



An employment coaching program serving adults receiving housing assistance showed promise in improving outcomes: Impacts of MyGoals at 12 months

Employment coaching involves trained staff working collaboratively with participants to help them set individualized goals directly or indirectly related to employment and providing motivation, support, and feedback as participants work toward those goals. Unlike most traditional case managers, coaches work in partnership with participants and do not tell the participants what goals they should pursue or what action steps to take in pursuing them. Research suggests that coaches may help participants cultivate self-regulation skills—skills such as persistence, focused attention, organization, emotional regulation, and time management—which are critical to success in employment.¹ For more information about how coaching can help participants, please see [this brief](#).

To explore the potential of employment coaching for adults with low incomes, the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is sponsoring an implementation and impact study of four coaching programs. OPRE contracted with Mathematica and Abt Associates, MDRC, and The Adjacent Possible to conduct an implementation and impact study of four coaching programs. This brief presents the first impact findings for MyGoals for Employment Success (MyGoals), a program for unemployed adults receiving housing assistance. These findings are based on comparisons of outcomes of study participants who were randomly assigned to either receive MyGoals or be in a control group. Outcomes are from the first 12 months after study enrollment and collected through surveys and records from human services agencies. At the time of the survey, most people offered MyGoals had received a substantial amount of coaching,

and many were still receiving coaching from the program. For a more detailed presentation of these findings, please see [the impact report](#).

About MyGoals

MyGoals was a coaching program for adults receiving federal housing assistance who were unemployed or worked fewer than 20 hours per week. It offered employment coaching and financial incentives for program participation and meeting certain employment milestones. The Housing Authority of Baltimore City and the Houston Housing Authority operated the program. MyGoals began operating in 2017 and ceased operations in September 2022. The program was developed by MDRC and Dr. Richard Guare.

MyGoals coaches met with participants for an initial coaching session with the goal of meeting at least monthly for up to 3 years, either in person at the program office or by phone. Study participants randomly assigned to the MyGoals group were eligible to earn up to \$5,000 in financial incentives for engaging with the program as well as finding and maintaining employment. About 56 percent of MyGoals participants were still participating in the program 12 months after study enrollment.

Participation was voluntary, and study participants randomly assigned to the MyGoals group could remain in the program even if they stopped receiving housing assistance. More information about MyGoals is available in the study's [program snapshot](#) and [report on program implementation](#).



Impacts 12 months after study enrollment

MyGoals improved goal-setting and attainment skills. A survey asked study participants how much they agreed with eight statements about setting goals and working to meet those goals. Scores on this measure indicate an average response across the eight statements and range from 0 (“strongly disagree”) to 3 (“strongly agree”). Participation in MyGoals increased how much people scored on this measure by 4 percent (2.27 for the MyGoals group versus 2.19 for the control group), a difference that is statistically significant, which means the impact estimate was larger than would be expected if the program had no effect on participant outcomes. This suggests that coaches were successful at helping participants set and work toward goals.

MyGoals likely had a small, positive effect on self-reported earnings, but the impact was not statistically significant. Based on survey data, average monthly earnings during the 12-month follow-up period were about \$33 (or 9 percent) higher for MyGoals participants than for control group members (\$411 versus \$378). However, this impact was not statistically significant, which means it would be common to find an impact estimate of this size if the program had no effect on participant outcomes. Further analysis suggests MyGoals had a 76 percent chance of having a positive impact on average monthly earnings, but only an 8 percent chance of the impact exceeding \$50. Analyses also suggest that the probability that MyGoals improved self-reported earnings increased over time.

MyGoals had a small, negative impact on earnings in the type of jobs reported to the state unemployment agency. In addition to survey data on self-reported earnings, the study team also collected data on quarterly earnings reported to the unemployment insurance agency. These data exclude

Summary of 12-month impact findings for MyGoals

Impacts on Goal-Setting and Attainment Skills

+4%

Improved goal-setting and attainment skills by 4 percent.



The impact estimate was larger than would be expected if the program had no effect on participant outcomes.

Impacts on Monthly Earnings

Self-reported earnings

+\$33

It would be common to find an impact estimate of this size if the program had no effect on participant outcomes. The impact was likely positive but small.



Impact tended to increase over time.

Earnings reported to Unemployment Insurance agencies

-\$42

It would be common to find an impact estimate of this size if the program had no effect on participant outcomes. The impact was likely negative but small.



Size of impact was similar throughout the follow-up period.

Impacts on Economic Hardship

+2%

Increased economic hardship by 2 percent.



It would be common to find an impact estimate of this size if the program had no effect on participant outcomes.

earnings from self-employment, gig work, and other jobs that are not reported to the unemployment insurance agency. The data also exclude any earnings that employers are required to report to the agency but may not have reported. MyGoals decreased average monthly earnings reported to the state unemployment agency by \$42, a difference that was statistically significant at the 10 percent level. Further analysis indicates a 77 percent chance that this impact is negative, but just a 14 percent chance that it represents a decrease greater than \$25.

MyGoals did not impact economic hardship. The survey asked respondents whether they faced six specific economic hardships, such as going without medical care because of cost or not being able to afford enough food. MyGoals and control group members reported similar levels of economic hardship: the average scale scores were 2.63

for the MyGoals group and 2.59 for the control group, a difference that was not statistically significant. Thus, on average, in the 12 months after study enrollment, members of both groups had experienced about 3 of the 6 economic hardships included in the survey.

Further results to come

Follow-up analyses 21 months and again 48 months after study enrollment will address whether the impacts of MyGoals persist, grow, or decline. Will more interactions with coaches lead to increasing impacts? Will the improvements in goal-setting and attainment skills lead to higher earnings impacts in the future? Or will the positive effects fade over time as participants leave the program? A report on the program's impacts at 21 months after study enrollment, anticipated in 2023, will start to answer these questions.

To receive updates from the study as these and other findings become available, you can request to join the project listserv by emailing coaching@mathematica-mpr.com.

The Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations

This study is testing four employment coaching programs designed for people with low incomes. It assesses the implementation of the coaching programs and—via an experimental study—their impacts on study participants' self-regulation skills, employment, earnings, self-sufficiency, and other measures of personal and family well-being. Publications produced as part of this study to date (available on the [project website](#)) describe the programs, document the study design and analysis plans, and provide findings on how the programs were implemented.

Endnote

¹ Locke, E., and Latham, G. (1990). *A theory of goal setting and task performance*. Prentice Hall.

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