. The 10 respondents included in our study were all from the current or a just completed class.

Community Skills Center. The Community Skills Center is a program run by a nonprofit community development corporation sponsored by a large, predominantly African-American Protestant church in south central Los Angeles. It is designed to work with the hardest to employ CalWORKs (TANF) recipients. More specifically, it largely works with ex-offenders or persons who are near to exhausting their five-year time limit for receiving cash assistance and have a poor work history. The program largely consists of life skills and job skills classes that take about five weeks. It also provides individualized case management services that include assessment, job placement, and retention services. About 10 to 15 persons are involved in the program at any one time. It is fully funded by government money. All 11 respondents included in our study were currently participants in the program.

New Hope Services. New Hope Services is a program located in southern Los Angeles County. It is an independent nonprofit entity that works closely with a number of churches in its community. It is a very young (one year old at the time of our study), small program, with only one full-time and one part-time employee. It works closely with the sponsoring congregations that refer persons with special needs to New Hope Services. At the time of our study its main program was a mentoring program in which members of the sponsoring congregations were linked up with persons in need, almost all of whom were receiving some form of public assistance. It receives no government funds. The four persons included in our study from New Hope Services were all taking part in the mentoring program.

From these descriptions a clear distinction emerges between the faith-based programs, and government and for-profit programs. The faith-based programs tended to emphasize training in life skills and work preparedness, that is, on such things as attitudes, career aspirations, interviewing skills, personal dress and grooming, workplace expectations, and emotional and physical support. With only one exception the government and for-profit programs tended to emphasize vocational training and the development of marketable skills.¹³ The three nonprofit/secular programs offered less vocational training and more life skills training than the government and for-profit programs, and more vocational training and less life skills training than the faith-based programs. It is also useful to note the small size and often struggling financial nature of most of the faith-based programs. They had an average of only 4.4 full-time employees, and 4 of the 8 had only 1 or 2 full-time employees. Their physical facilities were typically minimal and marked by limited equipment and classroom amenities. Also, there were program differences within the five program types. This must be born in mind in interpreting the results reported here. What may be true of a program type overall may not be true of all the individual programs that fell into that type. We have sought to take this into account by checking not only how our results varied by the five types of programs, but also by the individual programs within the five program types. Whenever there were notably different results among the various programs within a program type, we report that fact.

Client Characteristics

Client Demographics. There are various factors that might affect the chances of a client successfully moving from welfare to self-supporting employment. Especially important are his or her educational level, language skills, and history of employment. A common criticism of programs that claim a high level of success in moving persons from welfare to work is that those programs have not demonstrated that they have drawn their clients from a representative sample of persons on welfare. “Creaming” the clients with the fewest barriers to employment will predictably lead to higher than average positive outcomes. In order to be confident about the conclusions that we will draw in this report, therefore, it is important for us closely to examine the demographic characteristics of the persons we surveyed. We attempt to answer two questions in this section: whether or not the persons included in our study closely match the welfare population as a whole, and whether or not some of our five types of programs have clients that appear to possess fewer barriers to employment than other types of programs. In this section we use the information given by the respondents in their baseline questionnaires, but we only include those who also took part in our 6 month follow-up telephone interviews.

Figure 2. Demographic Characteristics, CalWORKS Population and Six Month Respondents

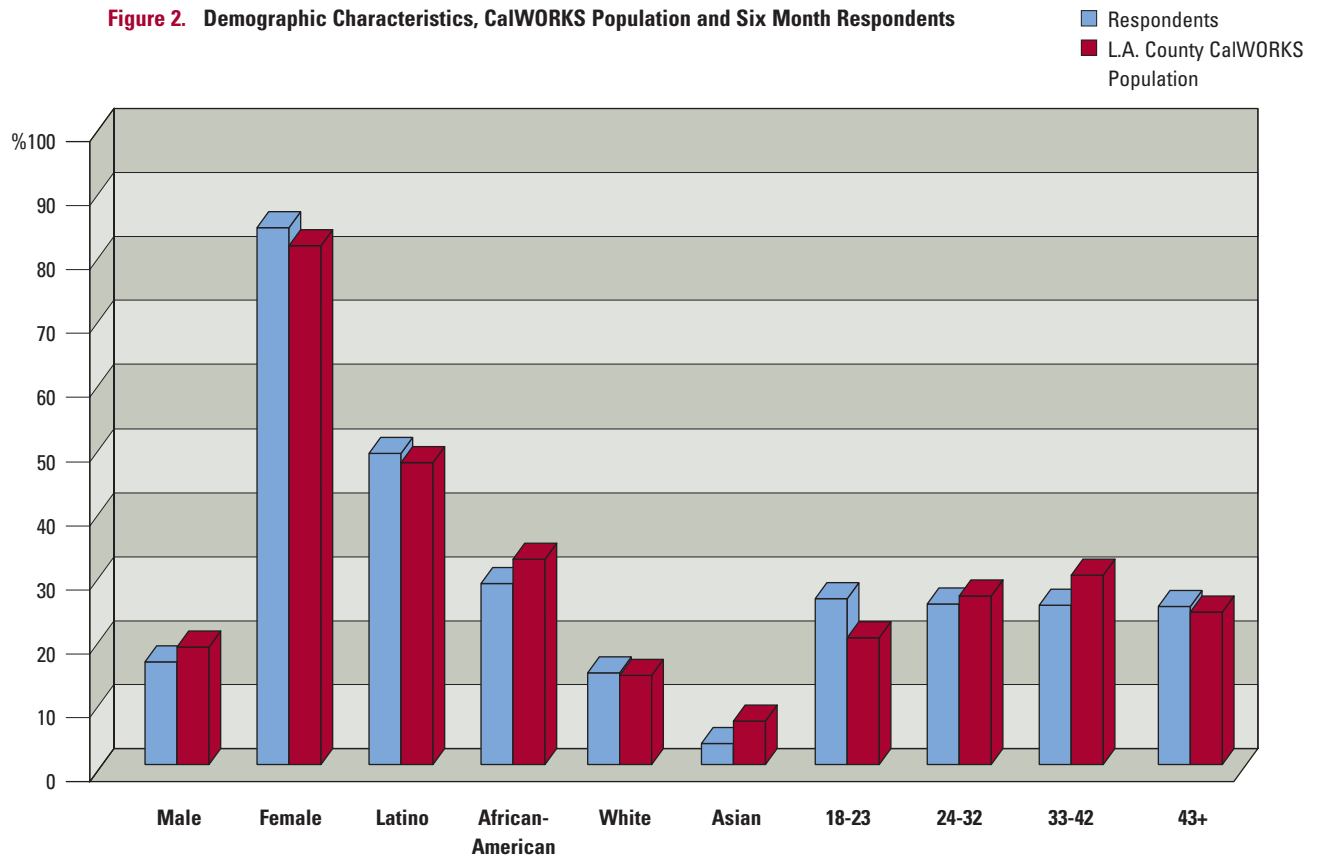
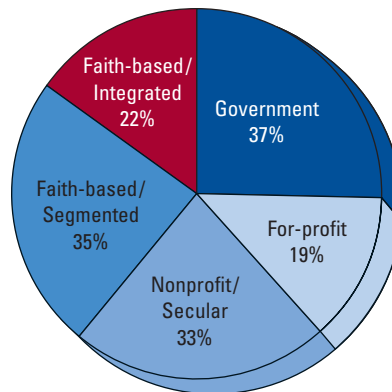


Figure 2 provides the gender, age, and race/ethnicity for the persons who were included in our six-month survey and persons in Los Angeles County who receive CalWORKs.¹⁴ Our survey respondents are nearly identical to the CalWORKs population in their gender, racial/ethnic, and age composition. Women compose 81 percent of the CalWORKs population and 84 of our survey respondents. Latinos are the largest proportion in both surveys (50 percent and 48 percent), followed by African-Americans (28 and 32 percent), whites (14 percent in both), and Asians (3 percent and 6 percent). Finally, the age distribution in the two surveys is very similar. These results suggest that we can be confident that the respondents from the 17 programs that took part in our survey were demographically representative of the welfare population of Los Angeles County as a whole.

The results are similar when the clients from the five program types are compared. In no single type of program, for example, were women less than two-thirds of the clients surveyed. The program types did differ somewhat in the age and racial/ethnic composition of their clients. Sixty-six percent of those surveyed from for-profit organizations were Latino, 47 percent of those from faith-based/segmented groups were African-American, and faith-based/integrated groups had nearly twice the percentage of whites (26 percent) than any of the other program types. More than half (53 percent) of those surveyed from the for-profit organizations were under 24, while 47 percent of those from nonprofit/secular groups were over 43. However, these differences are relatively small, and there is no reason to believe that they would significantly affect the ability of a program to assist a person in obtaining employment.

Figure 3. Less Than High School Education by Program Type, Six Month Respondents



Barriers to Employment

In addition to the demographic background of clients in our five program types, we also asked a series of questions to determine what challenges they faced in seeking employment. There is little question that there are barriers that can make it more difficult for a person to find and retain a job. We subsequently sorted those obstacles into three large categories: skills barriers, situation-in-life barriers, and subjective attitudinal barriers. The point of these questions was to determine if the five program types were drawing clients who were similarly situated in terms of the challenges that they faced in seeking employment.

A number of the program heads that we interviewed for this project suggested that among the most significant *skill barriers* to persons finding employment was the lack of a high school education. One study of women who left welfare, for example, found that those women with at least a high school education were nearly forty percent more likely to stay off welfare than those women without a high school education.¹⁵ We therefore asked respondents about their educational attainment (Figure 3). Nearly one-third of all respondents (29 percent) did not have a high school diploma. As the figure shows, however, there are some differences among the different programs. Two program types, for-profit and faith-based/integrated, had smaller percentages of clients with less than a high school education (19 and 22 percent respectively), while government run, faith-based/segmented, and nonprofit/secular programs had far higher percentages of these clients (37 to 33 percent).

In addition to education, a number of the program heads noted the difficulty clients face in finding employment if they do not speak English, or if they do not read English well. In our survey, we therefore asked respondents how well they spoke and read English. Eighty percent reported that they read English very well, while 85 percent indicated that they spoke English very well.

Table 2 provides the percentages of respondents from each of the five program types who had between zero and three of these particular skills (i.e., had a high school diploma, spoke English well, and read English well). The table shows that a majority of the respondents in our survey (59 percent) had all three of these skills. This population would presumably face the fewest skill barriers to employment. By contrast, only 14 percent of the respondents had none or only one of these particular skills, while 27 percent had two of the skills in question.

There are, however, some intriguing differences between the program types. In particular, the for-profit and the faith-based/integrated programs had significantly larger percentages of clients with all three skills (71 and 77 percent respectively), and much lower percentages with one or fewer (9 and 3 percent). None of the other three program types differed very much in the percentage of clients facing skill barriers.

T A B L E 2 .

Total Skills Measure at Baseline by Program Type*

Program Type	0–1 Skills	2 Skills	3 Skills	Total	
				N	Percent
Government	16.8%	32.6%	50.5%	95	100%
For-profit	8.9%	20.0%	71.1%	90	100%
Nonprofit/Secular	22.7%	27.3%	50.0%	66	100%
Faith-based/Segmented	17.6%	35.3%	47.1%	34	100%
Faith-based/Integrated	2.9%	20.0%	77.1%	35	100%
Total	14.4%	26.9%	58.8%	320	100%

*The percentage of respondents who possessed the following skills at the baseline: a high school diploma, an ability to read English well, and an ability to speak English well.

In addition to skill obstacles to employment, there are what we call *life-situation barriers* for persons seeking employment. Sometimes persons looking for a job are not so much limited by a lack of education or language skills, but by some factors in their lives that make it difficult for them to get and keep a job. Our interviews with persons involved in welfare-to-work programs led us to conclude that there are at least six significant life-situation obstacles to employment: a history of drug or alcohol abuse, health problems, a crime conviction, being single with two or more children living at home, being unemployed, and, finally, a weak work history. Some of these challenges are self-evident; health problems, for example, might keep a person on welfare from making it to a job interview or might increase the likelihood of their being frequently absent from a job that they do have. Being single and having two or more children adds considerable time commitments to parents looking for work, particularly for single mothers, who often bear the brunt of childcare responsibilities and are a disproportionate percentage of persons on welfare.¹⁶ During the six-month telephone interviews we asked those respondents who had not completed the welfare-to-work program that they had been in why they had left the program. Comments about problems related to childcare were common. One of the clients said, “I left because I had to be at the hospital with my daughter. She was born three months early.” Another noted that “the most difficult aspect of the job search is the issue of child care. It is the biggest problem for single parents, and one that could use more help from the government or private industry.”

A number of the persons we interviewed suggested that being employed, in virtually any job, is the best way for a person on welfare to secure an even better job. Thus we considered being unemployed to be a barrier. Finally, persons with strong work histories are more likely to have the skills and recommendations that are oftentimes necessary for them to secure employment when they do not have a job. Thus we asked persons how long they had held their present or most recent job, how many hours a week they worked at it, and the pay level. Those we classified as having a weak work history were persons who had had their current or most recent job less than 3 months, worked less than 20 hours a week, and earned less than \$10 an hour.

We counted a life situation as being a barrier only when the respondent had given information that confirmed she or he faced that barrier to employment. If information was missing or incomplete we counted that respondent as not having that barrier. Thus our measure of life situation barriers to employment should be viewed as the minimum number of barriers with which the respondents had to contend in finding employment.

As we expected, there was a great discrepancy in terms of the percentage of clients that faced particular barriers. Sixty-five percent of those surveyed, for example, were unemployed and 45 percent had two or more children. By contrast, only 9 percent reported health problems, 6 percent had a crime conviction in their past, and only 2 percent indicated that they had a drug or alcohol problem. The range of possible barriers for each person in our

T A B L E 3 .

Life Situation Barriers at the Baseline, by Program Type*

Program Type	3-4 Barriers	2 Barriers	1 Barrier	0 Barriers	Total	
					N	Percent
Government	6.3%	33.3%	40.6%	19.8%	96	100%
For-profit	2.2%	25.3%	56.0%	16.5%	91	100%
Nonprofit/Secular	9.1%	34.8%	48.5%	7.6%	66	100%
Faith-based/Segmented	5.6%	27.8%	41.7%	25.0%	36	100%
Faith-based/Integrated	10.5%	31.6%	42.1%	15.8%	38	100%
Total	6.1%	30.6%	46.8%	16.5%	327	100%

*The six life situation barriers we considered were a history of drug alcohol abuse, health problems, a crime conviction, being single with two or more children, being unemployed, and a weak work history.

survey was between 0 and 6, although no one in our survey reported more than 4 barriers. Table 3 lists the percentage of respondents from each program type with 0 to 4 of these life-situation obstacles. A significant percentage of the clients we surveyed (37 percent) had at least 2 of the 6 life-situation barriers to employment. By contrast, 17 percent had none of these particular obstacles. Because any one of these life situations can make it very difficult for a person to find a job, the high percentage of respondents in our survey who had at least two of them suggest that these clients face formidable barriers in finding steady employment. A person in this category could, by way of example, be a single mother with two or more children living with her at home who is also currently unemployed. Or, alternatively, a person with two such barriers could have both a crime conviction and a poor work history.

Some patterns emerge when the clients of the five program types are compared. The non-profit/secular and faith-based/integrated programs were the most likely to have clients with two or more of these challenges (44 and 42 percent respectively, when one combines those with 2 barriers and those with 3 or 4 barriers), and non-profit/secular programs also clearly had the lowest proportion of clients with none of these barriers (8 percent). It is worth noting that one of the nonprofit/secular programs, Eastern One-stop, contributed disproportionately to the number of nonprofit/secular clients with 2 or more barriers (56 percent of their clients), and one of the faith-based/integrated programs, Community Skills Center, contributed disproportionately to the number of faith-based/integrated clients with two or more barriers (64 percent of their clients). For this measure, at least, it is reasonable to conclude that non-profit/secular and faith-based/integrated programs had more clients with barriers to employment than did the three other types of programs. Government and faith-based/segmented organizations, on the other hand, were the programs most likely to have clients with no life-situation barriers (20 and 25 percent respectively), while the for-profit programs were the least likely to have clients with at least two of these obstacles (28 percent).

Not only are skills and life-situation important factors in a person finding employment, but so too are the *subjective attitudes* that clients bring with them to the job search. Many program directors and staff with whom we spoke reported that client attitudes of pessimism, and a lack of self-confidence, are major barriers to employment. To measure these subjective obstacles to employment we asked respondents in the survey to indicate whether they agreed strongly, agreed, were uncertain, disagreed, or disagreed strongly with the following statements: “Sometimes I get so discouraged it is hard for me to keep going,” “No matter how hard I work I doubt I will ever have a really good job,” and “I am confident one year from now I will be better off than I am now.” We then assigned a numerical value of 1 to 5 for responses to each of the five items (1 being most pessimistic response

T A B L E 4 .

Level of Attitudinal Optimism at Baseline, by Program Type*

Program Type	Very Low	Low	High	Very High	Total	
					N	Percent
Government	18.0%	20.2%	33.7%	28.1%	89	100%
For-profit	13.5%	13.5%	39.3%	33.7%	89	100%
Nonprofit/Secular	19.3%	14.0%	42.1%	24.6%	57	100%
Faith-based/Segmented	21.2%	24.2%	42.4%	12.1%	33	100%
Faith-based/Integrated	18.8%	25.0%	34.4%	21.9%	32	100%
Total	17.3%	18.0%	38.8%	26.7%	300	100%

*Based on three attitudinal questions asked in the questionnaire.

and 5 being the most confident) and created an overall score to measure each client’s level of attitudinal optimism. With five possible responses to the three questions the range of scores for each survey respondent was between 3 and 15. Those whose cumulative scores were from 3–8 we labeled as having a very low level of optimism; those with score of 9–10 we considered as having a low level of optimism; those with scores 11–13 we considered as possessing high optimism; and those whose total scores were 14–15 we labeled as having a very high level of personal optimism.

Table 4 highlights the percentage of respondents for this attitudinal measure for each of the five program types. One interesting result is that our respondents were generally optimistic about their chances of getting ahead. Only 17 percent had a very low level of attitudinal optimism, while 27 percent had a very high level of personal optimism. There are, however, some differences among the five program types. Compared to every other program type, a smaller percentage of respondents from for-profit groups had very low levels of optimism (13 percent) and a higher proportion were very optimistic (34 percent). By contrast, persons from faith-based/segmented programs were significantly less hopeful about their prospects, with 21 percent having a low level of attitudinal optimism and only 12 percent being very optimistic. Almost one-half (45 and 44 percent) of the faith-based/segmented and faith-based/integrated clients fell into either the low or very low levels.

Religious Involvement

One other interesting result from the survey had to do with the religious involvement of the respondents. Table 5 lists frequency of church attendance by program type. Almost two-thirds (63 percent) of clients in faith-based/integrated programs attended church once a week or more, indicating the faith-based programs had a special appeal to those who themselves were religiously active. Those in the secular programs were much less likely to report weekly church attendance, but even their clients reported attending fairly frequently. Thirty-two percent of those surveyed from the government programs and more than half (52 percent) of those from secular non-profit programs reported attending church once a week or more. As a rule, clients in welfare-to-work programs, whether those are religiously based or not, are very involved in religious activities, with more than 4 in 10 (43 percent) attending church at least once a week. These results suggest that there is probably an even larger market for religiously based welfare-to-work programs in Los Angeles than religious agencies can currently provide.

T A B L E 5 .

Church Attendance at Baseline, by Program Type

Program Type	Once a week or more	Few times a month	Few times a year	Never	Total	
					N	Percent
Government	32.0%	18.1%	39.4%	10.6%	94	100%
For-profit	36.3%	25.3%	23.1%	15.4%	91	100%
Nonprofit/Secular	52.3%	16.9%	27.7%	3.1%	65	100%
Faith-based/Segmented	52.8%	19.4%	13.9%	13.9%	36	100%
Faith-based/Integrated	63.2%	14.8%	18.4%	2.6%	38	100%
Total	43.2%	19.8%	27.2%	9.9%	324	100%

What do these demographic data and the data on the skills, situation-in-life, and attitudinal barriers to employment tell us about the clients from these welfare-to-work programs? First, our survey population is very similar to the general welfare population in Los Angeles County in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and age. The disproportionate number of women and racial minorities in our survey is similar to the welfare population of the county as a whole. There are some demographic differences among the five program types, particularly in terms of race, but nothing suggests that these differences would significantly affect the success of a particular program type.

The skills, life situation, and attitudinal optimism measures that we created suggest that the clients in the five program types are largely similar. The differences between them are summarized in Table 6. The for-profit programs had clients who faced fewer skills and attitudinal barriers than did the clients in the other programs. The government programs' clients also appeared to face somewhat fewer barriers than did the other programs' clients. The faith-based/integrated programs, on the other hand, had clients who faced more life-situation and attitudinal barriers than did the clients in the other programs (although their clients faced fewer skills barriers). This finding is somewhat surprising given the number of people who have suggested that faith-based programs are more able than government programs to reject the clients who are the most difficult to train for work programs. Our survey suggests that this simply has not happened. When we analyze the outcomes achieved by the five types of programs, we will attempt to determine whether or not their results are in any way a function of the kinds of clients that they are serving. Given the similarity of the clients in the different program types, however, it is likely that any conclusions we reach about program effectiveness are not a result of a particular program type working with an easier population of clients.

T A B L E 6 .

Summary of Barriers Faced by Clients at Baseline, by Program Type

Program Type	Skills Barriers	Life Situation Barriers	Attitudinal Barriers
Government	Same number of barriers	Fewer barriers	Same number of barriers
For-Profit	Fewer barriers	Same number of barriers	Fewer barriers
Nonprofit/Secular	Same number of barriers	More barriers	Same number of barriers
Faith-based/Segmented	Same number of barriers	Fewer barriers	More barriers
Faith-based/Integrated	Fewer barriers	More barriers	More barriers

Client Evaluations

As we noted earlier in this report, there have been very few studies that measure the effectiveness of different kinds of programs at providing basic social services. One of the many problems with measuring effectiveness is defining what constitutes a “successful” program. Outcome based measures (for example, job placement and wage levels) are certainly important considerations, and ones we will look at in greater detail later in the report, but we are also convinced that an equally important, but oftentimes overlooked, factor in measuring program effectiveness consists of the clients’ evaluations of their experiences while participating in a program. A number of critics of the welfare state have argued that professional and bureaucratic agencies treat clients as passive recipients of services, rather than individual citizens with values that need to be nurtured. The result, they contend, is that clients can have diminished capacities in the subjective values that are important for their long term needs.¹⁷ A focus on job placement alone, in short, is an insufficient measure for all of what programs are, or are not, doing for their clients.

In order to measure these more subjective factors we asked respondents in our 6-month survey two types of questions that called on them to evaluate the program they had been in. One set of three questions dealt with the degree to which the program staff had shown a caring, understanding attitude towards them personally. These we considered a measure of staff empathy. A second set of two questions dealt with evaluations of the more practical, instrumental value of the program.

Staff Empathy

The three questions that dealt with staff empathy asked the clients if the people running their program took an interest in them personally, if they really cared about their problems, and if they understood them and the situation they were in. For each statement, we asked respondents to indicate if the statement was always true, sometimes true, or never true. In each case, a majority of the respondents felt positively about their interactions with the program staff. Fifty-eight percent reported that the staff always took a personal interest in them, 55 percent said that they always cared about their problems, and 57 percent noted that staff always understood their situation. The data disconfirm the idea that welfare programs are so bureaucratic and depersonalized that they demonstrate little or no interest in clients or their particular situation in life.

There are, however, some intriguing differences among the five program types on these subjective evaluations. The for-profit and the government run programs consistently did not do as well on these feelings questions than did the nonprofit/secular, faith-based/segmented, and faith-based/integrated programs. For example, 71 percent of the clients surveyed from nonprofit/secular programs said that the staff running their program always took a per-

T A B L E 7 .

Perceived Staff Empathy Measure at Six Months, by Program Type*

Program Type	High	Medium	Low	Total	
				N	Percent
Government	51.3%	39.5%	9.2%	76	100%
For-profit	45.5%	31.8%	22.7%	88	100%
Nonprofit/Secular	66.1%	23.7%	10.2%	59	100%
Faith-based/Segmented	65.6%	25.0%	9.4%	32	100%
Faith-based/Integrated	65.7%	20.0%	14.3%	35	100%
Total	55.9%	30.0%	14.1%	290	100%

*Based on clients' responses to questions asking about their program staff's interest in them personally, caring about their problems, and understanding of them and their situation.

sonal interest in them, while only 51 percent of those from government programs reported a similar experience. Moreover, 68 percent of clients from faith-based/integrated programs responded that the people running their program always cared about their problems, while less than half (40 percent) of clients felt the same level of personal support from the staff of their for-profit programs. Additionally, one in five respondents from for-profit groups responded that the staff never cared about their problems, which was a significantly higher percentage than any other program type. Finally, nearly two-thirds of the respondents from nonprofit/secular, faith-based/segmented, and faith-based/integrated programs said that the people running their program always understood them and the situation they were in. By contrast, less than half of those surveyed from the for-profit programs (47 percent) and just over half of those from government programs (54 percent) had a similarly positive impression of their programs. Some of the sense of warmth and caring that was present in one of the faith-based/integrated programs is clearly reflected in a client who said of the staff in her program: "They behaved like Christ. They were gentle, kind, giving, and did not discriminate. They gave me a mentor. They taught me spiritually."

Table 7 combines the responses to these three questions to create an overall measure of the perceived staff empathy for clients. We assigned a value of 1 to 3, from the least positive response (never true) to the most positive (always true) for each of the three questions. The range of possible scores for each respondent to the survey, therefore, was from 3 to 9. We considered that those whose scores ranged from 3–5 had a very low assessment of their program, those with a score of 6–7 had moderately positive assessment, and those with a score of 8–9 had a very high assessment of their program. As the table indicates, for-profit groups were the least effective program type on this personal empathy scale. While 56 percent of all respondents rated their programs very positively, only 46 percent of those in for-profit programs had a similarly positive impression. Moreover, nearly a quarter (23 percent) of respondents from for-profit programs rated their programs very negatively, which was a much higher percentage than that of the survey respondents overall (14 percent) and also much higher than any other single program type. Nonprofit/secular and both types of faith-based programs, by contrast, did particularly well on this empathy measurement, with about two-thirds of their clients rating their program very positively and only 10 percent rating their program very negatively.

Client Contact Following Program

The problems clients face in seeking employment presumably do not end once they have officially completed a particular program. A possible benefit of an empathetic program is that the staff would remain personally and professionally involved with clients after the program has finished. In order to measure this factor we asked respon-

T A B L E 8 .

Client Contacts with Staff Since Leaving Program, by Program Type

Program Type	At Six Months					At Twelve Months				
	Many	A few	None	N	Total	Many	A few	None	N	Total
Government	23.7%	27.6%	48.7%	76	100%	22.7%	37.3%	40.0%	75	100%
For-profit	12.5%	55.7%	31.8%	88	100%	11.1%	50.0%	38.9%	72	100%
Non-profit/Secular	27.1%	37.3%	35.6%	59	100%	18.0%	50.8%	31.1%	61	100%
Faith-based/Segmented	11.4%	40.0%	48.6%	35	100%	14.8%	40.7%	44.4%	27	100%
Faith-based/Integrated	47.4%	34.2%	18.4%	38	100%	20.0%	56.7%	23.3%	30	100%
Total	22.6%	40.2%	37.2%	296	100%	17.4%	46.4%	36.2%	265	100%

dents at both the six-month and twelve-month interviews how many contacts they had had with staff since leaving their program (see Table 8). As the table indicates, a significant majority of the clients (77 percent at six months and 83 percent at twelve months) had either only a few or no contacts with staff since leaving their program, while a much smaller proportion (23 percent at six months and 17 percent at twelve months) of all those surveyed had many contacts. The program types that scored very well on our empathy scale (nonprofit/secular, faith-based/segmented, and faith-based/integrated programs) do not consistently score well on this contact question. At 6 months the only type of program that seemed very involved with their clients after the program had been completed were the faith-based/integrated ones. Nearly half (47 percent) of all respondents from these programs indicated that they had *many* contacts with program staff six months after the program had ended, a proportion almost twice as high as any other program type. The faith-based/integrated programs were unable to sustain this high level of contacts for another 6 months. At 12 months only 20 percent reported many contacts, a figure actually slightly lower than the government programs. More of the faith-based/integrated clients, however, reported either many or a few contacts (77 percent) than did the clients of any other type of program. The faith-based/integrated programs at 12 months still led the other types of programs in staff contacts with former clients, but its large advantage over the other types of programs had severely dwindled.

Value of Contact Following Program

We next asked those respondents who had contact with program staff after their program had ended to assess the value of those contacts (see Table 9). Overall, clients who reported contacts with program staff at both the six- and twelve-month interviews reported that this contact had been helpful to them (54 and 50 percent). Only about 10 percent of those with some contact with their program indicated that the contact had been not at all helpful to them. Interestingly, clients from government programs at 6 months were the most likely to respond that those contacts had been helpful (72 percent), the highest of the 5 types of programs. By 12 months this had shrunk to 58 percent, but this was still the highest among the 5 program types. The weakness of government programs seems to be that only a very small percentage of clients (24 percent at 6 months and 23 percent at 12 months) reported having contact with the people who ran their program. But the few who did have contact evaluated

these contacts very positively. As we noted above, a much larger percentage of clients from faith-based/integrated programs indicated that they had contact with program staff, and a majority of them reported that the contacts had been helpful (57 percent at 6 months and 52 percent at 12 months). While there are fiscal and practical difficulties in keeping close ties with clients months after a program has ended, the data suggests that clients perceive a clear benefit when they are able to maintain personal and professional contact with program staff.

T A B L E 9 .

Helpfulness of Contacts with program Staff after Leaving Program, by Program Type

Program Type	At Six Months					At Twelve Months				
	Always	Sometimes	Never	N	Total	Always	Sometimes	Never	N	Total
	Helpful	Helpful	Helpful			Helpful	Helpful	Helpful		
Government	71.8%	25.6%	2.5%	39	100%	57.8%	37.8%	4.4%	45	100%
For-profit	40.0%	45.0%	15.0%	60	100%	44.2%	34.9%	20.9%	43	100%
Non-profit/Secular	55.3%	39.5%	5.3%	38	100%	47.6%	40.5%	11.0%	42	100%
Faith-based/Segmented	50.0%	44.4%	5.6%	18	100%	50.0%	42.9%	7.1%	14	100%
Faith-based/Integrated	56.7%	26.7%	16.1%	30	100%	52.2%	34.8%	13.0%	23	100%
Total	53.5%	36.7%	9.7%	185	100%	50.3%	37.7%	12.0%	167	100%

Instrumental Evaluation

In addition to client evaluations of the staff empathy of their particular program, we also asked respondents to evaluate their program on instrumental grounds. It is one thing if program staff are kind and understanding people, it is quite another to determine if they are also helpful in a practical, instrumental sense. To measure this factor we asked respondents if the following statement was always true, sometimes true, or never true: “The people running or teaching in [name of the program] were knowledgeable about how to help me.” Additionally, we asked respondents if they thought that their program was very helpful, somewhat helpful, or not at all helpful to them. Finally, we assigned a value of 1 to 3 for each of the three possible responses to the two questions, resulting in a range of scores from 2 to 6. We considered those who scored a 2 as being low in instrumental evaluation of their programs, those who scored a 3 as being medium in instrumental evaluation, and those who scored 4 or above as being high in instrumental evaluation (see Table 10).

Clients generally believed that the programs and their staff were instrumentally helpful to them. More than two-thirds (67 percent at six months) reported that it was “always true” that the staff of their program were knowledgeable about how to help them, and a similar percentage (64 percent) indicated that their program was “very helpful” to them. One pattern that emerges when the program types are compared is that the government programs, which did not score high on the empathy measurements, do better than any other program on our instrumental scale, with nearly 60 percent of clients having a very high evaluation of the government program in which they participated. The faith-based groups that scored very high on the empathy scale, by contrast, do not do as well on the instrumental scale. Faith-based/integrated programs, for example, scored among the highest on the three personal empathy questions, but had the most clients among the five program types assign low scores in their instrumental evaluations (although exactly one-half fell into the high category).

Client Evaluation Findings

This first set of assessment data suggests several things about welfare-to-work programs. First, as noted above, the data do not support the criticism that welfare programs are inherently uncaring and coldly professional in their dealings with clients. An impressive percentage of clients responded positively that staff showed a personal interest in them, understood the problems that they faced, and cared about them. The programs are also doing a good job on our instrumental measurements; as a rule, the clients we surveyed felt that the staff in their particular program was knowledgeable about what they needed, and that the program was helpful to them.

T A B L E 1 0 .

Instrumental Evaluation at Six Months, by Program Type*

Program Type	High	Medium	Low	Total	
				N	Percent
Government	58.7%	25.3%	16.0%	75	100%
For-profit	42.0%	29.5%	28.4%	88	100%
Nonprofit/Secular	54.2%	30.5%	15.3%	59	100%
Faith-based/Segmented	41.2%	44.1%	14.7%	34	100%
Faith-based/Integrated	50.0%	15.8%	34.2%	38	100%
Total	49.7%	28.6%	21.8%	294	100%

*Based on clients' responses to questions asking about their program staff's knowledgeableness in helping them and the helpfulness of their program.

One reason for the difference between our findings and the stereotypical picture of cold, uncaring welfare bureaucracies may be that the stereotype has its roots in large government offices where persons apply for welfare assistance and eligibility is determined. These offices are necessarily highly bureaucratized as they process a host of applications and apply strict eligibility standards. But even government-run welfare-to-work programs in Los Angeles are typically run by community colleges or other more locally-oriented agencies that often are not large and involve intensive personal contact between staff and clients.

There are also some interesting differences that emerged among the program types. As we have noted, the non-profit/secular and faith-based groups scored significantly better than government and for-profit programs on our empathy questions, while government programs did better on instrumental measures. What implications can we draw from this? It is likely that programs have different self-understandings about how they can be most successful in working with clients. It is quite possible that government and for-profit groups understand their purpose primarily in terms of providing clients with marketable skills for the workplace. This is not to suggest that government and for-profit programs are “uncaring”—the data does not support that conclusion—but that this is not a primary focus of their program. They are focused, instead, on the instrumental skills that clients will need to find a job. A client who had participated in a government program commented, for example, that “the program taught me everything I need to know to be a CNA [certified nursing assistant]. It gave me the knowledge I needed to move on to higher levels of nursing.” Similarly, a client from a computer-training program in a for-profit program noted, “I learned more in the computer class in the few weeks I attended than in any other class.” In both these cases, positive client comments were focused on the instrumental benefits of participating in the government or the for-profit program.

Nonprofit and faith-based programs, by contrast, oftentimes have a mission that encourages staff to think more holistically about client needs. While these programs are neither indifferent to nor unsuccessful at providing clients with the instrumental skills that they will need in the workplace—the data does not support this conclusion—they seem to be more sensitive to clients' personal needs. These programs frequently emphasize life skills and job preparedness training, while the government and for-profit programs emphasize vocational education and training in marketable skills. These different emphases are reflected in the client reactions to the programs. A client from a faith-based/integrated program, for example, focused her comments on the life skills she learned in her program: “I think the _____ program is a great program to go through. I have not found a job yet, but it is nice to know that I am comfortable at least looking for a job.” Another client noted her faith-based/segmented program “helped me with transportation to job interviews, helped me with clothes, helped me with the words to use in an interview, and helped me with counseling for my son. Basically, they were there when I needed them.”

Nonprofit and faith-based programs also tend to spend more time on the clients' personal and social needs. One of the clients commented about her faith-based/integrated program: "It was a Christian program, it was encouraging, it helped me get back on my feet and on the right track. It helped turn me into the mature woman that I now am. It helped me a lot." Another person in a faith-based/segmented program noted that she profited from "just having somebody there to listen when you are going through your ups and downs. I'm very happy with my program, very content." Neither of these clients mentioned whether they had secured a job or learned marketable skills, but they clearly felt that they had benefited personally from their programs, which in turn should have long-term, positive implications for finding and maintaining employment.

A number of studies have noted that a person's attitudes, patterns of behavior, and social capital (their connections to and involvement with civic organizations, family support systems, and even their self-perceptions) are just as important for their engagement in society as the particular skills that they have.¹⁸ One study in Memphis, for example, found:

Employers are seeking entry-level employees who are motivated, understand appropriate behaviors for the workplace, can balance their family responsibilities with workplace obligations, and are reliable and on time. The development of soft skills and competencies include communication, thinking and cognitive abilities, conflict resolution, anger management, interpersonal and teamwork skills, habits of punctuality and regular attendance, physical appearance and dress, and a strong work ethic. Such skills are often deemed more important than technical skills training, which can be provided on the job or at the place of employment.¹⁹

It is possible that programs focusing on clients' more personal needs are doing a better job at providing them with the social capital and attitudes that they will need as they make their way successfully back into the world of work. One of the client's comments illustrates this idea, as she noted that what was particularly helpful to her about her faith-based/integrated program was "the fact that I had nowhere to go to and this was a place that I could be. The fact that I was around other women who were in the same situation I was in." The question on client contact with program staff six and twelve months after their program had ended, for example, clearly indicates that clients believe that they benefit from such active engagement with program staff. No doubt those contacts are providing the connections that clients need as they face obstacles finding and retaining a job months after their program has ended.

What we take from all of this is that there is merit in a welfare-to-work policy that is fluid enough to allow different programs to provide different client needs. Some clients already have in place the social support system that they need to succeed, but they lack a particular skill for employment. For them, a program that focuses solely on skills training is perfectly appropriate. For other clients, however, the biggest obstacle to employment may be that they do not have a network of support in the community, or they may lack the self-confidence to go and look for work. For them, a program tailored to respond to their social and personal needs might be more helpful than one that simply trains them in a skill.

T A B L E 1 1 .

Employment at Baseline and at Six Months, by Program Type

Program Type	Percent of respondents <i>not</i> employed at baseline and employed full-time at six months	Percent of respondents <i>not</i> employed at baseline and employed part-time at six months	Percent of respondents <i>not</i> employed at baseline and still <i>not</i> employed at six months	Totals for respondents <i>not</i> employed at baseline		Percent of respondents employed at baseline and still employed at six months	
				N	Percent	Percent	N
Government	20.0%	12.7%	67.3%	55	100%	77.4%	40
For-Profit	52.7%	7.3%	40.0%	55	100%	61.1%	36
Nonprofit/Secular	16.7%	14.8%	68.5%	54	100%	70.0%	10
Faith-based/Segmented	13.6%	13.6%	72.7%	22	100%	85.7%	14
Faith-based/Integrated	16.7%	4.2%	79.2%	24	100%	92.9%	14
Total	26.7%	11.0%	62.4%	210	100%	74.6%	114

Program Outcomes

In addition to client evaluations of the programs we utilized the concrete outcomes actually experienced by clients as a second measure of program effectiveness. If welfare-to-work programs have any relationship to their name, they must be able to assist clients to move away from dependence on welfare to gainful employment for meeting basic economic needs. However, to measure movement away from welfare towards gainful employment is a challenge. There are not simply two poles: no employment with total welfare dependency and full-time gainful employment with economic self-sufficiency. Part-time employment and employment at wages so low that economic self-sufficiency does not result can be combined to cause a wide range of intermediate stages between these two poles. Also, as we have documented, clients face a host of potential obstacles to employment that usually make it difficult for a particular program to move persons all the way to economic self-sufficiency. Thus any gains—even when they do not immediately lead to economic self-sufficiency—should be credited as being positive outcomes.

This section of our report uses four types of measures to assess the outcomes of the five types of programs: changes in employment status, changes in wage levels for those who were employed, changes in the receipt of welfare assistance, and changes in attitudinal optimism. In presenting the data we will also highlight a number of selected variables that may have made it easier or harder for a specific program type to reach certain success levels.

Changes in Employment Status

Our first outcome measure is that of the employment status of the clients of the various types of programs. We found that six months after the baseline data had been gathered nearly half of the respondents were employed. The for-profit clients fared the best in terms of their clients being employed, with 60 percent reporting either full- or part-time employment, and the nonprofit/secular programs fared the worst with only 36 percent of their clients reporting employment. Twelve months after the baseline data were gathered 57 percent of the respondents reported they were employed, a slight gain over the 6-month number. The for-profit programs again fared the best, with 75 percent of their clients reporting employment, and the nonprofit/secular programs again fared the worst, with 41 percent reporting employment.

Tables 11 and 12 are more revealing, however, since they take into account the employment status of the clients at the time the baseline data were gathered. It shows for each type of program the percentage of respondents who were not employed at the beginning of the study and at 6 and 12 months were employed either full- or part-time

T A B L E 1 2 .

Employment at Baseline and at Twelve Months, by Program Type

Program Type	Percent of respondents <i>not</i> employed at baseline and employed full-time at twelve months	Percent of respondents <i>not</i> employed at baseline and employed part-time at twelve months	Percent of respondents <i>not</i> employed at baseline and still <i>not</i> employed at twelve months	Totals for respondents <i>not</i> employed at baseline		Percent of respondents employed at baseline and still employed at twelve months	
				N	Percent	Percent	N
Government	23.3%	14.0%	62.8%	43	100%	80.6%	31
For-Profit	58.5%	17.1%	24.4%	41	100%	73.3%	30
Nonprofit/Secular	28.6%	8.2%	63.3%	49	100%	60.0%	10
Faith-based/Segmented	12.5%	31.3%	56.3%	16	100%	81.8%	11
Faith-based/Integrated	15.0%	10.0%	75.0%	20	100%	80.0%	10
Total	31.4%	14.2%	54.4%	169	100%	76.1%	92

or were still unemployed. They also show the percentages of respondents who were employed at the beginning of the study and were still employed at 6 and 12 months.

The for-profit programs ranked first in enabling persons who were unemployed at the baseline to find employment. At six months 53 percent of their clients who had been unemployed at the baseline were working full-time and another 7 percent were working part-time, and at twelve months 59 percent were working full-time and another 17 percent were working part-time. The faith-based/integrated programs fared the worst in enabling their clients who had been unemployed at the baseline to find employment. Almost 80 percent of their clients who were unemployed at the baseline were still unemployed at 6 months. At 12 months this figure had dropped to only 75 percent. Seventy-three percent of the faith-based/segmented clients who were unemployed at the baseline were still without employment 6 months later, but this had been reduced to 56 percent by 12 months, better than any other type of program except for the for-profit programs. But most of this improvement came from their clients finding part-time, not full-time employment. They were the worst of the five program types in their clients finding full-time employment. The clients of the government and nonprofit/secular programs did only slightly better than the faith-based clients, with 60 to 70 percent of their clients who were unemployed at the baseline not being able to find employment at either 6 or 12 months.

There is a surprising reversal, however, when one looks at the clients who were employed at the baseline and were able to maintain their employment. At 6 months the faith-based/integrated clients fared the best, with over 90 percent of their clients maintaining an employed status, and the for-profit programs did the worst, with only 61 percent of their clients remaining employed. In fact, clients from the for-profit programs who were employed at the baseline did not do much better at 6 months than those who were unemployed at the baseline. At 12 months the faith-based/integrated clients who had been employed at the baseline had dropped somewhat in maintaining employment, and the government and faith-based/segmented clients had improved somewhat. As a result, all three of these types of programs had about 80 percent of their clients who had been employed a year earlier still employed. This was a higher percentage than that of the for-profit and the nonprofit/secular programs clients.

T A B L E 1 3 .

Hourly Wages of Employed Respondents, by Program Type

Program Type	At Six Months					At Twelve Months				
	Less than		\$10 or	N	Total %	Less than		\$10 or	N	Total %
	\$7	\$7 to \$9	more			\$7	\$7 to \$9	more		
Government	28.6%	46.9%	24.5%	49	100%	17.1%	46.3%	36.6%	41	100%
For-profit	7.4%	63.0%	29.6%	54	100%	3.8%	58.8%	37.7%	53	100%
Nonprofit/Secular	12.5%	58.3%	29.2%	24	100%	20.0%	52.0%	28.0%	25	100%
Faith-based/Segmented	27.8%	55.6%	16.7%	18	100%	12.5%	56.3%	31.3%	16	100%
Faith-based/Integrated	16.7%	44.4%	38.9%	18	100%	15.4%	23.1%	61.5%	13	100%
Total	17.8%	54.6%	27.6%	163	100%	12.2%	50.7%	37.2%	148	100%

Wage Levels

A second measure of welfare-to-work program outcomes is the wage level of the persons who were employed. It is fairly easy to find minimum wage level jobs, but such jobs usually leave persons still mired in poverty and dependent on some forms of public assistance. Thus a crucial need in moving persons from welfare dependence to economic self-sufficiency is to help them obtain jobs that enable them to move above minimum wage levels. It is especially important to note the percentages of respondents earning \$10 or more an hour, since this would seem to be the required wages to eliminate the need for welfare and to lift a person out of poverty.²⁰

Table 13 shows the wage levels of employed respondents at 6 and 12 months. It demonstrates, first, how difficult it is for persons in poverty to reach the \$10 an hour level. Overall, only 28 percent of the respondents who were working were earning at least \$10 an hour at 6 months and only 37 percent were doing so at 12 months. More encouraging is the fact that higher percentages of clients of all but one of the types of programs were earning \$10 an hour at 12 months than at 6 months. This seems to indicate that the welfare-to-work programs were having a long-term, positive effect. Only the nonprofit/secular clients were not doing better at 12 months than they were at 6 months. The faith-based/integrated programs did the best at having clients in the “\$10 or more” category: 39 percent at 6 months and a very high 62 percent at 12 months. The for-profit programs were notable for the very small number of their employed clients who were mired in the “less than \$7” an hour level: only 7 percent at 6 months and an even lower 4 percent at 12 months.

What these figures do not take into account are the changes in the wage levels of the clients who were already employed at the time they were in the various welfare-to-work programs. Table 14 summarizes, for each of the five program types, the percentages of their clients who at 6 months and at 12 months were experiencing lower, the same, and higher wages.²¹ At six months the for-profit and the nonprofit/secular programs showed especially positive outcomes. Over one-third of their clients experienced increased wages and about one-half were able to maintain their earlier wage levels. At 12 months the for-profit programs’ clients were able to maintain, and even increase, their 6-month gains. Forty-five percent experienced wage increases over their wages at the baseline 12 months earlier. Very few of their clients who were working at both the baseline and at 6 or 12 months saw a decrease in their wages. The government programs also did very well in helping their clients to achieve higher wage levels, with 52 percent seeing increased wages at the 12-month interviews. One reason the for-profit and government programs did as well as they did was that many of their clients who were working both at the baseline and at 12 months had been earning only \$7 or less at the baseline. Our data show it is easier for persons to move from the “less than \$7” category to the “\$7 to \$9” category than from the “\$7 to \$9” category to the “over \$10” category.

T A B L E 1 4 .

Net Changes in Wages at Six and Twelve Months Compared to Baseline Wages, by Program Type*

Program type:	At Six Months					At Twelve Months				
	Wages	Wages stayed	Wages	N	Total %	Wages	Wages stayed	Wages	N	Total %
	increased	the same	decreased			increased	the same	decreased		
Government	27.3%	54.5%	18.2%	44	100%	52.0%	44.0%	4.0%	25	100%
For-profit	33.3%	50.0%	16.7%	42	100%	45.0%	50.0%	5.0%	20	100%
Nonprofit/Secular	36.4%	45.5%	18.2%	22	100%	16.7%	83.3%	0.0%	6	100%
Faith-based/Segmented	6.3%	87.5%	6.3%	16	100%	12.5%	87.5%	0.0%	8	100%
Faith-based/Integrated	5.9%	70.6%	23.5%	17	100%	0.0%	85.7%	14.3%	7	100%
All programs	25.5%	57.4%	17.0%	141	100%	36.4%	59.1%	4.5%	66	100%

*These are, of course, based on aggregate percentages for each category and one cannot conclude that the same individuals were experiencing higher, the same, or lower wages. See footnote 21.

The faith-based/integrated clients fared the worst in moving their clients to higher wage levels. The problems the faith-based/integrated programs had in this regard can in large part be explained by the fact that only 1 of their clients who was employed at both the baseline and at 6 months was in the low “less than \$7” category at the baseline. Similarly, 7 of their 17 clients who were employed at both the baseline and at 6 months were already earning \$10 or more at the baseline. Thus they had comparatively few clients in a position to move up, and especially few in the lowest wage category, which was the category most likely to experience an increase in wages.

Table 15 summarizes the relative effectiveness of the five types of programs in terms of employment and wages. Overall, the for-profit programs had the best employment and wage outcomes. Compared to the other types of programs, more of their clients had moved from unemployment to employment, more had achieved full-time employment, and more had increased their wages to \$10 or more an hour. The for-profit programs did not do as well in helping those already employed to maintain their employment, but even here they did about as well as the other types of programs among the 12-month respondents. For the most part, there was no consistent pattern among the four other types of programs doing either comparatively better or worse. The government programs did better in terms of clients who increased their wages. The nonprofit/secular programs did better in terms of their clients in finding full-time employment, and the clients of both types of faith-based programs did better in helping those already employed to maintain their employment status.

Three comments on these employment and wage findings are in order. First, it is clear that it is very difficult to move persons from unemployment to gainful employment. Overall, a majority of the respondents who were unemployed at the baseline were still unemployed a year later, and of those who were employed many were employed only part-time. Less than a third had moved from unemployment to full-time employment. A second comment is to note the greater success of the for-profit programs, compared to the four other program types, in enabling their clients to improve their employment and wage situation. Earlier we noted that the for-profit firms tended to have clients with greater skill levels, fewer life situation barriers, and higher attitudinal optimism levels. But the differences do not seem to be so great as to be able to explain fully the large employment advantages the for-profit clients had experienced.

A third comment entails the two types of faith-based programs. Some have claimed that faith-based programs are spectacularly more effective than secular programs in achieving positive results. Our data indicate reality is more complex than such claims. In enabling their clients who were already employed at the baseline to maintain

T A B L E 1 5 .

Summary of Employment and Wage Outcomes, by Program Type*

Program Type	Those unemployed at baseline finding employment	Those finding employment finding full-time employment	Those employed at baseline maintaining employment	Those employed at baseline increasing their wages
Government	About average	About average	About average	Better than average
For-Profit	Better than average	Better than average	About average	Better than average
Nonprofit/Secular	About average	Better than average	Worse than average	Worse than average
Faith-based/Segmented	About average	Worse than average	Better than average	Worse than average
Faith-based/Integrated	Worse than average	About average	Better than average	Worse than average

*Based on the authors' judgments, taking into account both the 6- and 12-month data, but giving somewhat more weight to the 12-month data.

employment they tended to do better than the other types of programs. In enabling their clients to find employment and to increase their wages they fared no better—and even slightly worse—than the government and nonprofit/secular programs. The overall picture is one of the faith-based programs doing about as well as the government and nonprofit/secular programs. However, given their very small size, usual lack of government funding, and minimal budgets, the surprising finding may be that they did almost as well as the larger, government and government-funded nonprofit/secular programs. Also, they were able to do so while emphasizing life skills training over the more expensive vocational or job skills training, even though some claim the latter are essential for welfare recipients if they are to improve their employment and wage situation.

The most likely explanation for the ability of employed faith-based program clients to maintain their employment builds upon some of our earlier data that found faith-based programs ranked very high in client evaluations of staff empathy. Respondents also reported the faith-based/integrated programs were ahead of all of the other types of programs in maintaining contact with them six and even twelve months after the baseline data were gathered. In terms of actual helpfulness and knowledgeable staff the faith-based programs fared only about as well as the other types of programs. Thus it is possible that the clients in faith-based/integrated programs who were already employed—who already had the knowledge or skills to land a job—gained the emotional support that carried them through the bad days and to persevere in the jobs they had. Those who had taken part in other types of programs—programs that were evaluated fairly negatively in terms of staff empathy and in staff contacts once the clients left the programs—may lack the emotional support or actual staff contacts that would get them through the tough days on the job. Since job retention is considered by many in the field to be a bigger challenge than simply finding employment, the success of the faith-based programs in helping their clients to maintain employment is a notable achievement.

Changes in Receipt of Welfare Assistance

A third outcome measure we used was the welfare status of the respondents. The ultimate goal of “welfare-to-work” programs is, of course, to enable persons to replace the receipt of welfare benefits with gainful employment. Thus, a logical question to ask is whether or not the five types of programs differed in the extent to which their clients were able to leave the welfare roles. The respondents were asked in the baseline questionnaire and in the six and twelve-month telephone surveys whether or not they were receiving any assistance under any one or more of a laundry list of welfare programs. One of the programs we inquired about was the CalWORKs program,

T A B L E 1 6 .

If Receiving TANF at Six and Twelve Months, by Program Type and Whether Receiving TANF at Baseline

Program Type	Percent of respondents receiving TANF at baseline and not receiving it at six months		Percent of respondents not receiving TANF at baseline and not receiving it at six months		Percent of respondents receiving TANF at baseline and not receiving it at twelve months		Percent of respondents not receiving TANF at baseline and not receiving it at twelve months	
	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
Government	17.3%	52	95.0%	40	22.5%	40	90.6%	32
For-profit	53.3%	30	94.8%	58	73.1%	26	97.7%	43
Nonprofit/Secular	30.0%	30	88.6%	35	51.7%	29	93.8%	32
Faith-based/Segmented	41.7%	12	95.0%	20	62.5%	8	100.0%	16
Faith-based/Integrated	9.5%	21	81.3%	16	21.4%	14	93.3%	15
Total	28.3	145	92.3%	169	43.6%	117	94.9%	138

which is the California version of the TANF program. In the following analysis we focus on whether or not the respondents were receiving CalWORKs/TANF benefits, rather than other forms of welfare assistance, such as food stamps or Medicaid, because it is the major cash support program in California and is the program persons usually have in mind when they refer to “being on welfare.”

Table 16 reports the percentages of respondents for each program type who were receiving TANF/CalWORKs benefits at six months and at twelve months, divided by whether or not they were receiving them at the baseline. Again, the for-profit programs had the best outcomes, with 53 percent of their clients who had been receiving TANF benefits at the baseline no longer doing so at six months and 95 percent of their clients who had not been receiving TANF benefits at the baseline still not receiving them at six months. The faith-based/segmented programs were not far behind them in assisting those on TANF to move off it and those not on TANF at the baseline to remain off at six months. The faith-based/integrated programs fared the worst—posting the lowest numbers both for assisting persons to move off TANF and in helping those not on it from having to rely on it (although 81 percent of their clients not receiving TANF benefits were still not receiving them after six months). The government programs also did poorly, with only 17 percent of their clients who were on TANF at the baseline, managing to leave it at six months.

The 12-month numbers are similar. The most encouraging aspect is that 44 percent of the 12-month respondents reported they were no longer receiving TANF. This helps to demonstrate that welfare-to-work programs can indeed be effective in enabling persons to leave the welfare rolls. This conclusion is tempered by the fact that those leaving TANF may have been doing so not because they had obtained employment, but because they were no longer receiving it due to other causes, such as losing eligibility due to noncompliance with certain regulations. The for-profit respondents, as was the case at 6 months, were the most successful at leaving TANF. The faith-based/integrated and government respondents were again lagging behind the respondents from the other types of programs. But the faith-based/integrated clients improved from 10 percent to 21 percent managing to leave the TANF rolls, drawing them about even with the government programs. All types of programs were about equally successful in keeping their clients who were not on TANF from having to go on it.

T A B L E 1 7 .

The Percentage of Respondents Whose Attitudes were More or Less Optimistic at Six and Twelve Months Compared with Attitudes at the Baseline, by Program Type

Program Type	At Six Months				At Twelve Months			
	Percent More optimistic	Percent Same level of optimism	Percent Less optimistic	Total	Percent More optimistic	Percent Same level of optimism	Percent Less optimistic	Total
Government	30.3%	39.3%	30.3%	89	69.6%	23.2%	7.2%	69
For-profit	31.8%	45.5%	22.7%	88	75.7%	22.9%	1.4%	70
Nonprofit/Secular	29.8%	38.6%	31.6%	57	54.9%	25.5%	19.6%	51
Faith-based/Segmented	15.2%	57.6%	27.3%	33	56.5%	26.1%	17.4%	23
Faith-based/Integrated	31.3%	50.0%	18.8%	32	80.0%	16.0%	4.0%	25
Total	29.1%	44.1%	26.8%	299	68.1%	23.1%	8.8%	238

Changes in Attitudinal Optimism

Our fourth outcome measure is that of changed mental attitudes of optimism or pessimism. As seen earlier, the baseline questionnaire asked all of the respondents to indicate whether they agreed strongly, agreed, were uncertain, disagreed, or disagreed strongly with the following three statements: “Sometimes I get so discouraged it is hard for me to keep going,” “No matter how hard I work I doubt I will ever have a really good job,” and “I am confident one year from now I will be better off than I am now.” These same three items were asked of the respondents at six months and again at twelve months. As reported earlier we created an attitudinal optimism scale by combining the respondents’ responses to these three items (see Table 4). In order to assess the impact the different types of programs had on their clients’ level of attitudinal optimism we calculated the percentages of clients for each type of program that were less optimistic, at the same level of optimism, and were more optimistic at six months and twelve months, as compared to their level of attitudinal optimism at the baseline.

We considered the level of client optimism as a program outcome because both previous studies and our own field interviews indicate that a major barrier to moving away from welfare dependency and towards economic self-sufficiency consists of mental attitudes. Feelings of hopelessness in light of seemingly overwhelming problems all too often create a defeatist mindset that can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Thus we are convinced that an important positive outcome that can be a marker towards economic self-sufficiency is higher levels of optimism and confidence in the future.

Respondents in the six-month interviews demonstrated a modest increase in attitudinal optimism. Twenty-nine percent were more optimistic than 6 months earlier, 44 percent had the same level of optimism, and 27 percent were less optimistic (see Table 17). Surprisingly, there was a surge in optimism between 6 and 12 months, with the result that the respondents were much more optimistic, as compared to their attitudes at the baseline, at 12 months than at 6 months. Some 68 percent were more optimistic and only 9 percent were less optimistic. This may be another indication that welfare-to-work programming does work. Those who had taken part in a welfare-to-work program had made enough headway over a year’s time that they were much more likely to hold to optimistic attitudes than they had while in the program.

T A B L E 1 8 .

The Percentage of Clients with more Optimistic Attitudes Minus the Percentage of Clients with Less Optimistic Attitudes, Compared to the Baseline, at Six and Twelve Months, by Program Type

Program Type	Percentage of clients with more optimistic attitudes minus the percentage of clients with less optimistic attitudes, at 6 months*	Percentage of clients with more optimistic attitudes minus the percentage of clients with less optimistic attitudes, at 12 months*
Government	0	+62.4
For-profit	+9.1	+74.3
Nonprofit/Secular	-1.8	+35.3
Faith-based/Segmented	-12.1	+39.1
Faith-based/Integrated	+12.5	+76.0
Total	+2.3	+59.3

*More precisely, the percentage of clients with more optimistic attitudes at 6 and 12 months compared to their attitudes at the baseline, minus the percentage of clients with less optimistic attitudes compared to their attitudes at the baseline.

In terms of differences among the program types, the clients of the faith-based/integrated programs experienced the greatest increase in optimism. As Table 17 shows, at six months only 19 percent were less optimistic (the lowest among the five types of programs) and 31 percent were more optimistic, the next to the highest among the five types of programs. At 12 months more faith-based/integrated clients possessed higher levels of attitudinal optimism than any other type of program. The for-profit and government program clients ran a close second to the faith-based/integrated clients in terms of increases in optimism. The nonprofit/secular and faith-based/segmented clients were clearly weaker in increases in optimism at both the 6-month and 12-month marks. Table 18 demonstrates these conclusions more clearly by subtracting the percentage of clients with less optimistic attitudes from those with more optimistic attitudes for each of the five program types.

The tendency of the faith-based/integrated programs to do the best in increasing clients' attitudinal optimism is remarkable because, as seen earlier, the for-profit clients had in fact fared better in improving their employment situation and wages and in leaving the TANF program than had the faith-based/integrated clients. This finding adds to the evidence noted earlier in this report that the faith-based programs with explicit, up-front religious elements in their programming were effective in establishing positive connections with their clients. They were the programs ranked very high by their clients as having a staff that took a personal interest in them, caring about them, and understanding their problems. The for-profit programs did almost as well as the faith-based/integrated programs, indicating that raising levels of client attitudinal optimism can be stimulated either by skills training and improved employment status or by building affective, empathetic bridges to the clients. What is puzzling is the fact that the faith-based/segmented and nonprofit/secular programs ranked as high or almost as high as the faith-based/integrated programs in staff empathy, yet they did much worse than the faith-based/integrated programs in increasing clients' level of optimism. It may be that explicit references to religious themes and ideas may play a more important role than often assumed in raising clients' sense of hope and optimism.²²

Observations and Policy Implications

There are several observations and policy implications that flow from the research reported here. First, it is clear from our research how difficult it is to empower persons to move from welfare dependency to economic self-sufficiency. In conducting this research, we were frequently impressed with formidable challenges and problems faced by persons receiving welfare assistance in finding and holding employment of such a nature that they no longer need welfare assistance. Our early discussion and documentation of skills, life-situation, and attitudinal barriers faced by the respondents in our study clearly demonstrate this. Sporadic employment, low wages, discouragement, and continued need for welfare assistance seem to be the norm. Welfare-to-work programs, no matter the nature of the sponsoring entity, are not an easy, magic solution. On the other hand, we were able to demonstrate many positive outcomes flowing from the welfare-to-work programs studied. Many persons (sometimes approaching a majority) are finding employment, raising their wages, developing more positive attitudes, and escaping welfare. The picture is mixed.

Almost two-thirds of the respondents who were not employed at the baseline were still not employed at 6 months, and a majority were still not employed at 12 months. Of those who were employed at the baseline at less than \$10 an hour and were still employed at six months, only 14 percent had managed to move up to \$10 or more an hour. Only 29 percent had moved up to the \$10 an hour or more wage level in 12 months. A similarly small percentage (28 percent) had moved off TANF six months after we gathered our initial baseline data, but a more encouraging 44 percent had done so after 12 months. The picture is indeed mixed.

A second observation is that there is no clear, consistent pattern of any one of the five types of programs in doing a more effective job in working with welfare-to-work clients. Our study gives little support to those who claim that all government programs are failures or that all faith-based or other nonprofit programs are huge successes. Studies in other social service areas in other cities may find such results. We did not. Some types of programs seemed to do better by some measures, but to do worse by other measures. Most notably both types of the faith-based providers and the nonprofit/secular providers did well in client evaluations of their staff's sense of empathy. The faith-based clients who were already working at the baseline did well in maintaining employment. The faith-based/integrated programs did well in increasing their clients' sense of optimism and hope for the future and in maintaining contact with their clients once the program ended. The faith-based/integrated programs did poorly in actually moving their clients off TANF, but did well at enabling those not on TANF to stay off it. Meanwhile, the for-profit programs, which fared poorly in staff empathy, did well in improving their clients' employment situation and in enabling them to leave TANF. Government, which lagged in some respects, scored high in their clients' evaluation of their program's instrumental effectiveness.

Our study does not support those who deprecate government-run and for-profit programs as uncaring and ineffective. Those who argue that faith-based programs are too small and unsophisticated to meet the complex needs of persons struggling to find employment and escape welfare and poverty also find little confirmation in our study. In fact, we were impressed, given the very limited staff resources and low budgets of most faith-based organizations, that they did as well as they did in comparison to their much better funded secular counterparts.

The complexity of the challenges clients face suggests, instead, that in the world of welfare-to-work it is too simple to say that any one type of program is more effective than any other type of program. All types seem to have their strengths and their weaknesses, which may match in many ways the different needs their clients have. This study supports what has been called niche effectiveness, that is, that different types of organizations have

their own niches in which they excel. William Galston, as seen earlier, has raised the question of whether or not there is “such a niche or niches in the general area of social welfare and social service provision such that religious congregations and faith-based organizations are uniquely well suited to fill that niche or those niches.”²³ This research suggests the answer to Galston’s question is yes. Even with small programs and highly limited resources many faith-based welfare-to-work programs have been highly effective in increasing clients’ sense of hope and optimism, in enabling employed clients to maintain their employment, and creating a social network through on-going contacts. Meanwhile, government-run and especially for-profit programs seems to be especially effective in teaching marketable skills. Those who argue that both are needed are probably closer to the truth than those who argue for one or the other.

Another niche that the faith-based programs, and especially the faith-based/integrated programs, may be able to fill is that of working with clients who themselves are deeply religious. We have some, admittedly limited, but intriguing data that suggests this may be the case. We found that of the clients who took part in faith-based/integrated programs and who themselves reported attending church several times a month or more, fared much better in improving their employment status than did the clients in the same programs who reported they attend church only a few times a year or never. None of 4 clients who did not attend church and were not employed at the baseline had found employment by 12 months, while one-third of those who did attend church had found employment. Of the 8 who already had employment at the baseline and attended church, only 1 was no longer employed at 12 months, while of the two that did not attend church, one was no longer employed at 12 months. These numbers are so small that little weight should be attached to them. That is why we did not introduce them earlier. But they do suggest that perhaps the holistic, integrally religious social service programs may have a niche to fill in meeting the social service needs of clients who themselves are religiously involved.

In light of this study we believe there are three public policy implications that especially warrant further consideration and study.

- It would appear that no one type of organization should be relied upon to provide welfare-to-work services. As just observed, the various types of programs we studied all have their strengths and weaknesses. In light of this fact, it seems foolish to depend only on any one type of organization as the provider of welfare-to-work services.
- The use of for-profit firms to provide welfare-to-work services warrants further consideration, even though doing so has been highly controversial in Los Angeles County as it has been in many other cities across the United States. Given the success of the for-profit organizations included in this study in improving their clients’ employment situation and in enabling them no longer to need TANF benefits, there is reason to believe that for-profit organizations should be given a greater role in working with welfare clients.

- In light of the niche effectiveness to which we made reference earlier, it would make public policy sense to make greater use of collaborative or partnership approaches. One could envision an approach in which a government agency makes eligibility determinations and assesses clients' needs and strengths. Clients would next be involved in a course run by a faith-based or secular nonprofit organization of their choice that works on life skills, job preparedness, and underlying attitudes. This would then be followed by vocational training or a skills class, while the secular or faith-based nonprofit organization continues to provide support and encouragement in once or twice-a-week sessions, perhaps continuing after initial employment.

Too often, we believe public policy debates are cast in either-or terms, when both may in fact be the most effective policy. We believe our findings lend support to that conclusion in the case of welfare-to-work efforts in Los Angeles. It is by such collaborative programs that the full resources of a community can be brought to bear on the enormous problems faced by those seeking to escape from welfare dependence to self-supporting employment. Anything less may very well be inadequate.

E N D N O T E S

- ¹ Charitable choice refers to legal provisions designed to allow faith-based organizations to compete for government contracts on an equal basis with secular nonprofits, to protect the religious autonomy of faith-based organizations that contract with government, and to protect the religious-freedom rights of recipients of government-funded services from faith-based groups. Legal provisions of this nature were added by Congress to four pieces of legislation in the latter 1990s: the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (1996), the Welfare-to-Work Act (1997), the Community Services Block Grant Program (1998), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration drug treatment program (2000).
- ² See, for example, the Charity Aid, Recovery, and Empowerment Act (CARE) of 2003, S. 272, introduced by Senator Joe Lieberman (D-CT) and Rick Santorum (R-PA).
- ³ Al Gore, “Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by Vice President Al Gore on the Role of Faith-based Organizations” (September 8, 1999).
- ⁴ See Stephen Goldsmith, *The Twenty-first Century City* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999) and David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, *Reinventing Government* (New York: Plume, 1993).
- ⁵ Martha Minow, *Partners, Not Rivals: Privatization and the Public Good* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 2002), p. 4.
- ⁶ See Stephen V. Monsma, “Working Faith: How Religious Organizations Provide Welfare-to-Work Services,” (Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, the University of Pennsylvania, 2002) and Stephen V. Monsma, *Public-Private Welfare-to-Work Partnerships* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, forthcoming). Also see John C. Green and Amy L. Sherman, “Fruitful Collaborations: A Survey of Government-Funded Faith-Based Programs in 15 States,” (Hudson Institute, 2002) and the numerous reports being put out by the Pew-funded Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy (www.religionandsocialpolicy.org).
- ⁷ William Galston, for example, has raised the question of whether or not there is “such a niche or niches in the general area of social welfare and social service provision such that religious congregations and faith-based organizations are uniquely well suited to fill that niche or those niches.” See “The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in the Social Welfare System,” The Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy Breakout Session: Faith-Based Service Niches, 2003 Spring Research Forum, March 6, 2003), p. 2.
- ⁸ Here and throughout this report we use the term “clients” to refer to persons who were taking part in the welfare-to-work programs being studied. Some have objected to the use of this term on the basis that it implies a passive role for those active in the programs. We found the actual programs studied using a variety of terms: customers, clients, students, and recipients. We decided to use the term “client” for convenience sake and because we do not believe the dictionary definition of the term implies passivity. The unabridged *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* gives as the second definition of client: “a person who engages the professional advice or services of another.” It is in this sense we use this word in this report.
- ⁹ The first two stages of the research were part of a wider national study of welfare-to-work programs in Chicago, Dallas, and Philadelphia, as well as Los Angeles. The research being reported here took this earlier study’s first two stages further in the case of Los Angeles in order to explore the question of the comparative effectiveness of different types of programs. For reports on the earlier study see Monsma, “Working Faith” and Monsma, *Public-Private Welfare-to-Work Partnerships*. Including only urban Los Angeles County meant the northern Santa Clarita and Lancaster-Palmdale and the western Malibu/Agoura areas were excluded. The zip codes that were excluded from our study were 93563, 91342, 91321, 91381, 91355, 91354, 91351, 91350, 93510, 93550, 93543, 93553, 93544, 93591, 93535, 93552, 93534, 93551, 93536, 93532, 91384, 93243, 90265, 90290, 91302, and 91301.
- ¹⁰ For a complete account of how this scale was constructed see Appendix C in Monsma, *Public-Private Welfare-to-Work Partnerships*.
- ¹¹ Some of the initial categories were so small that we had to include many of the programs in those categories, even if they were not fully representative of the other programs in that category. This was especially true of the for-profit programs, where we selected two of the four programs in that category, and the faith-based/integrated programs, where we selected 4 of the 10 programs in that category.
- ¹² Our associate researcher, whom we recognize and thank in our acknowledgements section, was Carolyn Mounts. Ms. Mounts is a MSW graduate of the University of Southern California and has extensive experience in field research, especially with faith-based organizations, in the Los Angeles area. She worked full-time on this current study at the crucial initial list-preparation and data-collection stages.
- ¹³ This is a pattern that other researchers have found. See Monsma, *Public-Private Welfare-to-Work Partnerships*, and William H. Lockhart, *Getting Saved from Poverty: Religion in Poverty-to-Work Programs* (Doctoral dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of Virginia, 2001), and Malcolm L. Goggin and Deborah A. Orth, “How Faith-Based and Secular Organizations Tackle Housing for the Homeless,” The Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy (The Rockefeller Institute of Government, October, 2002).

- ¹⁴ The data for the CalWORKs population in Los Angeles comes from *Monitoring the Implementation of CalWORKs: Welfare Reform and Welfare Service Provision in Los Angeles, 1998*. Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services.
- ¹⁵ See, for example, Kathryn Edin, Kathleen Mullan Harris, and Gary D. Sandefur. *Welfare to Work: Opportunities and Pitfalls*. Washington, DC: American Sociological Association, 1998; and Daniel Flaming, Patricia Kwon, and Patrick Burns. *Running Out of Time: Voices of Parents Struggling to Move from Welfare to Work*. Los Angeles, California: Economic Roundtable, 2002.
- ¹⁶ See Thomas McCurdy, David C. Mancuso, and Margaret O'Brien-Strain, *Does California's Welfare Policy Explain the Slower Decline of its Caseload?* San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California, 2002.
- ¹⁷ See Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial*. New York: Harper Collins, 1995.
- ¹⁸ See Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. *Voice and Equality: Civic Participation in American Politics*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- ¹⁹ "Report #2: Touching Lives and Communities," U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Secretary, Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (May 5, 2003), pp. 4-5.
- ²⁰ The respondents had an average of 1.6 children under 18 years of age and living at home. Since most of our respondents were single, the typical household in our study consisted of 3 persons. In 2002 the Poverty Threshold for a family of 3 persons, with two children under 18 years of age, was \$14,494, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. See www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/threshld/thresh02. Someone working an average of 30 hours a week for 50 weeks at \$10 would earn \$15,000. Especially given the higher cost of living in Los Angeles compared to the national average, we concluded that anyone earning less than \$10 an hour would have a very difficult time achieving economic self-sufficiency.
- ²¹ These are, of course, aggregate figures. Thus one cannot assume that the same individuals were experiencing higher, the same, or lower wages. Some, for example, might experience higher wages and if the same number experienced lower wages, it would appear as though all wages stayed at the same level. These figures do, however, accurately portray the wage movement of the clients of the different program types taken as a whole.
- ²² Studies by William Lockhart and one of the authors of this study have shown that religiously holistic or integrated welfare-to-work programs in fact make explicit use of such positive religious themes as that God loves and cares for those in the program, that he has a plan for their lives, and that God is a source of help in difficult times. See William H. Lockhart, *Getting Saved from Poverty: Religion in Poverty-to-Work Programs* (PhD dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of Virginia, 2001) and Monsma, *Public-Private Welfare-to-Work Partnerships*.
- ²³ See Galston, "The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in the Social Welfare System, p. 2.



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