Evaluation of
Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations

Can a Participant-Centered Approach to Setting and Pursuing Goals Help Adults with Low Incomes Become Economically Stable?

Short-Term Impacts of Four Employment Coaching Programs

OPRE Report #2023-139 • June 2023

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Glossary

Bayesian analysis. Bayesian analysis in this report gives an interpretation of programs' impacts on earnings that takes into account the prior evidence on the effectiveness of similar programs. This analysis provides the probability that the program's impact is greater than a specified amount.

Coaching. This evaluation defines coaching as an approach with six distinct features: (1) includes setting goals and developing action steps for meeting the goals; (2) is not directive—the coach does not specify goals for participants, develop plans to achieve those goals, or tell them what to do next, but instead works collaboratively with the participants; (3) is individualized and depends on the participants' needs and preferences; (4) helps participants learn the skills to set goals on their own and work toward meeting those goals; (5) attempts to reinforce participants' motivation to meet goals; and (6) holds participants accountable by regularly discussing with the participants their progress toward reaching goals. Employment coaching, for purposes of this evaluation, is coaching in which goals are related directly or indirectly to employment. The designs of the four coaching programs included in the evaluation all meet this definition.

Confirmatory outcomes. Confirmatory outcomes are the main outcomes that the program is expected to change. The main test of the program's effectiveness is based on whether the program had a beneficial impact on the confirmatory outcomes.

Control group. Members of the control group do not have access to the program being evaluated. Study participants were assigned to the control group randomly. The services available to the control group varied across the four coaching programs being evaluated, as detailed in the report.

Earnings. We measured earnings using both study participant responses to the follow-up survey and National Directory of New Hires administrative records of earnings reported by employers to an Unemployment Insurance (UI) agency. Self-reported earnings cover all jobs the study participant may have had, but may be subject to error if study participants remember jobs incorrectly. Earnings reported to a UI agency are not subject to this error, but exclude jobs that are not reported to UI agencies—such as self-employment or gig work—which are becoming more common.

Economic well-being. All programs in the study intend to improve economic well-being. This may be accomplished through improved labor market outcomes, access to other material supports (such as assistance programs), or better financial management. We use a six-item economic hardship scale to assess the extent to which scarce economic resources affected key aspects of material well-being, such as food, housing, and medical care.

Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations. This study examines four employment coaching programs designed for adults with low incomes. It includes an implementation study of the four coaching programs and an experimental impact study on participants' self-regulation skills, employment, earnings, self-sufficiency, and other measures of personal and family well-being. This report uses the terms study and evaluation interchangeably to refer to this work.

Exploratory outcomes. Exploratory outcomes are outcomes that are related to confirmatory or secondary outcomes but are not the main outcomes the program intends to influence. The purpose of examining impacts on exploratory outcomes is to aid interpretation of the confirmatory impact findings and to inform future research.

Goal-setting and attainment skills. Setting goals and working to attain them requires self-regulation skills. By focusing on setting and attaining goals, coaching is expected to strengthen self-regulation skills and facilitate employment and other positive outcomes. We use an eight-item scale on goal-setting and attainment skills designed to measure people's ability to set and work toward attaining employment goals as a confirmatory outcome.

Impact. We measured the impact of each employment coaching program on a given outcome based on differences in average outcomes between members of the program and control groups. With random assignment, the program and control group members had similar characteristics and experiences, on average, before participating in the program so any differences in observed outcomes can be attributed to employment coaching. We estimate the impact on each outcome using a statistical model to improve the precision of the impact estimates and control for any differences between the program and control groups in baseline characteristics.

Nondirective. Being nondirective is a key difference between coaching and more traditional case management. When coaches are nondirective, they do not specify goals for participants, develop plans to achieve those goals, or tell program participants what to do next. Rather, coaches guide participants in a collaborative process in which the participants determine their goals and develop plans to achieve them.

Program group. Members of the program group have access to the coaching program being evaluated. We also refer to this as the FaDSS group, Goal4 It! group, LIFT group, or MyGoals group depending on the program. Study participants are assigned to the program group randomly.

Random assignment. Adults who were eligible for one of the four employment coaching programs and who consented to participate in the study were randomly assigned either to a program group that had access to the coaching program or a control group that did not have access to the coaching program.

Secondary outcomes. Secondary outcomes are the key outcomes in areas that are less central to the program's goals. The program might affect these outcomes, but the program may still be deemed effective if it does not.

Self-regulation skills. Self-regulation skills are the skills used to finish tasks, stay organized, and control emotions. Other terms used to refer to these or related skills include soft skills, social and emotional skills, executive skills, and executive functioning skills. They are critical in finding, maintaining, and advancing in a job. Examples of self-regulation skills relevant to employment include goal-directed persistence and self-efficacy needed to continue with a task despite setbacks, time management necessary to show up to work on time, and emotional understanding and regulation needed to deal with difficult coworkers or supervisors.

Statistically significant. For each outcome, we conduct a statistical test of whether the employment coaching program has an effect on the outcome. This test provides the probability of finding the estimated impact if the program actually had no effect on the outcome; that is, the probability of finding the estimated impact by chance if the true impact is zero. We refer to an estimated impact as statistically significant if there is less than a 5 percent probability of finding it by chance when the true impact is zero. We refer to an impact as statistically significant at the 10 percent level if there is less than a 10 percent probability of finding it by chance when the true impact is zero.

Overview

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. Recently, there has been growing interest among policy makers, practitioners, researchers, and others in using employment coaching to assist Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other adults with low incomes.

This report presents short-term impact findings from an experimental study conducted as part of the Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations, which is sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families. Focusing on the first 9 or 12 months (depending on the program) after study enrollment, it presents findings on the effectiveness of the four employment coaching programs included in the evaluation. These programs are:

- **Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS)** serves TANF recipients and their family members in Iowa. Participation in FaDSS is voluntary and most coaching sessions occur in the participant's home.
- **Goal4 It!™** provides employment coaching to TANF recipients in Jefferson County, Colorado in lieu of traditional case management. Receipt of TANF benefits is conditional on participation in either Goal4 It! or traditional case management.
- **LIFT** is a voluntary coaching program operated in four U.S. cities. Most coaching is conducted by unpaid student interns from Master of Social Work programs.
- **MyGoals for Employment Success (MyGoals)** serves recipients of housing assistance in Baltimore, Maryland, and Houston, Texas. Participation is voluntary.

The report presents estimates of impacts of coaching on participants' self-regulation skills, employment, earnings, self-sufficiency, and other measures of personal and family well-being at a time when many participants were still receiving coaching. We find that although none of the programs had large impacts on earnings, there were some promising findings. Future reports will present longer-term findings on the programs' impacts at approximately two years after study enrollment and again for some programs at four to six years after study enrollment, when most participants will have completed their coaching.

PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This report addresses the following primary research questions:

- **Do the coaching programs improve the outcomes of adults with low incomes after 9 to 12 months?** Specifically:
  - Do the coaching programs affect participants' intermediate outcomes related to goal pursuit and other skills associated with labor market success?
  - Do the coaching programs affect participants' employment and economic security outcomes?
  - Are the coaching programs more effective for some groups of participants than others?

PURPOSE

Poverty and other chronic stressors can hinder the development and use of the self-regulation skills that are critical in finding and maintaining employment. Examples of self-regulation skills relevant to employment include, among others: the persistence needed to keep at a task despite setbacks; the time management skills that make it possible to consistently show up to work on time; and the emotional understanding and regulation to deal productively with co-workers. Research suggests that coaching can promote self-regulation skills and hence may be a way to help adults with low incomes become economically secure.

The purpose of this study is to examine whether coaching is effective in improving goal pursuit and other self-regulation skills and eventually improves the employment outcomes and economic security of TANF recipients and other adults with low incomes.

KEY FINDINGS AND HIGHLIGHTS

We found that:

- Two of the four coaching programs had statistically significant impacts on goal-setting and attainment skills—a measure of self-regulation skills.
- Although no program had a statistically significant impact on average monthly earnings, Bayesian analysis of self-reported earnings suggests impacts that were small and likely positive for three of the four programs (see table below). None of the programs had positive impacts on earnings reported to an Unemployment Insurance (UI) agency, and Bayesian analysis suggests evidence of a small, likely negative effect on those earnings for one program.
- One of the four coaching programs led to a statistically significant reduction in economic hardship (such as inability to pay bills or cutting the size of meals because of the inability to afford enough food).

Summary of impacts on confirmatory outcomes

Outcome	FaDSS	Goal4 It!	LIFT	MyGoals
Goal-setting and attainment skills	+	❍	❍	+
Average monthly self-reported earnings	❍ Likely between $0 and $50	❍ Likely between $0 and $50	❍ Likely between -$25 and $25	❍ Likely between $0 and $50
Average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency	❍ Likely between -$25 and $25	❍ Likely between -$25 and +$25	NA	❍ Likely between $0 and -$25
Economic hardship	–	❍	❍	❍

Source: First follow-up survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: The statements about the likely size of the impact are based on a Bayesian analysis. "Likely" refers to a probability of more than 50 percent.

+ indicates a positive impact that is significantly different from 0 at the .05 level.

– indicates a negative impact that is significantly different from 0 at the .05 level.

❍ indicates no impact that is significantly different from 0 at the .05 level.

NA indicates that impact estimates are not available; we did not include earnings reported to a UI agency for LIFT because this outcome is not available for the 40 percent of LIFT study participants who did not provide valid Social Security numbers when they enrolled in the study.

METHODS

Between February 2017 and November 2019, about 4,300 adults who were eligible for one of the four employment coaching programs included in the evaluation and who consented to participate in the evaluation were randomly assigned either to (1) a program group that had access to employment coaching, or (2) a control group that did not have access to employment coaching but could receive other services available in the community. In the study of the Goal4 It! program, the control group received traditional TANF case management. In the study of FaDSS, all program and control group members received TANF case management.

The effectiveness of each employment coaching program was assessed based on differences in average outcomes between program and control group members. To estimate the impacts of employment coaching, the study used data from (1) a baseline survey or form administered to study participants at the time of study enrollment, (2) a follow-up survey administered to study participants approximately 9 to 12 months after study enrollment, (3) administrative employment and Unemployment Insurance records from the National Directory of New Hires, and (4) administrative records from state and local agencies on participation in public assistance programs.

Executive Summary

Policy makers, practitioners, researchers, and others are interested in the potential of employment coaching to help Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other adults with low incomes to become economically secure. Employment coaching is based on the idea that coaches can help people use and strengthen the skills that enable them to stay organized, finish tasks, and control emotions. Improving these skills, which we refer to as self-regulation skills, can in turn help them improve their economic security. Coaches work collaboratively with participants to help them set individualized goals directly or indirectly related to employment and provide 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 participants what goals to set or what actions to take to work toward them. Despite growing interest in employment coaching programs for adults with low incomes, there is no rigorous evidence of their effectiveness.

This report presents short-term impact findings from an experimental study conducted as part of the Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations, which is sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families. This evaluation includes an impact study of four employment coaching programs. It uses an experimental design to assess the impacts of each program on study participants' self-regulation skills, employment, earnings, and other measures of personal and family well-being during the first 9 or 12 months, depending on the program, after study enrollment. In doing so, it offers the first look at program impacts at a time when most participants have received a substantial amount of coaching, but when many continue to engage in coaching. Future reports will document whether and how these impacts change over time as participants receive more coaching services and complete their programs.

WHAT IS EMPLOYMENT COACHING?

Although the definitions of coaching vary, this evaluation defines it as an approach with six distinct features: (1) includes setting goals and developing action steps for meeting the goals; (2) is not directive—the coach does not tell participants what to do, but instead works collaboratively with the participants; (3) is individualized and depends on the participants' needs and preferences; (4) helps participants learn the skills to set goals on their own and work toward meeting those goals; (5) attempts to reinforce participants' motivation to meet goals; and (6) holds participants accountable by regularly discussing with the participants their progress toward reaching goals. Employment coaching, for purposes of this evaluation, is coaching in which goals are related directly or indirectly to employment. The designs of the four coaching programs included in the evaluation all meet this definition.

THE EMPLOYMENT COACHING PROGRAMS IN THE STUDY

We selected the four employment coaching programs for the evaluation because they (1) met our definition of coaching (described above); (2) offered strong, well-implemented employment coaching that aimed to improve employment outcomes for TANF recipients or other adults with low incomes; and (3) had the capacity and willingness to participate in an experimental study. Although the four programs share these similarities, there are also differences across the programs (Table ES.1).

Table ES.1. Selected features of programs and participants in evaluation

	Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS)	Goal4 It!	LIFT	MyGoals for Employment Success (MyGoals)
Context				
Implementing organization(s) and location(s) included in the study	Local service agencies under contract to the Iowa Department of Human Rights	TANF agency in Jefferson County, Colorado	Nonprofit organizations in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City; the Washington DC location was not included in the study	Housing authorities in Baltimore and Houston
Main eligibility criteria	TANF recipients	TANF recipients subject to work requirements	Parents or caregivers of children younger than 8 or expectant parents; have stable housing and are working or in school or another household member is working	Adult member of household receiving housing assistance; unemployed or working fewer than 20 hours per week
Voluntary or mandatory	Voluntary	Goal4 It! or traditional case management were mandatory for TANF receipt	Voluntary	Voluntary
Features of coaching				
Meeting format and coaching location for in-person sessions	One-on-one or with family members in participant's home	One-on-one in TANF office	One-on-one in community setting or LIFT office	One-on-one in MyGoals office
Duration of time eligible to receive coaching	While receiving TANF and up to 7 months after leaving TANF	While receiving TANF	2 years	3 years
Coach assesses for self-regulation skills and discusses explicitly with participants	No	No	No	Yes
Coach status	Paid professional	Paid professional	Unpaid Master of Social Work intern	Paid professional

We use an experimental design to assess the effectiveness of each employment coaching program in improving participants' outcomes (Table ES.2). Between February 2017 and November 2019, about 4,300 adults who were eligible for one of the four employment coaching programs included in the evaluation and who consented to participate in the study were randomly assigned with equal probability either to a program group that was given access to employment coaching or to a control group that did not have access to employment coaching from the program. In the impact study of Goal4 It!, control group members were provided TANF case management. In the study of FaDSS, all program and control group members received TANF case management. In the study of all four programs, all study participants, whether in the program or control group, could receive other services available in the community.

Table ES.2. Selected features of program study designs

	FaDSS	Goal4 It!	LIFT	MyGoals
Features of study				
Dates of study enrollment	June 2018 to November 2019	October 2018 to November 2019	June 2018 to November 2019	February 2017 to September 2019
Number of study participants (program/control)	863 (430/433)	802 (401/401)	808 (405/403)	1,803 (902/901)
Program services tested	FaDSS plus TANF case management versus TANF case management without FaDSS	Goal4 It! coaching versus traditional TANF case management	LIFT versus services in the community	MyGoals versus services in the community
Length of first follow-up period	9 months after study enrollment	9 months after study enrollment	9 months after study enrollment	12 months after study enrollment

Note: Study enrollment had already begun for the impact study of MyGoals before it joined the Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations in 2018. For this reason, the first follow-up period for the study of MyGoals was 12 months after study enrollment, whereas the follow-up period for the studies of the other programs was 9 months after enrollment.

Data sources. This report is based on analysis of data from five main sources: (1) a baseline survey or form administered just before study enrollment that collected data on study participants' characteristics; (2) management information system data on receipt of coaching services; (3) a follow-up survey conducted at 9 months (FaDSS, Goal4 It!, and LIFT) or 12 months (MyGoals) after study enrollment that collected data on study participants' outcomes; (4) administrative data on quarterly earnings and receipt of Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits reported to the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH); and (5) administrative data on receipt of public assistance from state and local public assistance agencies.

Confirmatory outcomes. Although the study examines each program's impact on a broad set of outcomes, it focuses on a few key outcomes that the program is expected to change, referred to as confirmatory outcomes. The main tests of the programs' effectiveness are based on whether the program had a favorable impact on the confirmatory outcomes. The confirmatory outcomes include measures in three areas:

1. **Self-regulation and goal-related skills**. Setting goals and working to attain them requires self-regulation skills and is the centerpiece of employment coaching. We use an eight-item scale on goal-setting and attainment skills designed to measure people's ability to set and work toward attaining employment goals as a confirmatory outcome.

2. **Labor market outcomes**. We use earnings as the confirmatory measure of labor market success because they encompass three ways that employment coaching could influence labor market success: obtaining a job, working more regularly or more hours, or earning higher wages. We measured earnings using both responses to the follow-up survey and NDNH administrative records. Earnings reported on the survey cover all jobs the study participant may have had, but may be subject to error if study participants remember jobs incorrectly. NDNH records are not subject to this error, but exclude jobs that are not reported to UI agencies—such as self-employment or gig work—which are becoming more common.

3. **Economic well-being.** All programs in the study intend to improve economic well-being. This may be accomplished through improved labor market outcomes, access to other material supports (such as assistance programs), or better financial management. We use a six-item economic hardship scale to assess the extent to which scarce economic resources affected key aspects of material well-being, such as food, housing, and medical care.

Other outcomes. We also examine the impact of each program on other outcomes not deemed as confirmatory for this report. Examples of these outcomes include the receipt of other employment services; participation in, completion of, and receipt of credentials from training and education programs; employment; and the receipt of public assistance.

Estimating and interpreting impacts. The effectiveness of each employment coaching program was assessed based on differences in average outcomes between members of the program and control groups. With random assignment, the program and control group members had similar characteristics and experiences, on average, before participating in the program so any differences in observed outcomes can be attributed to employment coaching. We estimate the impact on each outcome using a statistical model to control for baseline characteristics and improve the precision of the impact estimates. For each impact estimate, we report whether the difference from zero was statistically significant. For impacts on earnings, we complement this by using a Bayesian analysis approach to estimate the probability that the program's impact is greater than a specified amount.

SUMMARY OF IMPACT FINDINGS

The impacts on confirmatory outcomes differed by program (Table ES.3). We found statistically significant impacts on goal-setting and attainment skills for two of the four programs. Although no program had a statistically significant impact on average monthly earnings, Bayesian analysis of self-reported earnings suggests impacts that were likely positive, albeit small, for three of the four programs. One of the four

programs led to a statistically significant reduction in economic hardship. We found no consistent pattern in whether coaching was more or less effective for subgroups of study participants.

Table ES.3. Summary of impacts on confirmatory outcomes

Outcome	FaDSS	Goal4 It!	LIFT	MyGoals
Goal-setting and attainment skills	+	❍	❍	+
Average monthly self-reported earnings	❍ Likely between $0 and $50	❍ Likely between $0 and $50	❍ Likely between -$25 and $25	❍ Likely between $0 and $50
Average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency	❍ Likely between -$25 and $25	❍ Likely between -$25 and +$25	NA	❍ Likely between $0 and -$25
Economic hardship	–	❍	❍	❍

Source: First follow-up survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: The statements about the likely size of the impact are based on a Bayesian analysis. "Likely" refers to a probability of more than 50 percent.

+ indicates a positive impact that is significantly different from 0 at the .05 level.

– indicates a negative impact that is significantly different from 0 at the .05 level.

❍ indicates no impact that is significantly different from 0 at the .05 level.

NA indicates that impact estimates are not available; we did not include earnings reported to a UI agency for LIFT because this outcome is not available for the 40 percent of LIFT study participants who did not provide valid Social Security numbers when they enrolled in the study.

IMPACTS BY PROGRAM

Below, we present a summary of the impact findings for each program participating in the evaluation. Each program's impact estimates on confirmatory outcomes appear in Figure ES.1, and trends over time in self-reported earnings for program and control group members appear in Figure ES.2.

FaDSS

- FaDSS improved program participants' goal-setting and attainment skills by 0.22 standard deviations or 5 percent. This difference was statistically significant.
- During the 9 months since study enrollment, FaDSS group members reported average monthly earnings of $94 more than the average monthly earnings of control group members (or about 15 percent), although this difference was not statistically significant. Bayesian analysis of this impact estimate suggests an 80 percent chance that it was positive, but only a 21 percent chance of it exceeding $50. This impact tended to increase over the course of the follow-up period.
- Administrative records from the NDNH suggest FaDSS and control group members had similar earnings reported to a UI agency, on average, during the follow-up period.
- FaDSS reduced the number of economic hardships faced by FaDSS group members by 0.19 standard deviations or about 10 percent, a difference that was statistically significant.

* FaDSS group members were more likely to receive a certificate, license, or diploma from a training program than their control group counterparts (7 percent and 2 percent, respectively), a difference that was statistically significant.

Goal4 It!

- Goal4 It! and control group members had similar levels of goal-setting and attainment skills 9 months after study enrollment.
- On average, Goal4 It! group members reported earning $66 more per month compared to control group members (or about 9 percent), although this difference was not statistically significant. Bayesian analysis suggests a 71 percent chance that this impact was positive, but only a 24 percent chance it was larger than $50. Analysis of the timing of these impacts suggests small, likely positive impacts that are concentrated in the first months after study enrollment but fade out after 7 months.
- Administrative records from the NDNH suggest Goal4 It! and control group members had similar earnings reported to a UI agency, on average, during the follow-up period.
- Goal4 It! and control group members reported similar levels of economic hardship 9 months after study enrollment.
- Goal4 It! group members were no more likely than control group members to participate in or complete education or training programs.

LIFT

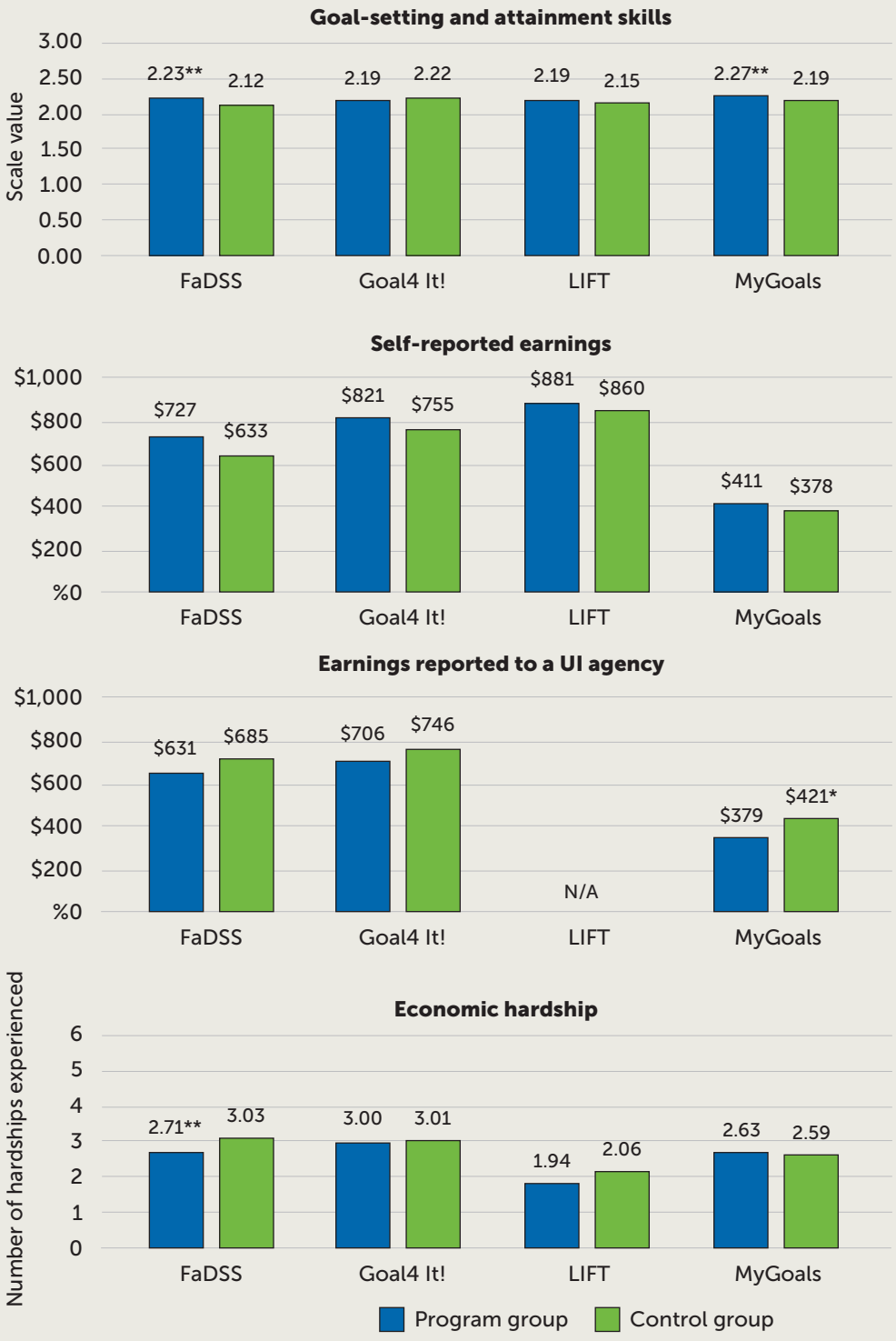
- LIFT and control group members had similar levels of goal-setting and attainment skills 9 months after study enrollment.
- LIFT and control group members had similar self-reported earnings, on average, during the follow-up period. We did not have enough information to conduct analysis of earnings reported to a UI agency because too few participants provided valid Social Security numbers at study enrollment.
- LIFT and control group members reported similar levels of economic hardship 9 months after study enrollment.
- LIFT group members were more likely than control group members to have participated in an education program since study enrollment (40 versus 30 percent), and to be participating in a training program at the time of the follow-up survey (7 versus 3 percent). Both differences were statistically significant.

MyGoals

- MyGoals improved program participants' goal-setting and attainment skills 12 months after study enrollment. This difference was statistically significant and equivalent to an effect size of 0.13 standard deviations, or an increase of 4 percent.

- During the 12-month follow-up period, MyGoals group members reported average monthly earnings that were $33 more than the average monthly earnings of control group members (or about 9 percent), although the difference was not statistically significant. Bayesian analysis suggests a 68 percent chance that this impact was between $0 and $50. Though small throughout, the positive impact of MyGoals on self-reported earnings tended to increase over the course of the follow-up period.
- Administrative records from the NDNH indicate MyGoals group members had lower average earnings reported to a UI agency than control group members did, a difference of $42 that was statistically significant at the 10 percent level. Bayesian 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 and control group members reported similar levels of economic hardship 12 months after study enrollment.
- MyGoals group members were more likely than control group members to be participating in an education program (13 versus 7 percent) and to be participating in a training program (7 versus 4 percent) at the time of the follow-up survey.

Figure ES.1. Impact of programs on confirmatory outcomes during the first follow-up period

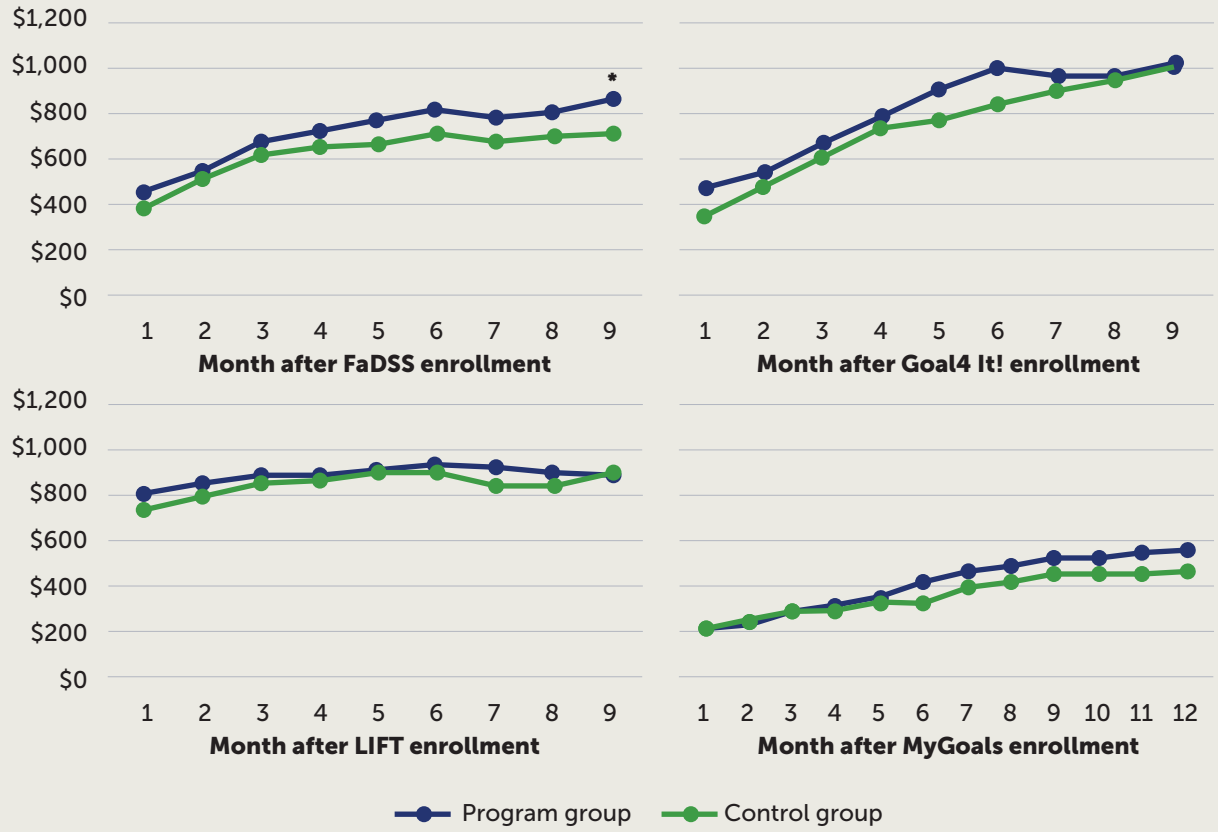


Source: First follow-up survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment for FaDSS, LIFT, and Goal4 It!, and over the first 12 months after study enrollment for MyGoals. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group. The goal-setting and attainment scale measures participants' average level of agreement with eight statements about their goal-related skills. Scores range from "strongly disagree" (0) to "strongly agree" (3). Administrative records on earnings were not available for LIFT because we did not have Social Security numbers for a large share of the LIFT sample.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

Figure ES.2. Impact of programs on average monthly self-reported earnings by month during the first follow-up period (exploratory analysis)



Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment for FaDSS, LIFT, and Goal4 It!, and over the first 12 months after study enrollment for MyGoals. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Our analysis of short-term impacts of four coaching programs found that none of the programs had large impacts on participants' earnings about 9 or 12 months after enrollment, yet there were some promising findings. FaDSS and MyGoals had positive and significant impacts on one of the study's confirmatory outcomes—goal-setting and attainment skills—suggesting that some approaches to employment coaching can improve these self-regulation skills. We also found that FaDSS had a negative and statistically significant impact on the economic hardship faced by study participants, measured by the occurrence of events such as going without medical care because of cost or the inability to afford enough food. Exploratory analysis revealed that FaDSS, MyGoals, and LIFT had some favorable impacts, depending on the program, on either participation or completion of education or training programs.

Follow-up analysis at 21 months and again at 48 to 67 months after study enrollment will address whether these impacts are sustained, whether new impacts emerge, and how the programs' impacts might evolve as program group members continue to receive services and complete their programs. Will the impacts on goal-setting and attainment skills persist or decrease once participants are no longer in the program? Will the small impacts on self-reported earnings found in the impact studies of some programs fade over time as participants leave the programs, or will more interactions with coaches and a longer time to find or progress in a job lead to larger impacts? Will the improvements in goal-setting and attainment skills for two of the four programs and the increased training or education for three of the programs lead to larger earnings impacts? A report on the programs' impacts at 21 months after study enrollment, anticipated in 2023, will begin to answer these questions.

Coaches and participants in coaching sessions.

I. Introduction

Policy makers, practitioners, researchers, and others are interested in the potential of employment coaching to help Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other adults with low incomes to become economically secure. Employment coaching is based on the idea that coaches can help people use and strengthen the skills that enable them to stay organized, finish tasks, and control emotions. Improving these skills, which we refer to as self-regulation skills, can in turn help them improve their economic security. Coaches work collaboratively with participants to help them set individualized goals directly or indirectly related to employment and provide 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 participants what goals to set or what actions to take to work toward them.

To explore the potential of employment coaching for adults with low incomes, the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, contracted with Mathematica and Abt Associates to conduct the Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations. This evaluation builds the evidence base by rigorously testing four employment coaching programs designed for adults with low incomes. It assesses the implementation of the four 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.

This report presents findings on the short-term impacts of the four employment coaching programs in the evaluation. These findings are based on survey and administrative data on the outcomes of study participants during the first 9 or 12 months (depending on the program) after study enrollment. The report offers the first look at program impacts at a time when most program group members have received a substantial amount of coaching, but when many are continuing to receive program services. Future reports will present impact findings at 21 months after study enrollment and between 48 and 67 months after study enrollment. These reports will document whether the short-term program impacts that emerged at the time of the first follow-up have been sustained, whether new impacts emerge, and how the programs' impacts might evolve as program group members continue to receive services and complete their programs.

The rest of this chapter is organized as follows. We begin by discussing self-regulation skills and defining employment coaching. We then describe the objectives of the study, the four programs and how they are expected to affect participants, and the design of the impact study. We end the chapter with a road map to the rest of the report.

SELF-REGULATION SKILLS

We define self-regulation skills as the skills used to stay organized, finish tasks, and control emotions. Other terms used to refer to these or related skills include soft skills, social and emotional skills, executive skills, and executive-functioning skills. Examples of self-regulation skills appear in Box I.1.

Self-regulation skills are critical in finding, maintaining, and advancing in a job. Examples of self-regulation skills relevant to employment include motivation and self-efficacy needed to continue with a task despite setbacks, selective attention necessary to focus on finishing a task, and emotional understanding and regulation needed to deal productively with coworkers or supervisors.

Poverty and other chronic stressors can hinder the development and use of self-regulation skills (Mullainathan and Shafir 2013). Thus, helping adults with low incomes practice and use self-regulation skills is especially important and may be able to help them achieve economic security.

Box I.1. Examples of self-regulation skills

Skill category	Skill	Definition
Personality factors	Motivation	The desire to start and finish tasks.
	Grit	The ability to persevere to attain long-term goals.
	Self-efficacy	The belief we have in our ability to perform at a high level.
Emotional skills	Emotion understanding	The ability to understand emotions in ourselves and others.
	Emotion regulation	The ability to alter the intensity of the emotion being experienced and the behaviors that go along with that emotion.
Cognitive skills	Executive function	A set of cognitive skills that helps us regulate and control our actions, particularly intentional action and setting and pursuing goals.
	Selective attention	The ability to attend to one particular aspect of a task in the face of other thoughts, information, and actions.
	Metacognition	A skill we use to observe and evaluate how we think, which is sometimes referred to as "thinking about thinking."

Source: Cavadel et al. 2017

EMPLOYMENT COACHING

Although the definitions of coaching vary, this evaluation defines it as an approach with six distinct features: (1) includes setting goals and developing action steps for meeting the goals; (2) is not directive—the coach does not tell program participants what to do but instead works collaboratively with the participants; (3) is individualized and depends on the program participants' needs and preferences; (4) helps program participants learn the skills to set goals on their own and work toward meeting those goals; (5) attempts to reinforce program participants' motivation to meet goals; and (6) holds program participants accountable by regularly discussing with the participants their progress toward reaching goals. Employment coaching, for purposes of this evaluation, is coaching in which goals are related directly or indirectly to employment. The designs of the four coaching programs included in this evaluation all meet this definition.

The main difference is that coaches are not directive—they do not tell program participants what to do—and work in partnership with participants instead.

Employment coaching as defined above is fundamentally different from case management, the traditional method for helping participants in TANF and other programs find and maintain employment. The main difference is that coaches are not directive—they do not tell program participants what to do—and work in partnership with participants instead. Coaches help program participants set goals, determine action steps, and assess their progress toward those goals, instead of guiding them to certain goals and directing how they will attain them (Joyce and McConnell 2019).

Research has revealed that setting goals and developing action steps to meet them can cultivate self-regulation skills (Locke and Latham 1990; Zimmerman et al. 1992). Hence, coaches—by working in partnership with participants to set goals and think through how to achieve them—might help participants practice and strengthen their self-regulation skills and in doing so might improve their economic security. Studies of coaching have focused mostly on professional and education settings such as financial management (Collins and Murrell 2010; Theodos et al. 2015), higher education (Bettinger and Baker 2011), and health (Pirbaglou et al. 2018); little evidence exists on the effectiveness of employment coaching for adults with low incomes (Martinson et al. 2020).

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations examines the effectiveness and implementation of four programs that offer employment coaching. In doing so, it contributes to the evidence base on how best to help adults with low incomes succeed in the labor market and become self-sufficient. It also provides the information necessary for other organizations to replicate the coaching programs in the evaluation or to refine their own coaching programs.

The main research questions the study is designed to address are:

- **Do the coaching programs improve the outcomes of adults with low incomes?**
  - Do the coaching programs affect participants' intermediate outcomes related to goal pursuit and other skills associated with labor market success?

  - Do the coaching programs affect participants' employment and economic security outcomes?
  - Are the coaching programs more effective for some groups of participants than others?

- How were the coaching programs implemented?
  - What was the program design?
  - What factors appear to have helped or hindered implementation of the program as designed?
  - What were the program participants' experiences with coaching; what services did they receive; and what types of coaching and other services did control group members receive?

This report addresses the first set of questions. Future impact reports will address how impacts change over time. The second set of questions is addressed in a series of reports about the implementation of each program. These reports, as well as publications that describe the programs and document the impact study design and analysis plans, are available on the project website.

THE EMPL

We selected coaching programs for the evaluation based on whether the program (1) met the evaluation's definition of coaching (described above); (2) offered strong, well-implemented employment coaching that aimed to improve employment outcomes for TANF recipients or other adults with low incomes; and (3) had the capacity and willingness to participate in an experimental study.

Each program selected for the evaluation is summarized below.

- **Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS)** provides employment coaching to TANF recipients in Iowa. Participation in coaching is voluntary, meaning it is not required to continue receiving TANF benefits. Most coaching sessions take place in the program participant's home. Coaching focuses on the whole family.
- **Goal4 It!** provides employment coaching to Jefferson County, Colorado, TANF recipients who are subject to work requirements. Goal4 It! is a participant-centered framework for setting and achieving goals. It was developed by Michelle Derr (formerly at Mathematica and now at The Adjacent Possible) with other Mathematica staff in partnership with other researchers, and human services practitioners; none of the staff involved in its development worked on the evaluation. The Jefferson County Department of Human Services began implementing Goal4 It! in 2018 as an alternative to traditional case management. Participation in either Goal4 It! or traditional case management is mandatory to continue receiving TANF benefits.

- **LIFT** is a nonprofit organization that operates a coaching program in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York City, and Washington, DC; all offices except the one in Washington, DC, participated in the study.[1] Participants are parents or other caregivers of children younger than age 8, or expectant parents. LIFT applicants must also demonstrate a level of stability in housing and work or education that the organization believes is critical to being able to focus on setting goals. Most coaches are unpaid student interns from Master of Social Work (MSW) programs.
- **MyGoals for Employment Success (MyGoals)** is a demonstration program developed by MDRC and Dr. Richard Guare and operated by the Baltimore and Houston public housing agencies. Participants are (1) adult members of households in public housing or receiving federal housing assistance through a housing choice voucher, and (2) either unemployed or working fewer than 20 hours per month. Participating in coaching is voluntary; it is not required to continue receiving housing assistance.

Although these programs shared many similarities, there were also many differences as summarized in Table 1.1. The key differences included whether the coaching was voluntary, whether it took place in the home or the program office or a community setting; the amount of structure coaches used to help participants set and work toward goals; whether financial incentives were offered; whether the coaches were paid professionals or unpaid graduate students; and the length of time participants could meet with their coaches.

Table I.1. Key features of programs in evaluation

	FaDSS	Goal4 It!	LIFT	MyGoals
Context				
Type of implementing organization(s)	Local social service agencies under contract to the Iowa Department of Human Rights	TANF agency	Nonprofit organization	Housing agencies
Designer of coaching model	Implementing organization	Mathematica	Implementing organization	MDRC and Dr. Richard Guare
Year implementation began	1988	2018	2015	2017
Service locations	Local offices across Iowa (17 total; 7 in study)	Jefferson County, Colorado	Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City (in study) and Washington, DC (not in study)	Baltimore and Houston
Main eligibility criteria	TANF recipients	TANF recipients subject to work requirements	Parents or caregivers of children under age 8 or expectant parents; have stable housing for 6 months and are working or in school or another household member is working	Adult member of household receiving housing assistance; unemployed or working fewer than 20 hours per month

(continued)

[1] The evaluation excluded the Washington, DC, office due to its small size and participation in another study.

	FaDSS	Goal4 It!	LIFT	MyGoals
Voluntary or mandatory	Voluntary	Goal4 It! or traditional case management were mandatory for TANF receipt	Voluntary	Voluntary
Referrals made to other services?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Features of coaching				
Meeting format	One-on-one or with family members	One-on-one	One-on-one	One-on-one
Coaching location for in-person sessions	Participant's home	TANF office	Community setting or LIFT office	MyGoals office
Duration of time eligible to receive coaching	While receiving TANF and up to 7 months after leaving TANF	While receiving TANF	2 years	3 years
Intended coaching dosage	At least twice per month in first 3 months, then monthly	Monthly, unless participant is working (then once every 2 months)	Twice in first month, monthly thereafter	At least once per month
Are self-regulation skills assessed and discussed explicitly with participants?	No	No	No	Yes
Financial incentives?	No	No	For engagement, up to a maximum of $1,000	For engagement and employment, up to a maximum of $5,000
Coach background				
Coach status	Paid professional	Paid professional	Unpaid MSW intern	Paid professional

HOW EMPLOYMENT COACHING PROGRAMS ARE EXPECTED TO AFFECT THEIR PARTICIPANTS

The objective of all the programs in the evaluation is to improve participants' self-sufficiency and well-being. To this end, coaches work with participants to set individualized goals and develop action steps to reach them. This helps participants practice self-regulation skills (Joyce and McConnell 2019). Coaches may also work with participants in developing strategies to address weaknesses in self-regulation skills that impede the participants' ability to make progress toward their goals. Coaches may also suggest ways participants can manage stress or reduce it by helping them access benefits and other supports. Developing a close relationship with a coach can also reduce stress. Coaches in one program—MyGoals—seek to help participants with self-regulation skills by assessing strengths and weaknesses in self-regulation skills and discussing them explicitly with the participants. For all four programs, the goals set by participants may be directly or indirectly related to employment. Indirectly related goals include, for example,

obtaining educational or training credentials, securing treatment for mental health issues, or addressing challenges to employment (such as lack of child care).

IMPACT STUDY DESIGN

The impact study used an experimental research design to assess the effectiveness of each coaching program in improving employment-related outcomes, economic security, self-regulation skills, and other measures of well-being. Outcomes of the study participants are being assessed at 21 months after study enrollment and again at 48 to 67 months after study enrollment. This report presents the findings for the first 9 months after study enrollment for FaDSS, Goal4 It!, and LIFT, and for the first 12 months after study enrollment for MyGoals. This section provides an overview of the design. Details of the study design are in Moore et al. (2019) and in Appendix A.

The impact study used an experimental research design to assess the effectiveness of each coaching program.

Random assignment. In total across the four programs, 4,276 adults who were eligible for one of the four employment coaching programs and who consented to participate in the study were randomly assigned either to a program group that had access to the coaching program or a control group that did not have access to the coaching program. In the report, program groups are also referred to by program name (for example, the LIFT group).

The services offered to the control group varied by program. In the study of FaDSS, program group members were offered coaching in addition to receiving TANF case management from an agency other than the one that provided FaDSS whereas the control group received TANF case management but no FaDSS services. In the study of Goal4 It!, control group members were required to participate in regular case management and program group members were required to participate in coaching instead of TANF case management. The control group in the study of each program (as well as the program group) could receive other services in the community.

Study enrollment and random assignment took place between February 2017 and November 2019, with each program beginning and ending random assignment at different times (Table I.2). Enrollment into the study of MyGoals began more than a year earlier than the other studies, and it enrolled more study participants.[2] Enrollment ended between September and November 2019 for all programs.

Table I.2. Dates of study enrollment and number of study participants, by program

Program	Dates of study enrollment		Number of study participants
	Starting date	Ending date	
FaDSS	June 2018	November 2019	863
Goal4 It!	October 2018	November 2019	802
LIFT	September 2018	November 2019	808
MyGoals	February 2017	September 2019	1,803

Source: Study management information systems.

[2] Enrollment into the study of MyGoals began as part of an experimental evaluation funded by Arnold Ventures and other funders. After MyGoals was included in the Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations, funded by OPRE, the program continued enrolling study participants and coordinated data collection and analysis across the two evaluations.

Data sources. This report is based on data from five main sources: (1) a baseline survey (FaDSS, Goal4 It!, and LIFT) or form (MyGoals) administered just before study enrollment that collected data on characteristics of the study participants and information needed to locate them for the follow-up surveys; (2) data from the program or study management information system on service receipt for the program group for all programs and for the control group for Goal4 It!, the only program that provided services to the control group; (3) a follow-up survey conducted at 9 months (FaDSS, Goal4 It!, and LIFT) or 12 months (MyGoals) after study enrollment that collected data on study participants' outcomes; (4) the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH), a database maintained by ACF's Office of Child Support Enforcement that provides data on earnings reported by Unemployment Insurance (UI) agencies as well as data on new hires and receipt of UI benefits; and (5) program administrative data on receipt of TANF, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and, for MyGoals, housing assistance.

Box I.2. Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Evaluation of Employment Coaching

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly affected operations of the four coaching programs in the evaluation (Kharsa and Joyce 2022). All four programs began implementing coaching virtually in March 2020.

The onset of the pandemic came after study enrollment was completed in November 2019 and after the conclusion of the first follow-up period for most study participants. In March 2020, 68 percent of the sample had completed their first follow-up periods; less than 15 percent of the sample had more than 3 months of their follow-up period remaining after March 2020. The 21-month follow-up period will coincide with the COVID-19 pandemic for all study participants. For this reason, we will use data from the 21-month follow-up period to explore the pandemic's effect on program impacts.

The pandemic resulted in the suspension of in-person survey data collectors to encourage study participants to complete the survey, which reduced survey response rates. Nevertheless, survey response rates for all programs were high enough that the impact analysis is at low risk of attrition bias, based on standards from ACF's Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse, a systematic evidence review of interventions designed to help job seekers with low incomes succeed in the labor market.

Outcomes. We examined each program's impact on a broad set of outcomes. The risk of finding a statistically significant result by chance, rather than one representing a true effect of the program, increases with the number of outcomes tested (Schochet 2009). To minimize concerns about multiple comparisons, we categorized outcomes as confirmatory, secondary, or exploratory and set rules for reporting the impacts. We did this before we estimated the impacts, and documented the categorization in the study registration on the Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/znkpu).

To categorize outcomes as confirmatory, secondary, or exploratory, we first categorized groups of outcomes, or areas, by the extent to which they were expected to be affected by the program. The main areas that the programs were designed to change are referred to as confirmatory areas. For all programs, these confirmatory areas included goal-setting and self-regulation skills, labor market outcomes, and economic hardship. For the two programs that exclusively serve TANF participants, the confirmatory areas also included receipt of public benefits during the second follow-up period because these

programs expect reductions in the receipt of TANF cash assistance benefits to emerge over the long term.[3] The main test of the program's effectiveness is based on whether the program had a beneficial impact on outcomes in these areas. We list confirmatory outcomes in Table I.3. Secondary areas are those that the program may affect but are less central to the program's goals; the program may still be deemed effective if they are not affected. Exploratory areas are sets of outcomes that the program does not try to affect but could potentially be affected. We list examples of secondary and exploratory outcomes in Table I.4.

Box I.3. Confirmatory, secondary, and exploratory outcomes

Confirmatory outcomes are the main outcomes that the program is expected to change. The main test of the program's effectiveness is based on whether the program had a beneficial impact on the confirmatory outcomes.

Secondary outcomes are the key outcomes in areas that are less central to the program's goals, The program might affect these outcomes, but could still be deemed effective if it does not.

Exploratory outcomes are outcomes that are related to confirmatory or secondary outcomes but are not the main outcomes the program intends to influence. The purpose of examining impacts on exploratory outcomes is to aid interpretation of the confirmatory impact findings and to inform future research.

Table I.3. Confirmatory outcomes

Programs	Outcomes	Measure	Data source
Area: Self-regulation and goal-related skills			
All	Goal-setting and attainment skills	This eight-item scale is the respondent's average level of agreement—from "strongly disagree" (0) to "strongly agree" (3)—with a series of statements on goal-related skills: • I know I need to get a job or a better job and really think I should work on finding one. • I set employment goals based on what is important to me or my family. • I set long-term employment goals that I hope to achieve (such as finding a job, finding a better job, getting promoted, or enrolling in further education). • I set specific short-term goals that will allow me to achieve my long-term employment goals. • Based on everything I know about myself, I believe I can achieve my employment goals. • When I set employment goals, I think about barriers that might get in my way and make specific plans for overcoming those barriers. • Even when I face challenges, I continue to pursue my employment goals. • I keep track of my overall progress toward my long-term employment goals and adjust my plans if needed.	Follow-up survey

(continued)

[3] Receipt of public assistance benefits during the first follow-up period is included in the exploratory analysis for all programs.

Programs	Outcomes	Measure	Data source
Area: Labor market outcomes			
All	Monthly earnings	Average monthly earnings during the follow-up period (calculated by summing quarterly earnings across the follow-up period and dividing by the number of months in the period). For the first follow-up period, the reference period for the measure is: • The first 9 months after study enrollment for FaDSS, Goal4 It!, and LIFT • The first 12 months after study enrollment for MyGoals	Follow-up survey
FaDSS, Goal4 It! MyGoals	Monthly earnings	Average monthly earnings during the follow-up period (calculated by summing quarterly earnings across the follow-up period and dividing by the number of months in the period). For the first follow-up period, the reference period for the measure is: • The first three quarters after study enrollment for FaDSS and Goal4 It! • The first four quarters after study enrollment for MyGoals	NDNH
Area: Economic well-being			
All	Economic hardship	A count ranging from 0 to 6 of the number of the following coping strategies study participants may have used: • Cut the size of meals or skipped meals because they could not afford enough food • Moved in with other people because of financial problems • Asked to borrow money from friends or family • Went without a phone because they could not afford to pay the bill • Sold belongings or took a payday loan • Went without medical care because of cost	Follow-up survey

Source: First follow-up survey.

Table I.4. Examples of secondary and exploratory outcomes

Programs	Outcomes	Measure	Data source
Labor market success (confirmatory area)			
All	Monthly self-reported earnings by month during the follow-up period (exploratory outcome)	A set of variables equal to self-reported earnings across all jobs during each month of the follow-up period.	Follow-up survey
All	Percentage of follow-up months employed (exploratory outcome)	A variable equal to the percentage of months of the follow-up period for which the study participant reported being employed.	Follow-up survey
Receipt of education or training (secondary area)			
All	Completion of an education program (secondary outcome)	An indicator that equals 1 if respondents reported completing an education program and 0 otherwise.	Follow-up survey
All	Completion of a training program (secondary outcome)	An indicator that equals 1 if respondents reported completing a training program and 0 otherwise.	Follow-up survey
All	Participation in an education program (exploratory outcome)	An indicator that equals 1 if respondents reported currently participating or that they had participated in an education program since the study enrollment and 0 otherwise.	Follow-up survey

(continued)

Programs	Outcomes	Measure	Data source
All	Participation in a training program (exploratory outcome)	An indicator that equals 1 if respondents reported currently participating or participated in a training program to develop skills for a particular job or occupation since the study enrollment and 0 otherwise.	Follow-up survey
Job quality (secondary area)			
All	Employed in a job offering fringe benefits (secondary outcome)	An indicator that equals 1 if employed in a job offering fringe benefits and 0 otherwise.	Follow-up survey
Employment challenges (secondary area)			
All	Challenges that impeded employment (secondary outcome)	Seven separate outcomes each corresponding to a particular challenge: The first is whether (yes or no) the survey respondent reported having a current driver's license at the time of the follow-up survey. The other six outcomes are whether respondents reported that having the challenge made it very hard or extremely hard to find and keep a good job at the time of the follow-up survey for the following reasons: • Lack of child care • Difficulties with transportation • Not having the right clothes or tools • Not having the right skills or education • Having a criminal record • A health issue	Follow-up survey
Housing (secondary area)			
All	Unstable housing (secondary outcome)	An indicator of whether respondent reported living on the streets, living in an abandoned building or car, living in a shelter, or living rent-free at the time of the follow-up survey.	Follow-up survey
Service receipt (exploratory area)			
All	Receipt of one-on-one job assistance (exploratory outcome)	An indicator that equals 1 if respondents reported met one-on-one with someone (in-person or by phone) to receive job assistance since the study enrollment and 0 otherwise.	Follow-up survey

Source: First follow-up survey.

Estimating and interpreting impacts. Our basic approach to estimating impacts is to compare the outcomes of program group members and control group members. Because random assignment created research groups that were similar in terms of their characteristics before participating in the program, any differences in observed outcomes can be attributed to the employment coaching program. For each employment coaching program, on average the program and control groups had similar demographic characteristics, indicators of socioeconomic status, earnings and employment histories, and self-regulation skills at the time of study enrollment (Appendix Tables B.1, C.1, D.1, and E.1).

The services available to the control group varied by program, which affects the interpretation of program impact estimates. In the FaDSS, LIFT, and MyGoals studies, control group members did not receive any services from the organization

providing coaching but retained access to other services available in the community. Thus, impact estimates for these programs represent the impact of the coaching program relative to alternative services that would be available in the community if the program providing coaching did not exist. Because all FaDSS study participants are TANF recipients, the alternative services include TANF case management provided by the Iowa TANF agency, which is a different agency than the one administering FaDSS to the program group. Hence, in the FaDSS study we compared the outcomes of study participants who were offered FaDSS services in addition to TANF case management to the outcomes of study participants who were offered only TANF case management. In the Goal4 It! study, control group members had access to traditional case management services provided by the same agency offering services to the program group. Thus, impact estimates for Goal4 It! represent the impact of providing agency services through coaching rather than through traditional case management.

We used a multivariate regression model to estimate the impact on each outcome; this approach leads to more precise impact estimates and controls for any remaining differences between the characteristics of members of the program and control groups.

Our main analysis was designed to estimate the impact of each program, but we also estimated the impact of all programs together in a pooled analysis. The pooled analysis gave equal weight to the four programs in the evaluation. It assessed whether the programs had common impacts on outcomes even though they offered different coaching strategies to different people in different contexts. The primary benefit of the pooled analysis is a larger sample size, allowing us to detect smaller impacts common across programs. A summary of key findings from this analysis is included in the report's Conclusion (Box VI.1), and more details about the analysis and related findings appear in Appendix F.

For each impact estimate, we reported whether the difference from 0 was statistically significant. For impacts on earnings, we complemented this assessment by reporting the probability that the program's impact was greater than a specified amount. These probabilities were calculated using a Bayesian approach (Box I.3).

Box I.3. Overview of the Bayesian approach to interpreting earnings impacts

To help readers interpret the findings on earnings, we complement our main reporting of statistical significance with a secondary analysis of the impact estimates using a Bayesian approach. This is an analysis of the probability a program's impact is positive or greater than a specified amount. A Bayesian interpretation of impact findings can be useful to practitioners who are considering implementing a particular component because it is more nuanced than an up-or-down assessment of whether an impact is statistically significant. The Bayesian analysis also guards against the possible misunderstanding that a lack of statistical significance means a low probability of a program's having an effect. We applied Bayesian methods, drawing on both the effect directly estimated from the study's data and on prior evidence about how common it is for programs to have effects on earnings of various magnitudes. We selected the prior evidence from OPRE's Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse which, as noted above, is a systematic evidence review of interventions designed to help job seekers with low incomes succeed in the labor market.

Impact tables also report effect sizes. These values measure the magnitude of impacts in standardized units that we can compare across different outcomes, even if the outcomes are measured in different units.

Subgroups. The effects of employment coaching can vary across certain groups of participants or program subsets. For adequate statistical power, we aimed to estimate separate impacts on confirmatory outcomes for subgroups with at least 300 study participants at the time of study enrollment. In addition to testing whether each impact was statistically significant, we examined whether the impacts varied by subgroup. The key subgroups include groups defined at baseline by age, number of children, race or ethnicity, primary language, presence of disability, education, employment, challenges to employment, goal-setting and attainment skill, degree of urbanicity, and, for some programs, the location of the office. Definitions of the subgroups appear in Appendix Table A.7.

ROADMAP TO THE REPORT

The next four chapters of the report present the impact estimates for each of the four programs: FaDSS, Goal4 It!, LIFT, and MyGoals. The report concludes with a summary of the findings and their implications. Appendix A provides details about the study design, data collection, and analysis. Appendices B through E give estimates from exploratory analysis that were not reported in the main report text. Appendix F describes the findings from an analysis in which the impacts are estimated with data pooled across all four programs.

Goal4It! program participant works on setting goals.

II. Impacts of FaDSS

FaDSS is the only program in the evaluation that offers employment coaching during home visits. The program focuses on the family as a whole. It is offered to TANF participants but it is not administered by a TANF agency. Participation is voluntary. FaDSS participants also receive regular TANF case management, as do all TANF recipients in Iowa. It's a well-established program—Iowa's Department of Human Rights has operated it statewide for more than 30 years through contracts with 17 local agencies. The study took place in 7 of the 17 local agencies because it was not practical to collect data from all 17. The evaluation team worked with program leaders to identify a set of 7 local agencies that could provide enough study participants to meet the study's enrollment goals and reflect a cross-section of urban, suburban, and rural areas.

This chapter describes the impacts of FaDSS in the first 9 months after study enrollment. We begin by describing the program and its implementation. We then report estimates of the program's overall impacts. The order of the discussion aligns with the sequence in which program impacts would be expected to emerge, beginning with the program's impacts on participants' receipt of services and moving on to a series of intermediate outcomes, including confirmatory analysis of self-regulation and goal-related skills and secondary analysis of education and training, and employment challenges. Next we describe confirmatory findings related to labor market outcomes and economic well-being, and secondary analysis of public assistance receipt. After presenting the impacts for all study participants, we describe the impacts by subgroups of interest. We conclude with a discussion of the findings and their implications.

Box II.1. Summary of findings for FaDSS

- FaDSS improved program participants' goal-setting and attainment skills. The impact from this confirmatory analysis was statistically significant.
- FaDSS group members had higher self-reported earnings during the 9-month follow-up period than control group members did, on average, although the impact from this confirmatory analysis was not statistically significant. We conducted Bayesian analysis of this impact estimate to further contextualize the confirmatory findings. This secondary analysis suggests FaDSS likely had a small, positive impact on self-reported earnings, and the probability of a positive impact increased over time.
- FaDSS and control group members had similar earnings that were reported to a UI agency, on average, during the follow-up period. The impact from this confirmatory analysis was not statistically significant.
- FaDSS reduced the number of economic hardships faced by FaDSS group members. The impact from this confirmatory analysis was statistically significant.

THE FADSS PROGRAM

FaDSS coaches aim to meet with program participants in their home at least twice a month in the first 3 months, and monthly thereafter.

FaDSS is designed to coach TANF recipients to help them become self-sufficient and enhance their family's functioning. FaDSS coaches aim to meet with program participants in their home at least twice a month in the first 3 months, and monthly thereafter. Coaching is centered on setting and pursuing goals, tracking progress toward previously set goals, assessing whether new goals are appropriate, and identifying action steps to be taken before the next home visit. Participants can set both personal and family goals. The model is the least structured of the four coaching programs participating in the evaluation, with the fewest tools and specified steps for conducting the coaching. Through formal assessments, coaches identify participants' service needs and make referrals when possible. Coaches are not trained on the subject of self-regulation skills. Although coaches may discuss challenges related to self-regulation skills with participants, they do not formally assess participants' self-regulation skills, nor do they use the term "self-regulation skills" or similar terms during the coaching sessions.

Eligibility criteria and enrollment procedures

To be eligible to enroll in FaDSS, participants must be receiving cash assistance from the Family Investment Program, Iowa's TANF program. FaDSS aims to serve TANF recipients who are determined by their case manager to be at risk of long-term dependency on TANF, but there is no formal screening for this criterion. Most study participants (80 percent in 2019, the last year of study enrollment) were referred to FaDSS by their TANF case manager. Almost all of the remaining 20 percent contacted the program directly after learning about it from a local service provider, relatives, or friends.

Participants can continue to receive FaDSS coaching for up to 7 months after they stop receiving cash assistance, whether by exiting TANF or having their benefits suspended for noncompliance. Participants also can return to FaDSS if they return to TANF and have their FaDSS eligibility window reset.

From June 2018 to November 2019, 863 adults enrolled in the study. All study applicants who were found eligible for the program and consented to participate in the study were randomly assigned to either the FaDSS group and offered FaDSS services, or to a control group and not offered FaDSS services. Both the FaDSS and control groups were required to receive case management as part of Iowa's TANF Employment and Training program, and both groups could access other services in the community.

Participant characteristics

The FaDSS study participants were TANF recipients; consequently, most were single women with children (Table II.1). The average participant age was around 30, and 94 percent were female. They had diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Forty-eight percent of participants were White, non-Hispanic; 36 percent were Black, non-Hispanic; and 12 percent were Hispanic. Just 7 percent were married, and 61 percent were the only adults living in their household. Nearly all participants had one child under age 18, and, on average, lived with two children.

Two-thirds of FaDSS study participants did not work in the month before study enrollment and, among those who were working, only 8 percent worked in a full-time job (Table II.1). Earnings tended to be low; participants who were employed in the month before study enrollment earned about $480 per month on average. To put this in context, if a three-person household had no additional income from other sources, earnings of $480 would represent about 27 percent of the federal poverty guideline ($1,778 per month in 2019).

Lack of access to child care (37 percent) and transportation (33 percent) were the most commonly reported challenges to finding or keeping a good job (Table II.1). About one in six study participants said lack of the right skills or education was an employment challenge, and one in four said they did not have a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate; only 3 percent of study participants had a college degree or higher. Nearly half of study participants did not have a valid drivers' license at the time of study enrollment, and 28 percent were in unstable housing (for example, living in a housing shelter, unsheltered, or another rent-free arrangement).

A FaDSS participant talks with her coach at home.

Table II.1. Characteristics of FaDSS study participants at the time of study enrollment

Baseline characteristic	Mean or percentage
Demographics	
Age (in years)	29.4
Female (percentage)	94
Race and ethnicity (percentage)	
Hispanic	12
Black, non-Hispanic	36
White, non-Hispanic	48
Other	3
Currently married (percentage)	7
Number of adults in the respondent's household	1.6
Number of children respondent lives with	2.1
Socioeconomic status	
Does not have high school diploma or GED (percentage)	24
Receiving public assistance (percentage)	99
Worked for pay in past 30 days (percentage)	34
Self-reported earnings in past 30 days ($)	
All study participants	161
Among those who worked for pay in past 30 days	481
Part-time or full-time status at current or most recent job (percentage)	
Did not work in past 30 days	67
Part time (less than 35 hours)	25
Full time (35 hours or more)	8
Worked for pay in past quarter (NDNH; percentage)	58
Monthly earnings reported to a UI agency in the past quarter (NDNH; $)	
All study participants	498
Among those with positive earnings reported to a UI agency	864
Employment challenges	
Challenges that made it very or extremely hard to find or keep a good job (percentage)	
Lack of transportation	33
Lack of child care	37
Lack of right clothes or tools for work	11
Lack of the right skills or education	17
Perceived lack of jobs in area	19
Having a criminal record	13
Health condition	17
No valid driver's license (percentage)	46
Unstable housing (percentage)	28
Sample size	863

Source: Baseline survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Baseline characteristics are drawn from the baseline survey unless otherwise noted. Appendix Table B.1 presents the full set of baseline characteristics separately for program and control group members. Unstable housing refers to being unsheltered, living in a shelter, or having another rent-free living arrangement.

GED = General Educational Development; NDNH = National Directory of New Hires; UI=Unemployment Insurance.

Coaching model implementation

The implementation study of FaDSS found that, overall, FaDSS was implemented as designed (Schwartz et al. 2020). Using multiple data sources, the implementation study found that although most FaDSS participants set a goal related to finding employment while in the program, most also set goals that were not directly related to employment. Coaches found it difficult to avoid being directive, but they generally succeeded. Participants and coaches reported developing strong relationships. According to FaDSS staff, there were jobs in the area, but there were limited resources available in the community to address many of the challenges to working—for example, securing transportation and child care, especially in rural areas. Based on information from the study management information system, FaDSS participants received an average of eight hours of coaching in the year after study enrollment and had an average of 18 interactions with coaches.[4] Twelve months after study enrollment, about 27 percent of those assigned to the FaDSS group were still in contact with their FaDSS coach.

IMPACTS OF FADSS ON SERVICE RECEIPT (SECONDARY AREA)

FaDSS increased the amount of one-on-one job assistance reported by study participants.

Because control group members could receive employment services from TANF or other places in the community, the survey asked FaDSS and control group members about other receipt of one-on-one job assistance (Table II.2). FaDSS group members reported receiving more one-on-one job search assistance than control group members did, and were more likely to say they received one-on-one assistance focused on setting short- and long-term goals. In the first 9 months following study enrollment, FaDSS group members received one-on-one job assistance twice as often as control group members (3.8 versus 1.8 contacts), on average. FaDSS group members were also between 8 and 9 percentage points more likely than control group members to report receiving help with setting long-term (38 versus 29 percent) and short-term (39 versus 31 percent) goals.

FaDSS group members received one-on-one job assistance twice as often as control group members.

Despite these differences, just under half of both FaDSS and control group members (41 versus 37 percent) reported ever receiving one-on-one job assistance in the 9 months following study enrollment (Table II.2). This rate was lower than we expected. Because the first coaching session took place at the time FaDSS group members enrolled in the study, all FaDSS group members received at least one coaching session. At the same time, the TANF program provided case management to study participants in both research groups. This suggests some FaDSS group members did not consider the family-focused coaching they received during home visits nor the TANF case management as one-on-one job assistance.

FaDSS group members were more likely to report assistance with work supplies and financial matters than control group members were, but they reported similar levels of child care services, transportation assistance, and other types of support services.

[4] The study management information system includes service receipt data for a maximum 12-month follow-up period.

Reflecting the program's intent to provide service referrals and supplemental supports as needed, FaDSS group members were more likely than control group members to report receiving some additional services, including financial assistance (12 versus 6 percent), and clothes, uniforms, tools, or other supplies and equipment (21 versus 12 percent) (Table II.2). This finding is consistent with data collected from the study's management information system, which indicated about 40 percent of FaDSS participants received a referral to outside services. In some locations, coaches also brought FaDSS participants clothing or supplies during their visits, and in one FaDSS location, coaches were able to request one-time financial assistance to help meet participants' needs (Schwartz et al. 2020). FaDSS group members were about as likely as control group members to receive assistance with transportation, housing, and child care; according to program staff, Iowa's Department of Human Rights did not fund these types of services.

Table II.2. Impact of FaDSS on service receipt during the 9-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Effect size
One-on-one job assistance				
Ever received one-on-one job assistance (percentage)	41	37	4	0.11
Number of times received one-on-one job assistance	3.8	1.8	2.0***	0.28
Received one-on-one job assistance focused on (percentage):				
Setting long-term goals	38	29	10**	0.26
Setting short-term goals	39	31	9**	0.23
Planning to achieve goals	39	32	7	0.18
Additional services				
Received the following service from a program since study enrollment (percentage):				
Child care services	36	30	6	0.16
Transportation assistance	35	29	5	0.15
Clothes, uniforms, tools, or other supplies and equipment	21	12	9***	0.42
Assistance finding stable housing	20	15	5	0.21
Assistance with budgeting, credit, banking, or other financial matters	12	6	6**	0.50
Mental health treatment	32	31	0	0.01
Sample size	257	251		

Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

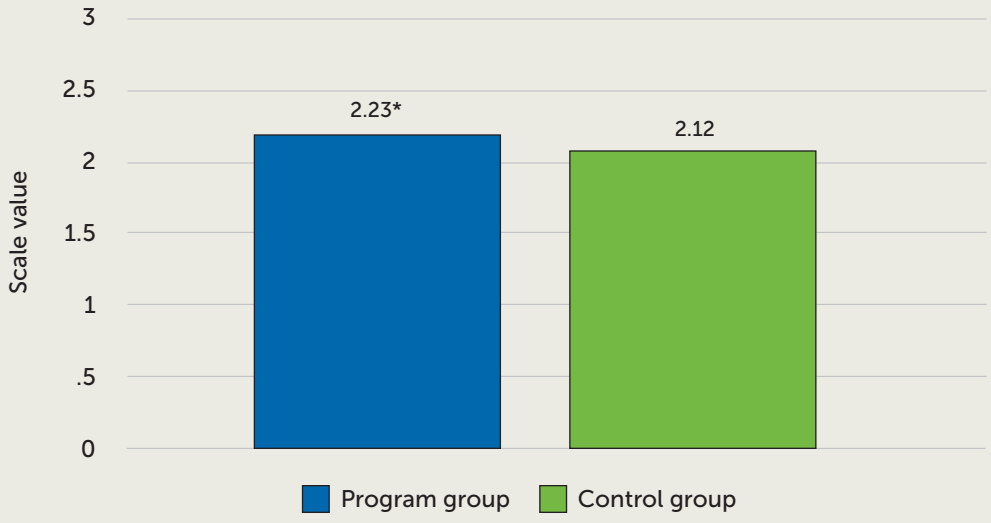
IMPACTS OF FADSS ON SELF-REGULATION AND GOAL-RELATED SKILLS (CONFIRMATORY AREA)

FaDSS improved goal-setting and attainment skills.

FaDSS coaches aimed to work with participants and their families to support participants in setting goals and working toward meeting those goals (Figure II.1). To measure how effectively participants did this, the survey asked how much they agreed with eight statements about setting goals and working to meet those goals. Scores on this measure range from 0 ("strongly disagree" with all eight statements) to 3 ("strongly agree" with all eight statements). FaDSS group members scored 5 percent higher than control group members (2.23 versus 2.12 points) on this measure, a difference that was statistically significant and equivalent to an effect size of 0.22 standard deviations.

To better understand the program's confirmatory impact on goal-setting and attainment, we examined impacts on responses to each of the eight survey questions that make up the scale. We found the estimated impact was statistically significant at the 5 percent level for three of these statements (Table II.3): (1) the extent to which study participants set goals based on what was important to them or their family (2.37 versus 2.21); (2) the extent to which study participants set short-term goals in service of long-term goals (2.25 versus 2.11); and (3) the extent to which study participants considered barriers to employment goals and made plans to overcome those barriers (2.17 versus 2.04). The impacts were statistically significant at the 10 percent level for three additional statements (Table II.3)

Figure II.1. Impact of FaDSS on goal-setting and attainment skills during the 9-month follow-up period (confirmatory analysis)



Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. The effect size for this impact is 0.22. This analysis is based on 262 program group and 258 control group members. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group. The goal-setting and attainment scale indicates participants' average level of agreement with eight statements about their goal-related skills. Scores range from "strongly disagree" (0) to "strongly agree" (3).

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

Table II.3. Impact of FaDSS on individual statements related to setting goals during the 9-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Effect size
Statements				
I know I need to get a job or a better job and really think I should work on finding one	1.86	1.87	-0.01	-0.01
I set employment goals based on what is important to me or my family	2.37	2.21	0.16**	0.19
I set long-term employment goals that I hope to achieve (such as finding a job, getting promoted, or enrolling in further education)	2.39	2.28	0.11	0.14
I set specific short-term goals that will allow me to achieve my long-term employment goals	2.25	2.11	0.14**	0.19
Based on everything I know about myself, I believe I can achieve my employment goals	2.41	2.29	0.13*	0.17
When I set employment goals, I think about barriers that might get in my way and make specific plans for overcoming those barriers	2.17	2.04	0.13**	0.17
Even when I face challenges, I continue to pursue my employment goals	2.25	2.13	0.12*	0.16
I keep track of my overall progress toward my long-term employment goals and adjust my plans if needed	2.10	1.98	0.12*	0.16
Sample size	264	265		

Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group. The goal-setting and attainment scale indicates study participants' average level of agreement with eight statements about their goal-related skills. Scores range from "strongly disagree" (0) to "strongly agree" (3).

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

In other exploratory analysis of measures of self-regulation and goal-related skills, findings indicate that FaDSS promoted participants' self-esteem at the 10 percent level of statistical significance (Appendix Table B.10). FaDSS did not improve other dimensions of participants' self-regulation skills, however, including metacognition and emotional control. As noted, the program does not formally assess participants' self-regulation or explicitly refer to self-regulation skills during coaching.

IMPACTS OF FADSS ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING (SECONDARY AREA)

In secondary and exploratory analysis, we found FaDSS group members were more likely than their control group counterparts to complete training programs and receive a certificate, license, or diploma.

Secondary analysis indicates that, compared with members of the control group, FaDSS participants were 3 percentage points more likely to have completed a training program by the time of the first follow-up survey, although few members of either group had done so. Only 7 percent of the FaDSS group completed a training program compared with 4 percent of the control group, a difference that was statistically significant at the

10 percent level (Table II.4). FaDSS group members were 5 percentage points more likely than control group members to receive a certificate, license, or diploma from a training program. FaDSS and control group members were equally likely to complete an education program. The TANF agency considers training and education as activities that count toward the TANF work requirements; both FaDSS and control group members were subject to these requirements.

Table II.4. Impact of FaDSS on education and training during the 9-month follow-up period (secondary and exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact
Participation in an education program (percentage)	23	21	2
Completion of an education program (percentage)	6	4	2
Participation in a training program (percentage)	11	9	1
Completion of a training program (percentage)	7	4	4*
Receipt of a certificate, license, or diploma from a training program (percentage)	7	2	5***
Participation in an education or training program (percentage)	28	26	2
Completion of an education or training program (percentage)	12	8	4
Sample size	254	249	

Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

IMPACTS OF FADSS ON EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES AND HOUSING STABILITY (SECONDARY AREA)

In secondary analysis, we found FaDSS and control group members were equally likely to report employment challenges and unstable housing at the time of the first follow-up.

Study participants in the FaDSS and control groups were equally likely to say the following challenges made it very or extremely hard to find and keep a good job: not having child care or family support; unreliable transportation; a lack of needed skills or education; a limiting health condition; not having the right clothes or tools; and having a criminal record (Table II.5). However, exploratory analysis revealed that FaDSS group members did have lower scores on a composite measure of these six individual challenges that averaged the extent to which each challenge was relevant to them; responses ranged from "not at all" (1) to "extremely" (5). On average, FaDSS group members scored 2.30 points on the composite, whereas control group members scored 2.45 points, a difference that was statistically significant at the 10 percent level. FaDSS and control group members were similarly likely to report having no valid driver's license and living in an unstable housing situation.

Table II.5. Impact of FaDSS on employment challenges and housing stability during the 9-month follow-up period (secondary and exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Effect size
Employment challenges				
Challenge that made it very hard or extremely hard to find and keep a good job (percentage):				
Not having child care or family support	38	38	0	0.01
Not having reliable transportation	37	42	-5	-0.12
Lack of needed skills or education	18	24	-6	-0.20
Not having right clothes or tools	17	20	-2	-0.09
Having a criminal record	15	20	-5	-0.20
Having limiting health condition	20	22	-2	-0.09
Employment challenges: composite	2.30	2.45	-0.15*	-0.16
No valid driver's license (percentage)	57	56	1	0.02
Housing stability				
Unstable housing (percentage)	14	17	-4	-0.18
Sample size	264	267		

Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group. Unstable housing refers to being unsheltered, living in a shelter, or having another rent-free living arrangement.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

IMPACTS OF FADSS ON LABOR MARKET OUTCOMES (CONFIRMATORY AREA)

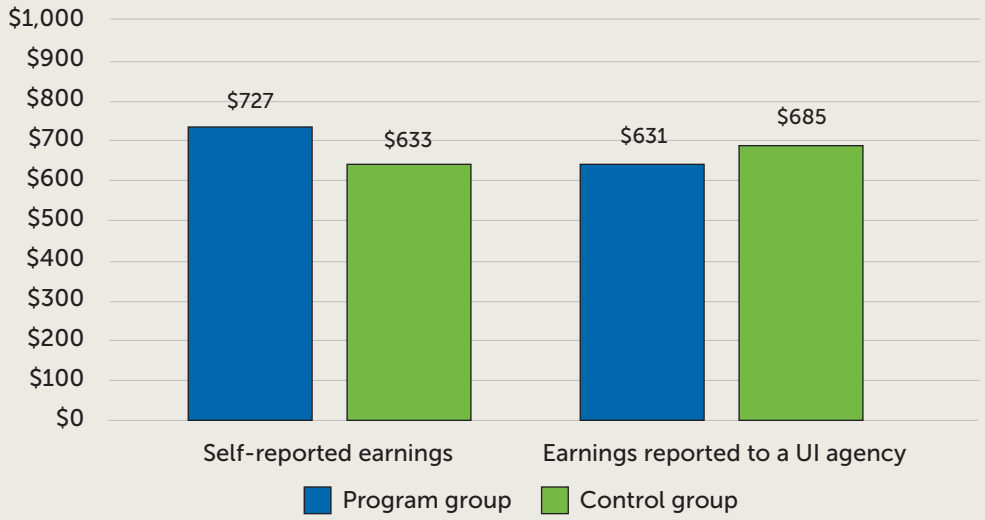
FaDSS group members had higher average self-reported earnings during the 9-month follow-up period than control group members did, although the difference was not statistically significant. Bayesian analysis suggests this impact was likely positive but small.

Based on follow-up survey data, FaDSS group members reported average monthly earnings that were higher than those of control group members ($727 versus $633), although this difference of $94 was not statistically significant (Figure II.2). To contextualize these findings, we conducted Bayesian analysis, which gives an interpretation of program impacts on earnings that takes into account the prior evidence on the effectiveness of similar programs. These estimates suggest FaDSS had an 80 percent chance of having a positive impact on average monthly self-reported earnings. Further breaking out the probability of a positive impact, there was a 59 percent chance the impact was between $0 and $50, but only a 21 percent chance of the impact exceeding $50 (Figure II.3). These estimates suggest FaDSS likely had a small, positive effect on self-reported earnings.

Administrative records suggest that FaDSS and control group members had similar earnings reported to a UI agency, on average, during the follow-up period.

According to NDNH administrative records, FaDSS group members earned $631 per month in jobs reported to a UI agency, on average, whereas control group members earned $685 per month (Figure II.2). This difference is not statistically significant. Bayesian interpretation of this difference also suggests the earnings impact of FaDSS for jobs reported to a UI agency was near, and possibly lower than, $0. The analysis suggests a 46 percent chance the program decreased earnings reported to a UI agency, but by less than $25 per month; there is only a 13 percent chance the program decreased earnings reported to a UI agency by $25 or more (Figure II.3). We discuss possible reasons for the difference between survey and administrative records findings at the end of this chapter.

Figure II.2. Impact of FaDSS on average monthly self-reported earnings and average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency during the 9-month follow-up period (confirmatory analysis)

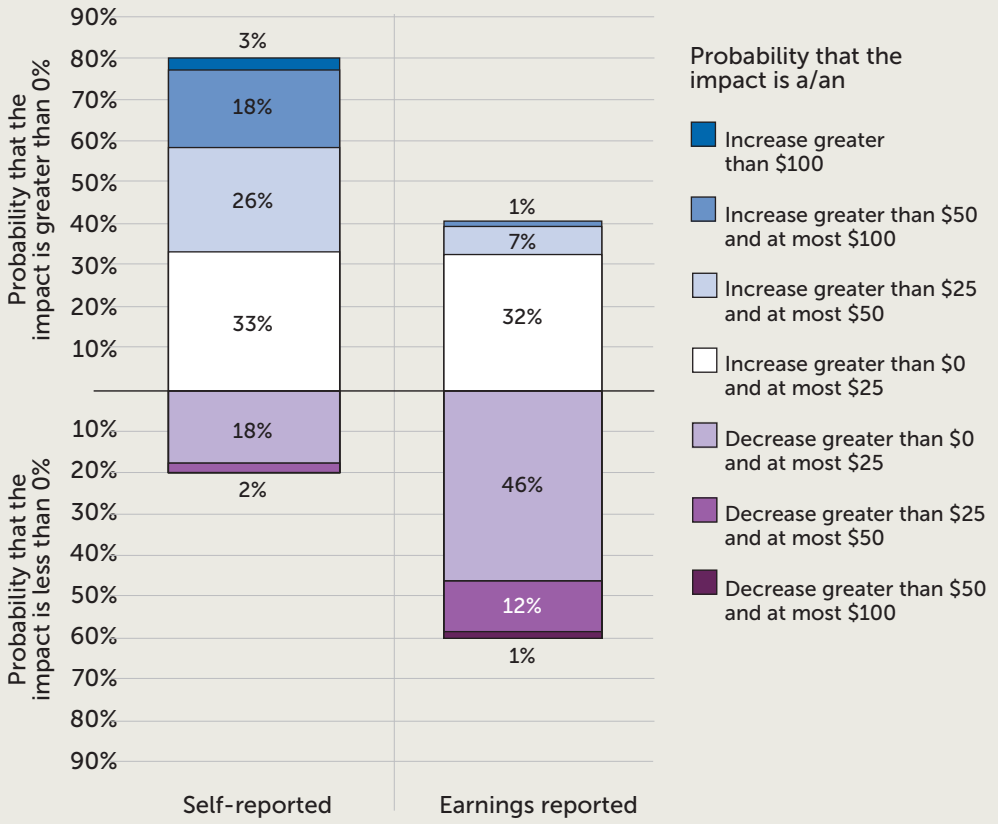


Sources: First follow-up survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Analysis of average monthly earnings from the first follow-up survey includes 250 program group and 247 control group members. Analysis of average monthly earnings from the National Directory of New Hires includes 416 program group and 416 control group members. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

Figure II.3. Probability of various sizes of the impact of FaDSS on average monthly self-reported earnings and average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency during the 9-month follow-up period (secondary analysis)



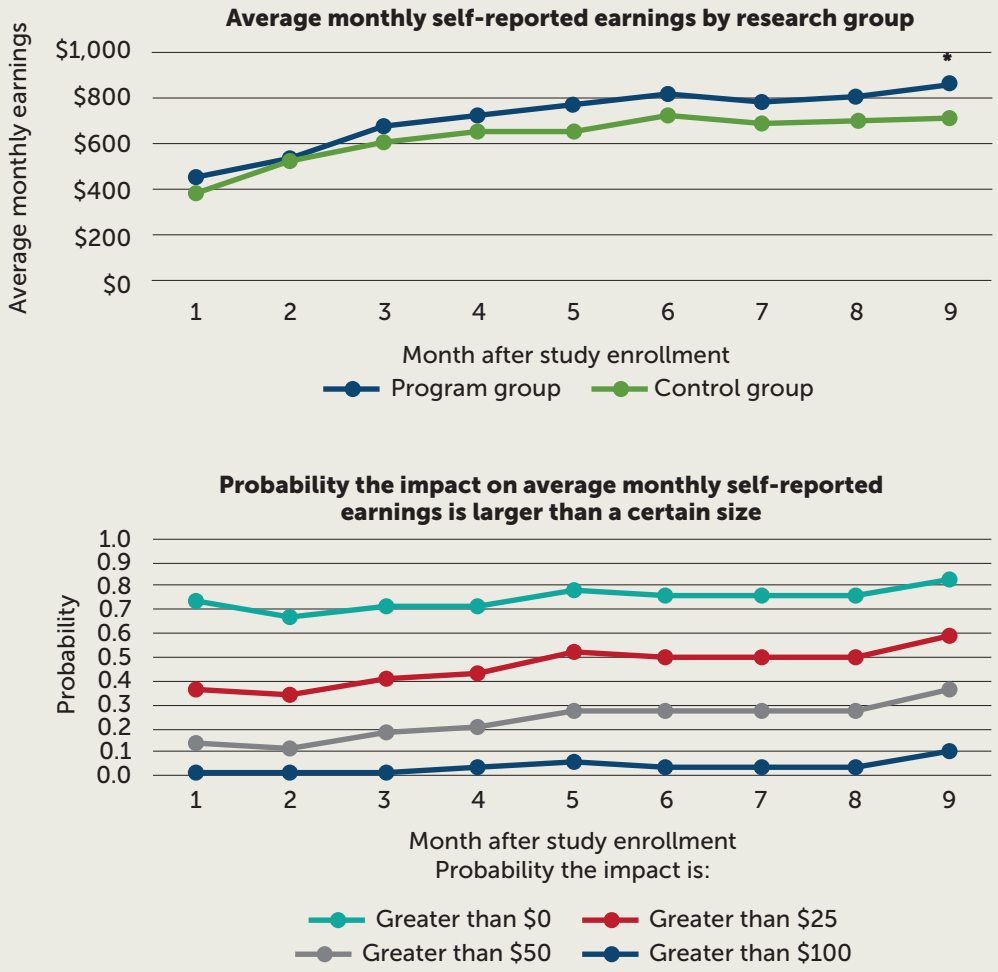
Sources: First follow-up survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Probabilities that impacts are various sizes are part of the exploratory analysis and calculated using Bayesian methods. Analysis of average monthly earnings from the first follow-up survey includes 250 program group and 247 control group members. Analysis of average monthly earnings from the National Directory of New Hires includes 416 program group and 416 control group members

Evidence suggests the probability of a positive impact on self-reported earnings—but not earnings reported to a UI agency—increased over time.

To further contextualize findings from the confirmatory analysis of self-reported earnings, we examined the impacts on earnings by month to assess how impacts evolved over time (Figure II.4). The impact trended upward with the number of months since study enrollment and was statistically significant at the 10 percent level in the 9th month after study enrollment. During the first 4 months of the follow-up period, the probability that FaDSS had a positive impact (represented by the teal line in the lower panel of Figure II.4) on self-reported earnings ranged from 66 to 73 percent based on Bayesian interpretation of the impact estimates. In the 5th through 9th months after study enrollment, the probability of a positive impact increased, ranging from 79 to 83 percent. By the 9th month after study enrollment, the probability of an impact greater than $25 (represented by the red line in the lower panel of Figure II.4) was 60 percent, thus more likely to have been greater than $25 than not.

Figure II.4. Impact of FaDSS on average monthly self-reported earnings by month during the 9-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)



Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. The top panel of this figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group. Probabilities that impacts are greater than a certain value are part of the exploratory analysis and calculated using Bayesian methods. Appendix Table B.6 presents these estimates in full detail.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

Examination of impacts on earnings reported to a UI agency by quarter showed no trend (Table II.6).

Table II.6. Impact of FaDSS on average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency by quarter during the 9-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

				Probability that the impact is:							
Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Less than –$100	Less than –$50	Less than –$25	Less than $0	Greater than $0	Greater than $25	Greater than $50	Greater than $100
Average monthly earnings by quarter after study enrollment (NDNH; $)											
Quarter 1	538	603	-66	0.00	0.01	0.15	0.62	0.38	0.08	0.01	0.00
Quarter 2	661	695	-34	0.00	0.01	0.14	0.50	0.50	0.18	0.04	0.00
Quarter 3	693	755	-61	0.00	0.03	0.19	0.56	0.44	0.15	0.03	0.00
Sample size	416	416									

Source: The National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months (3 quarters) after study enrollment. Probabilities that impacts are greater than a certain value are part of the exploratory analysis and calculated using Bayesian methods. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

NDNH = National Directory of New Hires.

In an analysis conducted to complement our confirmatory analysis on earnings, we found FaDSS had no effect on whether participants were employed or whether they had jobs offering benefits. FaDSS did increase employment in jobs that were not regular full- or part-time jobs.

FaDSS and control group members had similar rates of employment according to both survey and administrative data (Table II.7). In the survey, both groups reported they were employed at some time during the month in 48 percent of the 9 months after they enrolled in the study. Administrative records also indicate similar employment rates in jobs reported to a UI agency for FaDSS and control group members, although these are higher than the levels study participants reported in the survey (64 percent versus 65 percent of the three quarters in the follow-up period, respectively, or about 1.9 quarters, on average). According to the survey results, study participants in both groups reported spending about 40 percent of the 9-month follow-up period in either a full- or part-time wage or salary position, and about 1 in 3 study participants were employed in a job offering fringe benefits for about 2 months, on average. However, FaDSS group members were more likely than control group members to report being employed in jobs that were not regular full- or part-time jobs (for example, jobs found through a temporary agency, or work as an independent contractor, freelancer, day laborer, or on-call employee), although employment of this kind was generally rare for both groups.

Table II.7. Impact of FaDSS on other labor market and job quality outcomes during the 9-month follow-up period (secondary and exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Effect size
Labor market outcomes				
Percentage of follow-up months employed	48	48	0	0.01
Percentage of follow-up quarters employed (NDNH)	64	65	-1	-0.02
Percentage of follow-up months employed in a regular wage or salary job	37	39	-2	-0.04
Percentage of follow-up months employed in a non-regular job	9	5	4**	0.20
Job quality				
Employed in job offering fringe benefits (percentage)	34	35	-1	-0.02
Percentage of follow-up months employed in a job offering fringe benefits	22	21	1	0.03
Sample size (survey)	263	263		
Sample size (NDNH)	416	416		

Sources: First follow-up survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months (three quarters) after study enrollment. Outcome variables are drawn from the first follow-up survey unless otherwise noted. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

NDNH = National Directory of New Hires.

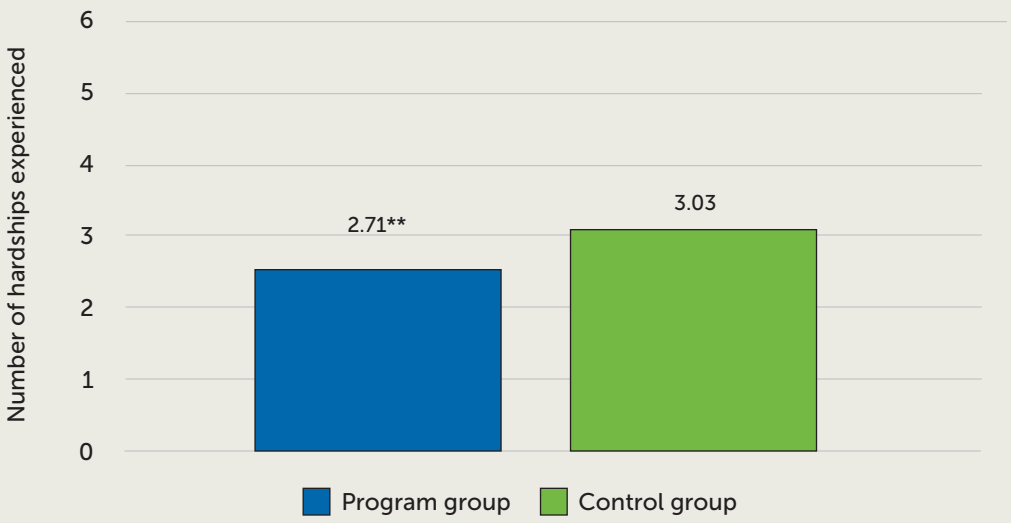
IMPACTS OF FADSS ON ECONOMIC WELL-BEING AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE (CONFIRMATORY AREA)

FaDSS reduced the number of economic hardships faced by program participants.

On average, FaDSS group members reported facing 2.71 out of 6 possible indicators of economic hardship at the time they responded to the follow-up survey, whereas members of the control group were facing an average of 3.03 hardships (Figure II.5). FaDSS therefore reduced the number of reported economic hardships by about 10 percent, a difference that was statistically significant.

To further explore this confirmatory finding, we looked at impacts on each hardship that contributes to the summary outcome included as part of the confirmatory analysis (Table II.8). FaDSS group members were less likely to have gone without a phone because it was too expensive (57 percent versus 66 percent in the control group), a difference that was statistically significant. Fewer members of the FaDSS group said they had to cut the size of meals because they couldn't afford enough food (48 percent versus 55 percent) and fewer reported taking a payday loan or selling or pawning belongings (29 versus 37 percent); both these impacts are statistically significant at the 10 percent level. These findings are consistent with FaDSS referring program participants to additional services, such as to agencies that provided families with household supplies and financial relief.

Figure II.5. Impact of FaDSS on economic hardship during the 9-month follow-up period (confirmatory analysis)



Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Regression-adjusted outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. The effect size for this impact is -0.19. This analysis is based on 263 program group and 269 control group members. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

Table II.8. Impact of FaDSS on indicators of economic hardship during the 9-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact
Cut size of meals because couldn't afford enough food (percentage)	48	55	-8*
Moved in with others because of financial problems (percentage)	42	43	0
Asked to borrow money from friends or family (percentage)	74	79	-5
Went without a phone because it was too expensive (percentage)	57	66	-10**
Took a payday loan or sold/pawned belongings (percentage)	29	37	-8*
Considered going to a doctor, dentist, or hospital but didn't because of cost (percentage)	24	29	-5
Sample size	264	267	

Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

Exploratory analysis indicates that FaDSS and control group members had similar levels of public assistance benefit receipt.

According to administrative records on TANF and SNAP receipt, 89 percent of FaDSS group and 90 percent of control group members received TANF cash assistance benefits in the 9 months following study enrollment (down from 97 percent for both groups at the time of study enrollment; Table II.9). Average monthly TANF cash assistance benefits were also similar for FaDSS and control groups. Ninety-six percent of both FaDSS and control group members received SNAP benefits in the 9 months following study enrollment. According to NDNH administrative records, 11 percent of both FaDSS and control group members received UI.

Table II.9. Impact of FaDSS on public benefit receipt during the 9-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

Outcome (administrative data)	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact
Received TANF cash assistance benefits since random assignment (percentage)	89	90	-1
Average monthly TANF cash assistance benefits ($)	157	164	-7
Received SNAP benefits since random assignment (percentage)	96	96	0
Average monthly SNAP benefits ($)	354	353	1
Received UI benefits since random assignment (percentage)	11	11	-1
Average monthly UI benefits ($)	23	33	-10
Sample size (public assistance agency records	426	429	
Sample size (NDNH)	416	416	

Source: The National Directory of New Hires and public assistance agency administrative records.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

NDNH = National Directory of New Hires; SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families;
UI = Unemployment Insurance.

IMPACTS OF FADSS BY SUBGROUP (SECONDARY ANALYSIS)

In exploratory analysis, we found the impacts of FaDSS are generally consistent across groups for most outcomes.

We examined whether impacts on the four outcomes included in the confirmatory analysis differed for a variety of subgroups defined at study enrollment, including, but not limited to, the study participant's age, number of children, education level, race/ethnicity, goal-setting skills, recent employment status, barriers to employment, possession of a valid driver's license, and urbanicity (Table II.10). Impact estimates for the confirmatory outcomes across these subgroups includes 36 comparisons of program and control group means. We estimated statistically significant differences in impacts in just three instances – only slightly more than the number of times a statistically significant comparison would be expected to emerge by chance. Data from administrative records indicate FaDSS had a negative impact on earnings reported to a UI agency among participants older than age 30 at study enrollment and no effect on such earnings for participants

younger than age 30. Enrollment in FaDSS also led to larger, favorable decreases in economic hardship among participants with some college education or higher (versus no college), and among participants whose initial goal-setting skills were at or below the sample median (versus above the median score).

Table II.10. Impact of FaDSS by subgroup during the 9-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

Subgroup	Increased goal-setting and attainment skills	Higher average monthly self-reported earnings	Higher average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency	Reduced economic hardship
Study participant age				
Older than age 30	↗**	○	↘**	○
Age 30 or younger	○	↗**	○	↗**
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	**Yes**	No
Number of children				
Two or more children	↗**	○	○	↗*
Fewer than two children	○	○	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No	No
Education level				
Some college or higher	↗**	○	○	↗***
No college	○	○	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No	**Yes**
Race and ethnicity				
Hispanic	↗*	○	○	↗**
Not Hispanic	○	○	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No	No
Goal-setting skills				
Above median score	↗*	○	○	○
At or below median score	↗*	○	○	↗***
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No	**Yes**

(continued)

Subgroup	Increased goal-setting and attainment skills	Higher average monthly self-reported earnings	Higher average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency	Reduced economic hardship
Recent employment status				
Employed currently or in past month	↗**	○	○	○
Not employed currently or in past month	↗*	○	○	↗*
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No	No
Barriers to employment				
Above median scale score	↗**	○	○	○
At or below median scale score	○	○	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No	No
Has a valid driver's license				
Yes	○	○	○	↗**
No	↗***	○	↘*	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No	No
Urbanicity				
Urban	○	○	↘**	↗***
Rural	↗**	○	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No	No

Sources: First follow-up survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Outcome variables are drawn from the first follow-up survey unless otherwise noted. Differences in subgroup impacts reflect differences that are statistically significant at the .05 level or below, two-tailed test. Appendix Table B.7 shows these subgroup impact estimates in more detail.

↗ Represents a favorable impact; ↘ represents an unfavorable impact; ○ represents no statistically significant impact.

***/**/* following the red and green arrows suggests impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01, .05, and .10 levels within a given group, respectively, two-tailed test.

The "Difference in subgroup impacts is significant" row indicates whether these within-group impacts differ from one another.

DISCUSSION OF THE FADSS IMPACT FINDINGS

FaDSS had positive, significant impacts on participants' goal-setting and attainment skills in the confirmatory analysis of impacts at 9 months after study enrollment.

Findings in this chapter show the impact of offering FaDSS in addition to regular TANF case management relative to offering TANF case management without FaDSS. FaDSS had positive, significant impacts on participants' goal-setting and attainment skills in the confirmatory analysis of impacts at 9 months after study enrollment. FaDSS coaches and participants collaboratively identify goals, determine action steps, and monitor progress on those action steps. Indeed, exploratory analysis indicated that FaDSS group members were more likely than control group members to report receiving one-on-one job assistance focused on setting goals. FaDSS' structured approach to setting goals during home visits may have effectively improved participants' goal-setting and attainment skills, including by improving individual- and family-centered goal-setting practices.

The exploratory analysis did not find impacts on other measures of self-regulation skills. This may be because, although theories of self-regulation emphasize its inherent link with setting goals (Burnette et al. 2013), FaDSS coaches are not trained to assess or consider self-regulation skills explicitly, although they may talk about topics related to self-regulation skills such as time management or avoiding conflict. If the process of setting goals improves self-regulation skills, it is possible that later follow-up may reveal impacts on direct measures of self-regulation, such as emotional control and metacognition.

We did not observe statistically significant impacts on self-reported earnings at the 9-month follow-up period in the confirmatory analysis; however, in the exploratory analysis we found suggestive evidence that FaDSS may lead to long-term, positive labor market effects. For example, we found that FaDSS group members were more likely than control group members to have completed a training program and to have received a certificate, license, or diploma from a training program. FaDSS coaches allow participants to set goals that are indirectly related to employment; according to staff-reported data, 58 percent of FaDSS group members set a goal related to education or training. Increased job skills as a result of completing training, as well as receipt of a certificate, license or diploma, may lead to higher earnings when measured at a later follow-up.

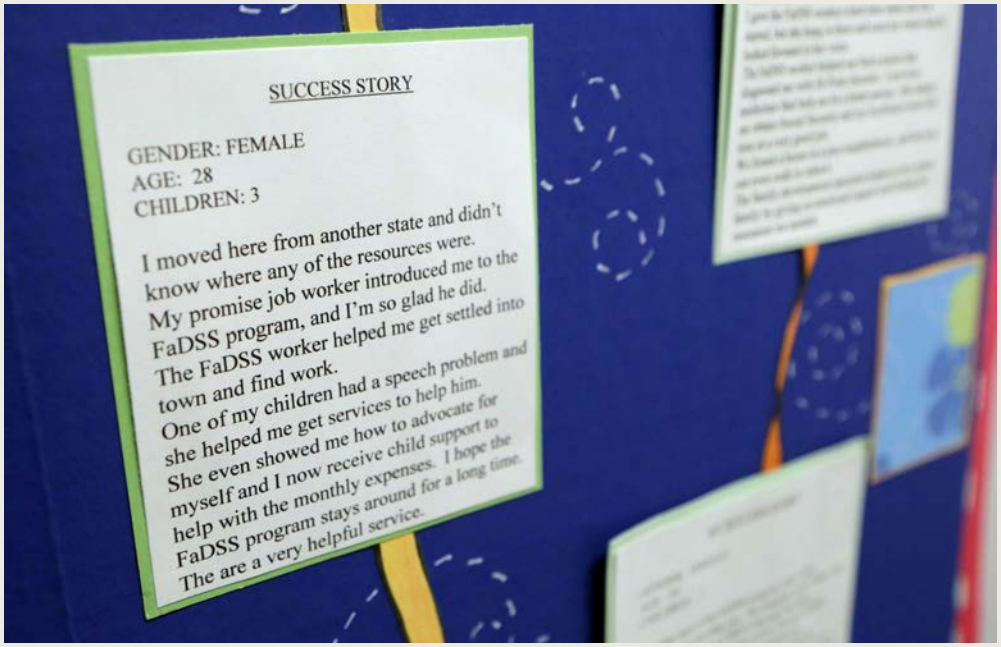
Additionally, according to secondary Bayesian analysis of the impact estimates, the probability of favorable impacts on self-reported earnings grew throughout the follow-up period, which is consistent with the possibility that earnings impacts might become more favorable over time. This may be because FaDSS participants can continue to receive FaDSS services for up to 7 months after they stop receiving TANF cash assistance. According to data collected as part of the implementation study, about 40 of FaDSS group members were still in contact with the FaDSS coach 9 months after study enrollment, whereas just 24 percent were still receiving TANF according to TANF administrative data.

Similar to self-reported earnings, we did not find an impact on earnings reported to a UI agency in the confirmatory analysis. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter VI, earnings from certain types of jobs, such as self-employment and

independent contracting, are not reported to UI agencies (Tollestrup 2019). Further, several earlier studies suggest that employers, particularly in low-wage sectors, often underreport employee earnings to UI agencies to avoid taxes or because of reporting errors (for example, Blakemore 1996; Moore et al. 2018). This study was not designed to directly assess the extent to which such under reporting took place. However, impact estimates generated as part of the exploratory analysis suggest that FaDSS was more successful at moving participants into the types of jobs for which report to a UI agency is less likely to be required, such as those that were not regular full- or part-time jobs. Additional follow-up analysis is necessary to determine whether patterns of impacts on earnings from the follow-up survey and administrative data remain divergent over time.

Finally, confirmatory analysis indicated that FaDSS significantly reduced economic hardship for participants, a central goal of FaDSS. How might FaDSS have reduced economic hardship without increasing earnings? One possibility is the program's referrals to outside services and supplemental supports helped participants avoid certain economic hardships. Another possibility is the process of setting relevant short-term goals helped FaDSS group members avoid economic hardships by helping them manage their limited resources more effectively. Eighty-one percent of FaDSS group members set a goal related to basic needs, which is consistent with exploratory analysis revealing the largest reductions in hardships were associated with the availability of basic needs and resources, such as food or household items.

A community action agency bulletin board displays FaDSS success stories.



III. Impacts of Goal4 It!

Goal4 It! is an employment coaching approach designed by Mathematica and partners[5] that was piloted in Jefferson County, Colorado's TANF program. The program uses a structured four-step approach to coaching. It was developed as an alternative to traditional TANF case management.

The goal of the impact study of Goal4 It! was to assess the effectiveness of Goal4 It! as an alternative to traditional TANF case management. Hence, TANF recipients who were subject to the work requirements were randomly assigned to either a program staff member who offered Goal4 It! (the Goal4 It! group) or a program staff member who offered the traditional TANF case management that the program had offered before the study (the control group). The study differs from the studies of the other three coaching programs in that coaching is compared with another service that the same organization provides rather than just other services the study participant can access in the community.

Goal4 It! also differs from the other three coaching programs being evaluated in that participation in Goal4 It! is mandatory for TANF recipients assigned to the program group, just as participation in traditional case management is mandatory for TANF recipients assigned to the control group.

This chapter describes the impacts of Goal4 It! as compared to traditional TANF case management during the first 9 months after study enrollment. The order of the discussion aligns with the sequence in which program impacts would be expected to emerge, beginning with the program's impacts on participants' receipt of services and moving on to a series of intermediate outcomes, including confirmatory analysis of self-regulation and goal-related skills and secondary analysis of education and training, and employment challenges. Next we describe confirmatory findings related to labor market outcomes and economic well-being, and secondary analysis of public assistance receipt. After presenting the impacts for all study participants, we then describe the impacts by subgroups of interest. We conclude with a discussion of these findings and their implications.

Goal4 It! coaches follow a structured four-phase (Goal, Plan, Do, Review and Revise) goal-setting process with program participants that involves setting goals and identifying challenges to reaching them.

THE GOAL4 IT! PROGRAM

Goal4 It! coaches follow a structured four-phase (Goal, Plan, Do, Review and Revise) goal-setting process with program participants that involves setting goals and identifying challenges to reaching them. During the Goal Phase, coaches discuss participants' current circumstances, strengths, and challenges and then work with participants to identify a meaningful goal. During the Plan Phase, participants commit to their goals, break them into achievable steps, identify obstacles and potential solutions, and work with their coach to create an action plan for goal achievement. During the Do Phase, participants work to execute the action plan. Finally, during the Review and Revise Phase, coaches and participants meet regularly to review goal progress and revise the goal or action plan as needed. Each phase has accompanying tools that coaches can use to support the process.

[5] Michelle Derr (formerly at Mathematica and now at The Adjacent Possible) and other Mathematica staff designed the intervention in partnership with other researchers and human services practitioners. None of the staff involved in its development worked on the evaluation.

Box III.1. Summary of findings for Goal4 It!

- Goal4 It! and control group members had similar levels of goal-setting and attainment skills 9 months after study enrollment. The impact from this confirmatory analysis was not statistically significant.
- Goal4 It! group members had higher self-reported earnings during the 9-month follow-up period than control group members did, on average, although the impact from this confirmatory analysis was not statistically significant. We conducted Bayesian analysis of this impact estimate to further contextualize the confirmatory findings. This secondary analysis indicates that the impact was likely positive but small, and did not reveal a clear trend over time.
- Goal4 It! and control group members had similar earnings that were reported to a UI agency, on average, during the follow-up period. The impact from this confirmatory analysis was not statistically significant.
- Goal4 It! and control group members reported similar levels of economic hardship 9 months after study enrollment. The impact from this confirmatory analysis was not statistically significant.

Coaches are trained on the importance of self-regulation skills. Although they may discuss self-regulation skills with program participants, they do not formally assess for strengths and weaknesses in the skills or name the skills in coaching sessions.

Goal4 It! participants are expected to meet with their coach in person monthly if they are unemployed and once every 2 months if they are working. Participants are also expected to make progress on the action steps to which they commit. Failure to meet with their coach could lead to a termination of TANF cash assistance. Failure to conduct activities that participants agreed on with their coach could lead to a sanction or a reduction in the amount of TANF cash assistance.

Eligibility criteria and enrollment procedures

To be eligible to receive Goal4 It!, participants must be deemed eligible for TANF cash assistance in Jefferson County, Colorado, and be subject to TANF work requirements. Participants can receive Goal4 It! only while they are participating in TANF.

From October 2018 to November 2019, 802 adults enrolled in the study. All TANF recipients who were subject to the TANF work requirements and consented to participate in the study were randomly assigned to either the Goal4 It! group or the control group. Members of the Goal4 It! group were required to receive coaching using Goal4 It!. Control group members could not access Goal4 It! coaching but were required to participate in traditional case management from a TANF case manager. This case management also incorporated setting goals, although identification of goals and actions taken to meet them were typically directed by case managers rather than driven by participants themselves as in coaching. Members of both the Goal4 It! and control groups could access other services in the community.

Participant characteristics

Goal4 It! study participants were typically single women who were either White or Hispanic with one or two children (Table III.1). Study participants' average age was 32, and 90 percent were female. Forty-seven percent of study participants were White,

non-Hispanic, and 42 percent were Hispanic; the rest were Black, non-Hispanic or another race or ethnicity. Only 12 percent of study participants were currently married, although about 40 percent reported living with another adult in their household.

Most study participants were unemployed at the time of study enrollment (Table III.1). Twenty-seven percent of study participants reported working for pay in the past 30 days, and, of those who reported working, just 9 percent worked in a full-time job in the past 30 days. Employed study participants earned, on average, approximately $600 per month. To put this in context, if a three-person household had no additional income from other sources, earnings of $600 would represent about 34 percent of the federal poverty guideline ($1,778 per month in 2019). Ninety-three percent of study participants reported receiving public assistance benefits; receipt of TANF benefits was required to be eligible for study enrollment. The other 7 percent were deemed eligible for TANF at study enrollment but did not begin receiving TANF benefits until one or more months afterwards. According to Goal4 It! administrative records, approximately 97 percent of study participants received TANF cash assistance benefits within 1 month of study enrollment.

Almost half of study participants identified a lack of child care as a challenge to finding or keeping a good job, and 42 percent identified a lack of transportation as an employment challenge (Table III.1). Thirty percent also identified a lack of education or job skills as a challenge to employment. Most study participants had not attended college, and almost one in four did not have a high school diploma or GED. One-third of study participants lived in an unstable housing situation (such as being unsheltered, living in a housing shelter, or living in another rent-free arrangement). Approximately 40 percent did not have a valid driver's license, a challenge in a suburban area like Jefferson County with limited public transportation.

Coaching model implementation

The implementation study of Goal4 It! found that coaches implemented most facets of the program as intended (Joyce et al. 2022). Using multiple data sources, the implementation study found that coaches used the Goal4 It! process and tools, and Goal4 It! participants met with coaches more than once per month while in the program, on average. Coaches generally reported being nondirective but were sometimes observed directing participants, such as by suggesting concrete action steps and offering next steps without soliciting participants' input. Goal4 It! participants frequently set goals and developed action steps during coaching sessions, most commonly discussing goals related to employment. Goal4 It! group members were significantly more likely than those receiving traditional case management to discuss goals related to employment. Participation in Goal4 It! was short—participants remained in the program for about 3 months, on average. This was consistent with an average length of participation in TANF of just over 4 months in Jefferson County. During the year after study enrollment, program participants had an average of four interactions with coaches.[6] Less than 10 percent of program participants were still in contact with a coach 12 months after study enrollment.

[6] The study management information system includes service receipt data for a maximum 12-month follow-up period.

Table III.1. Characteristics of Goal4 It! study participants at the time of study enrollment

Baseline characteristic	Mean or percentage
Demographics	
Age (in years)	32.4
Female (percentage)	90
Race and ethnicity (percentage)	
Hispanic	42
Black, non-Hispanic	9
White, non-Hispanic	47
Other	3
Currently married (percentage)	12
Number of adults in the respondent's household	1.5
Number of children respondent lives with	1.9
Socioeconomic status	
Does not have high school diploma or GED (percentage)	22
Receiving public assistance (percentage)	93
Receiving income from TANF (public assistance agency records; percentage)	97
Worked for pay in past 30 days (percentage)	27
Self-reported earnings in past 30 days ($)	
All study participants	160
Among those who worked for pay	601
Hours worked per week at current or most recent job (percentage)	
Did not work in past 30 days	75
Part time (less than 35 hours)	16
Full time (35 hours or more)	9
Worked for pay in past quarter (NDNH; percentage)	49
Monthly earnings reported to a UI agency in the past quarter (NDNH; $)	
All study participants	733
Among those with positive earnings reported to a UI agency	1,491
Employment challenges	
Challenges that made it very or extremely hard to find or keep a good job (percentage)	
Lack of transportation	42
Lack of child care	48
Lack of right clothes or tools for work	27
Lack of the right skills or education	30
Perceived lack of jobs in area	17
Having a criminal record	21
Health condition	23
No valid driver's license (percentage)	38
Unstable housing (percentage)	34
Sample size	802

Sources: Baseline survey, public assistance agency administrative records, and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Appendix Table C.1 presents the full set of baseline characteristics separately for program and control group members. Unstable housing refers to being unsheltered, living in a shelter, or having another rent-free living arrangement.

GED = General Educational Development. NDNH = National Directory of New Hires; TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; UI=Unemployment Insurance.

IMPACTS OF GOAL4 IT! ON SERVICE RECEIPT (SECONDARY AREA)

Study participants in the Goal4 It! group and those offered traditional case management reported similar levels of one-on-one job assistance and other services.

Approximately 40 percent of both Goal4 It! and control group members reported receiving one-on-one job assistance during the 9 months following study enrollment (Table III.2). On average, members of both groups received one-on-one job assistance about three times over this period. Thirty-five to 40 percent of members of both groups reported receiving one-on-one job assistance focused on setting short- and long-term goals and planning to achieve those goals. Goal4 It! and control group members were also similarly likely to have received other types of program services since study enrollment, such as child care and transportation assistance.

Based on administrative records on service receipt, Goal4 It! group members had more contact with program staff than members of the group offered traditional TANF case management.

Administrative records from the study management information system were also collected to track service receipt and program participation for all study participants, including control group members who were enrolled in traditional case management. Goal4 It! is the only employment coaching program included in the evaluation in which staff entered service receipt data not only for program group members but also for control group members. These data indicate higher levels of service receipt than reported in the follow-up survey, particularly for Goal4 It! group members, suggesting that study participants may not have recognized case management or coaching as job assistance (Table III.2). Based on the administrative data, Goal4 It! group members had more contacts with program staff than control group members, on average (3.7 versus 2.6 contacts).

In addition to receiving more contacts with program staff than control group members, Goal4 It! group members were more likely to set and develop goals, consistent with Goal4 It!'s structured process for setting and pursuing goals (Table III.2). Seventy-six percent of coaching contacts between coaches and Goal4 It! group members included setting goals, 72 percent included development of action steps, and 85 percent included discussion of next steps (compared to 70, 67, and 62 percent for control group members, respectively). The implementation study report on Goal4 It! provides additional detail on patterns of service receipt from program administrative data (Saunders et al. 2022).

Table III.2. Impact of Goal4 It! on service receipt during the 9-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Effect size
Service receipt (survey data)				
Ever received one-on-one job assistance (percentage)	41	43	-1	-0.03
Number of times received one-on-one job assistance	3.0	3.4	-0.5	-0.05
Received one-on-one job assistance focused on (percentage):				
Setting long-term goals	35	36	0	-0.01
Setting short-term goals	37	40	-3	-0.07
Planning to achieve goals	37	39	-3	-0.07
Received the following service from a program since study enrollment (percentage):				
Child care services	27	21	6	0.18
Transportation assistance	45	45	0	0.00
Clothes, uniforms, tools, or other supplies and equipment	16	15	1	0.05
Service receipt (management information system data)				
Ever received coaching (percentage)	92	87	5**	0.35
Number of contacts with coach by mode:				
In person	2.7	2.2	0.5***	0.24
Telephone	0.7	0.3	0.4***	0.37
Email	0.3	0.1	0.2***	0.30
Number of coaching contacts that included:				
Setting goals	2.6	1.7	1.0***	0.46
Development of action steps	2.6	1.6	1.0***	0.45
Discussion of next steps	3.1	1.7	1.5***	0.58
Percentage of coaching contacts that included (if coaching ever received):				
Setting goals	76	70	6***	0.20
Development of action steps	72	67	5**	0.15
Discussion of next steps	85	62	23***	0.68
Sample size (survey)	218	218		
Sample size (management information system)	401	401		

Sources: First follow-up survey and staff records from the study management information system.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Outcome variables are drawn from the first follow-up survey unless otherwise noted. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

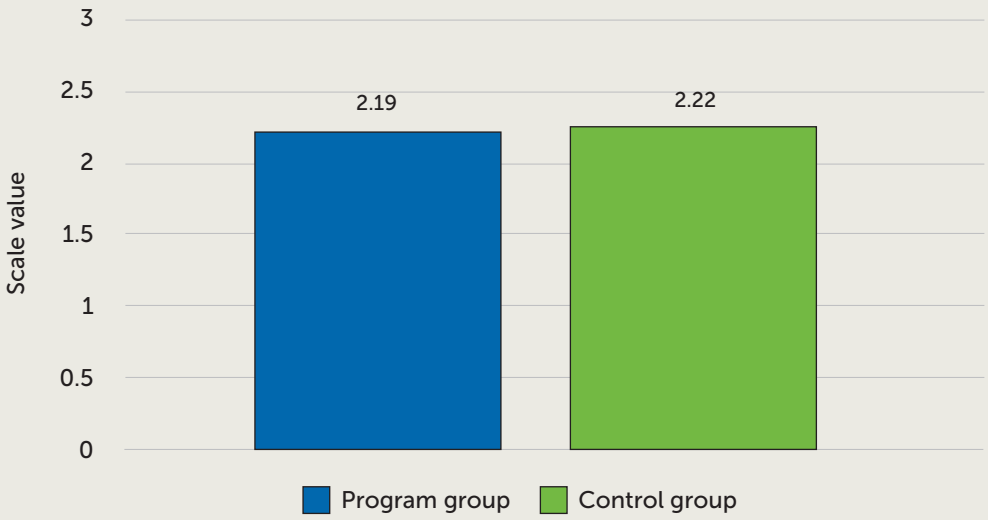
***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

IMPACTS OF GOAL4 IT! ON GOAL-SETTING AND SELF-REGULATION SKILLS (CONFIRMATORY AREA)

At 9 months after study enrollment, goal-setting and attainment skills were similar for study participants offered Goal4 It! and those offered traditional case management.

Although goal-setting and self-regulation skill improvement was incorporated in the development of Goal4 It!, Goal4 It! and control group members had similar scores on goal-setting and attainment skills as measured by the follow-up survey—2.19 and 2.22, respectively (Figure III.1). These scores reflect an average between agreeing with and strongly agreeing with the eight statements on setting goals and are generally in the range of those reported by participants in the studies of other employment coaching programs.

Figure III.1. Impact of Goal4 It! on goal-setting and attainment skills during the 9-month follow-up period (confirmatory analysis)



Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. The effect size for this impact is -0.04. This analysis includes 225 program group members and 224 control group members. The goal-setting and attainment scale indicates study participants' average level of agreement with eight statements about their goal-related skills. Scores range from 0 (strongly disagree) to 3 (strongly agree).

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

IMPACTS OF GOAL4 IT! ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING (SECONDARY AREA)

In secondary analysis, Goal4 It! group members were no more likely than control group members to complete education or training programs by the time of the first follow-up survey.

Members of both the Goal4 It! and control groups were equally likely to say they had participated in or completed an education program. Twenty-five percent of Goal4 It! group members and 20 percent of control group members participated in an education program, whereas 7 and 5 percent completed an education program, respectively (Table III.3). The differences between groups were not statistically significant.

Members of both groups were also similarly likely to say they had participated in, completed, or received a certificate, license, or diploma from a training program. Thirteen percent of Goal4 It! group members and 14 percent of control group members participated in a training program, whereas 7 percent and 8 percent completed that program, respectively.

Table III.3. Impact of Goal4 It! on education and training during the 9-month follow-up period (secondary and exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact
Participation in an education program (percentage)	25	20	4
Completion of an education program (percentage)	7	5	2
Participation in a training program (percentage)	13	14	0
Completion of a training program (percentage)	7	8	0
Receipt of a certificate, license, or diploma from a training program (percentage)	6	5	1
Participation in an education or training program (percentage)	30	28	2
Completion of an education or training program (percentage)	11	12	-2
Sample size	217	216	

Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

IMPACTS OF GOAL4 IT! ON EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES AND HOUSING STABILITY (SECONDARY AREA)

Secondary analysis indicates that Goal4 It! and control group members were similarly likely to report experiencing most employment challenges and unstable housing.

Goal4 It! and control group members were equally likely to identify unreliable transportation, a lack of needed skills or education, a limiting health condition, not having the right clothes or tools, and having a criminal record as challenges that made it very hard or extremely hard to find and keep a good job (Table III.4). None of the differences between the groups was statistically significant. However, Goal4 It! group members were more likely than control group members to report that the absence of child care or family support (51 percent versus 40 percent) was an employment challenge, a statistically significant difference. Members of both groups were similarly likely to report not having a valid driver's license and to report living in an unstable housing situation (that is they were unsheltered, living in a shelter, or had another rent-free living arrangement).

Table III.4. Impact of Goal4 It! on employment challenges and housing stability during the 9-month follow-up period (secondary and exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Effect size
Employment challenges				
Challenge that made it very hard or extremely hard to find and keep a good job (percentage):				
Not having child care or family support	51	40	11**	0.27
Not having reliable transportation	33	38	-4	-0.12
Lack of needed skills or education	28	24	4	0.13
Not having right clothes or tools	21	26	-5	-0.16
Having a criminal record	17	17	0	0.01
Having limiting health condition	25	22	3	0.09
Employment challenges: composite	2.52	2.47	0.04	2.52
No valid driver's license (percentage)	31	33	-2	31
Housing stability				
Unstable housing (percentage)	21	18	2	0.09
Sample size	229	228		

Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group. Unstable housing refers to being unsheltered, living in a shelter, or having another rent-free living arrangement.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

IMPACTS OF GOAL4 IT! ON LABOR MARKET OUTCOMES (CONFIRMATORY AREA)

Goal4 It! group members had higher average self-reported earnings during the 9-month follow-up period than control group members, although the difference was not statistically significant. Bayesian analysis suggests this impact was likely positive but small.

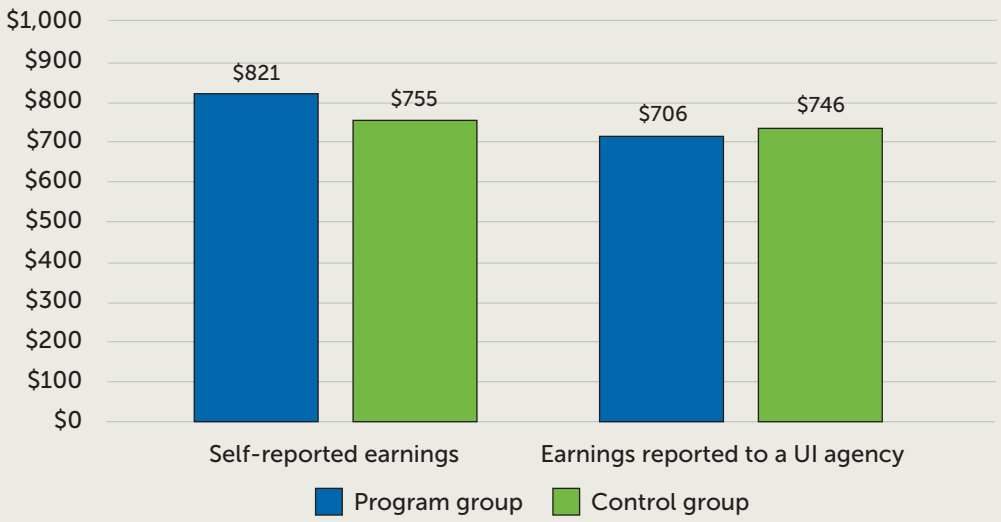
Goal4 It! group members reported earning $821 per month, on average, whereas control group members reported earning $755 per month, on average; this difference of $66 is not statistically significant (Figure III.2). To contextualize these findings, we conducted Bayesian analysis, which gives an interpretation of program impacts on earnings that takes into account the prior evidence on the effectiveness of similar programs. These estimates indicate a 71 percent chance that the impact of Goal4 It! on self-reported earnings was greater than $0 but only a 24 percent chance that this impact exceeds $50 (Figure III.3).

Administrative records suggest that Goal4 It! and control group members had similar earnings reported to a UI agency, on average, during the 9-month follow-up period.

According to administrative earnings data, Goal4 It! group members earned $706 per month from jobs reported to a UI agency, on average, whereas control group members earned $746 per month, on average; the difference is not statistically significant

(Figure III.2). Bayesian analysis suggests that the impact on earnings reported to a UI agency for Goal4 It! was likely near $0; the analysis suggests a 62 percent chance that the impact was between a $25 reduction and a $25 increase in earnings reported to a UI agency per month (Figure III.3).

Figure III.2. Impact of Goal4 It! on average monthly self-reported earnings and average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency during the 9-month follow-up period (confirmatory analysis)

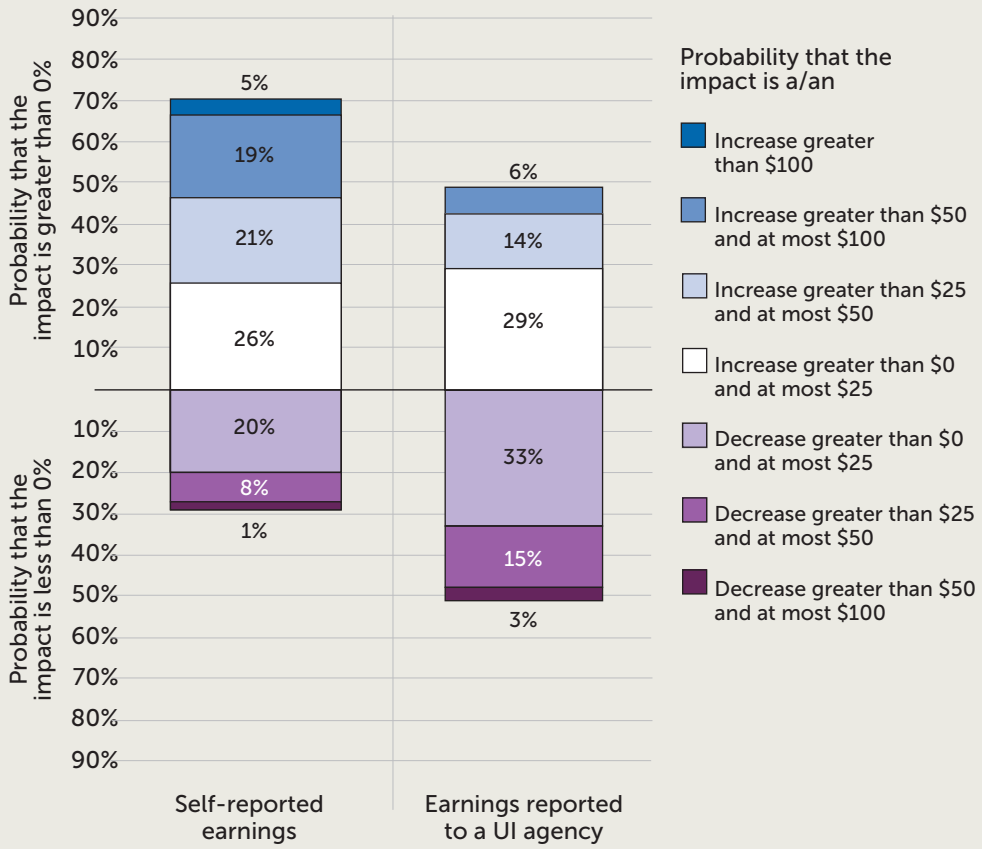


Sources: First follow-up survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Analysis of average monthly earnings from the first follow-up survey includes 250 program group and 247 control group members. Analysis of average monthly earnings from the National Directory of New Hires includes 416 program group and 416 control group members. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

Figure III.3. Probability of various sizes of the impact of Goal4 It! on average monthly self-reported earnings and average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency during the 9-month follow-up period (secondary analysis)



Sources: First follow-up survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Probabilities that impacts are various sizes are part of the exploratory analysis and calculated using Bayesian methods. Analysis of average monthly earnings from the first follow-up survey includes 250 program group and 247 control group members. Analysis of average monthly earnings from the NDNH includes 416 program group and 416 control group members.

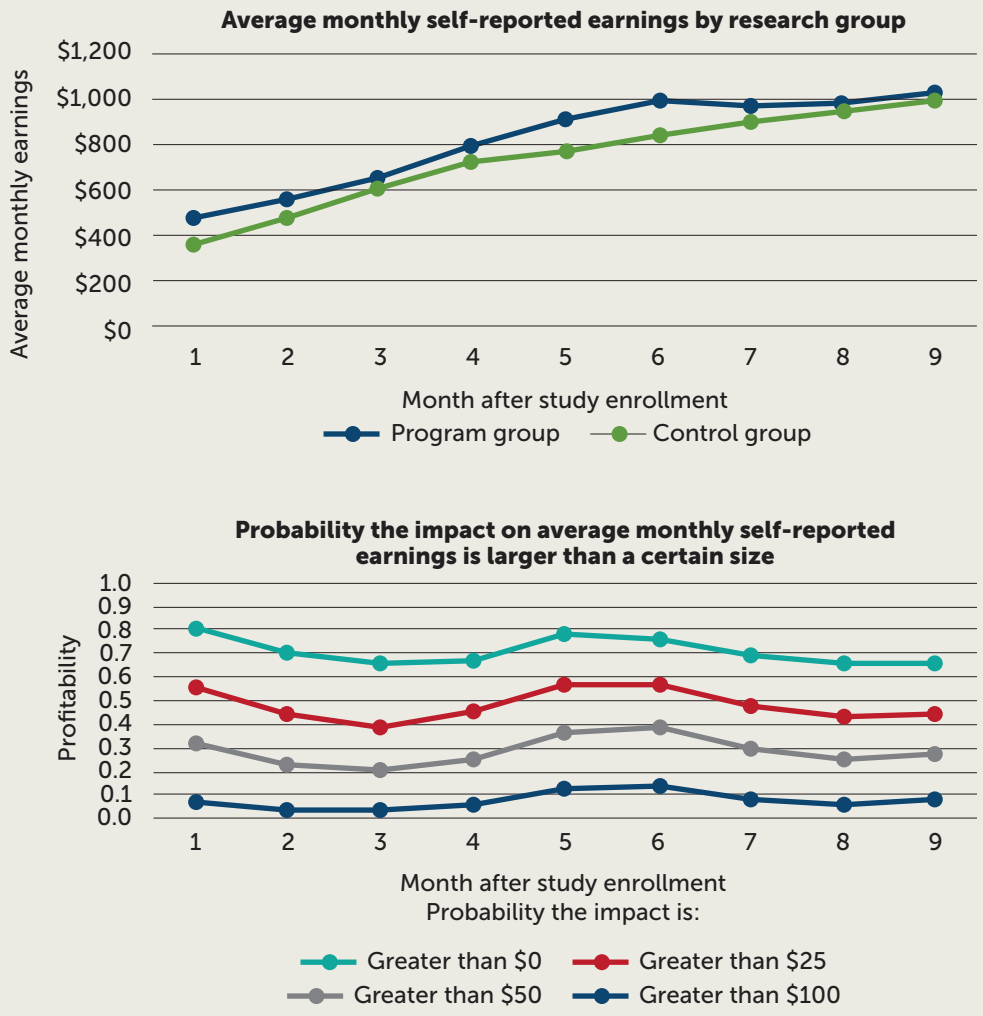
NDNH = National Directory of New Hires.

Analysis of the timing of impacts on self-reported earnings suggests small, likely positive impacts that emerge quickly but do not demonstrate a clear pattern over time. The probability of a positive impact on self-reported earnings was lowest at the end of the follow-up period.

Bayesian analysis indicates that Goal4 It! produced a positive impact on self-reported earnings in the first month after study enrollment, which was very likely to be positive (81 percent) and may be greater than $25 (56 percent), though it was not statistically significant (Figure III.4). Bayesian analysis suggests a small, positive effect of the program in the second through ninth month after study enrollment, although the probability of a positive impact is not as large, fluctuating between 65 and 76 percent. The probability of a positive impact was lowest (65 percent) at the end of the 9-month follow-up period.

We did not observe statistically significant impacts when examining earnings reported to a UI agency in any quarter, although the probability of a positive impact is also lowest (just 33 percent) during the final quarter of the follow-up period (Table III.5).

Figure III.4. Impact of Goal4 It! on average monthly self-reported earnings by month during the 9-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)



Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. The top panel of this figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group. Probabilities that impacts are greater than a certain value are part of the exploratory analysis and calculated using Bayesian methods. Appendix Table C.6 presents these estimates in full detail.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

Table III.5. Impact of Goal4 It! on average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency by quarter during the 9-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

				Probability that the true impact is:							
Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Less than –$100	Less than –$50	Less than –$25	Less than $0	Greater than $0	Greater than $25	Greater than $50	Greater than $100
Average monthly earnings by quarter after study enrollment (NDNH; $)											
Quarter 1	594	579	15	0.00	0.01	0.09	0.35	0.65	0.33	0.13	0.01
Quarter 2	740	756	-16	0.00	0.03	0.17	0.43	0.57	0.30	0.13	0.01
Quarter 3	798	928	-130	0.01	0.14	0.38	0.67	0.33	0.13	0.04	0.00
Sample size	396	394									

Sources: The National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months (three quarters) after study enrollment. Probabilities that impacts are greater than a certain value are part of the exploratory analysis and calculated using Bayesian methods. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

NDNH = National Directory of New Hires.

In an analysis conducted to complement our confirmatory analysis on earnings, we found that Goal4 It! increased rates of employment, particularly in part-time jobs and within the first 7 months after study enrollment.

According to survey data, on average, Goal4 It! group members were employed for 46 percent of months in the follow-up period and control group members were employed for 38 percent of months, a statistically significant difference (Table III.6). Based on administrative records, Goal4 It! group members were employed in 51 percent of the three follow-up quarters, on average, and control group members were employed in 46 percent of quarters, on average (a difference that was statistically significant at the 10 percent level). Estimates from both the survey and administrative earnings data suggested that impacts on employment emerged in the first months after study enrollment, but faded out by the end of the 9-month follow-up period. Impacts on self-reported employment ranged from 8 to 11 percentage points in the first 7 months after study enrollment but largely disappeared in months 8 and 9 after study enrollment. Administrative records suggested positive impacts on employment in jobs reported to a UI agency of 6 to 8 percentage points in the first two quarters after study enrollment but suggested similar rates of employment between Goal4 It! and control group members in the third quarter after study enrollment.

The impacts of Goal4 It! on the self-reported employment of Goal4 It! group members were driven by employment in part-time jobs (Table III.6). According to survey data, Goal4 It! group members were exclusively employed in a part-time job for a greater proportion of the follow-up period, on average (14 versus 8 percent). Goal4 It! group members were employed in a full-time job for slightly less time than control group members (17 versus 21 percent), but the difference was not statistically significant.

Members of both groups were similarly likely to ever be employed in a job offering fringe benefits.

Table III.6. Impact of Goal4 It! on other labor market and job quality outcomes during the 9-month follow-up period (secondary and exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Effect size
Labor market outcomes				
Percentage of follow-up months employed	46	38	9**	0.20
Percentage of follow-up quarters employed (NDNH)	51	46	5*	0.12
Percentage of follow-up months employed in a full-time job	17	21	-4	-0.11
Percentage of follow-up months employed in a part-time job only	14	8	7***	0.28
Percentage of follow-up months employed in multiple jobs	3	3	0	0.03
Job quality	.	.	.	.
Employed in job offering fringe benefits (percentage)	30	32	-2	-0.06
Percentage of follow-up months employed in a job offering fringe benefits	17	19	-2	-0.07
Sample size (survey)	234	228		
Sample size (NDNH)	396	394		

Sources: First follow-up survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months (three quarters) after study enrollment. Outcome variables are drawn from the first follow-up survey unless otherwise noted. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

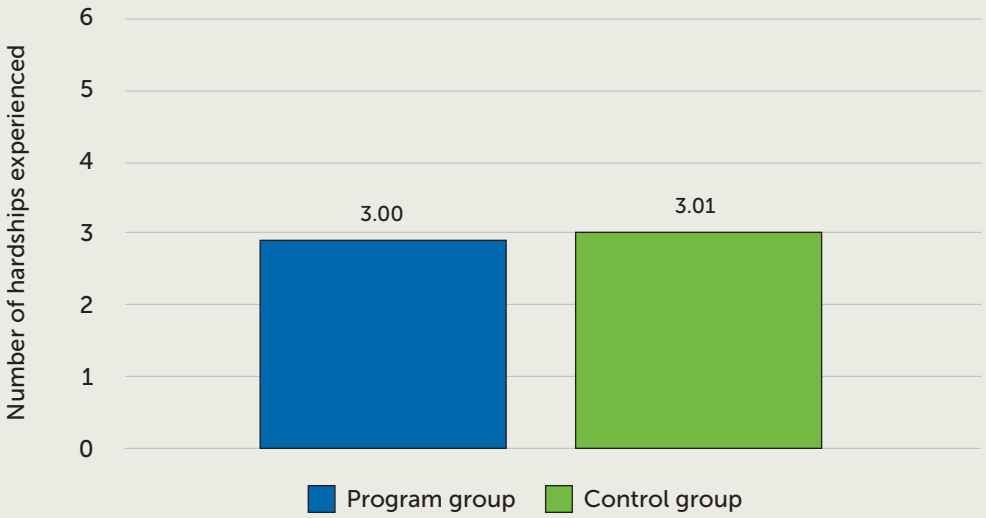
NDNH = National Directory of New Hires.

IMPACTS OF GOAL4 IT! ON ECONOMIC WELL-BEING AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE (CONFIRMATORY AREA)

Goal4 It! and control group members reported similar levels of economic hardship.

Goal4 It! and control group members agreed with about three out of six indicators of economic hardship (Figure III.5). These include whether study participants asked to borrow money from friends or family, cut size of meals because they could not afford enough food, moved in with others because of financial problems, went without a phone because it was too expensive, took a payday loan or pawned belongings, or considered going to a medical professional but did not because of the cost.

Figure III.5. Impact of Goal4 It! on economic hardship during the 9-month follow-up period (confirmatory analysis)



Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. The effect size for this impact is -0.01. This analysis includes 232 program group members and 228 control group members. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

Exploratory analysis indicates that Goal4 It! and control group members received public assistance benefits at similar levels during the 9-month follow-up period.

According to administrative data received from Jefferson County, 93 percent of Goal4 It! group members and 92 percent of control group members received TANF cash assistance benefits in the 9 months after study enrollment (Table III.7).[7] On average over this span, Goal4 It! group members received $222 and control group members received $238 in TANF cash assistance benefits per month. Ninety-five percent of Goal4 It! group members received SNAP benefits since study enrollment, as compared with 96 percent of control group members. According to administrative data, members of both groups also had similar levels of UI receipt and average monthly UI benefits.

[7] Although all participants were deemed eligible for TANF receipt at study enrollment, some left the program within the first month and others were randomly assigned before their TANF application was approved or processed.

Table III.7. Impact of Goal4 It! on public benefit receipt during the 9-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

Outcome (administrative data)	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact
Received TANF cash assistance benefits since random assignment (percentage)	93	92	1
Average monthly TANF cash assistance benefits ($)	222	238	-16
Received SNAP benefits since random assignment (percentage)	95	96	-1
Received UI benefits since random assignment (percentage)	9	8	1
Average monthly UI benefits ($)	28	35	-8
Sample size (public assistance agency records)	401	399	
Sample size (NDNH)	396	394	

Sources: National Directory of New Hires and public assistance agency administrative records.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

NDNH = National Directory of New Hires; SNAP= Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; UI=Unemployment Insurance.

IMPACTS OF GOAL4 IT! BY SUBGROUP (SECONDARY ANALYSIS)

Exploratory analysis indicates that the impacts of Goal4 It! are generally consistent across groups for most outcomes.

We examined whether impacts on the four confirmatory outcomes differed for subgroups defined at study enrollment including study participant age, number of children, education level, race and ethnicity, initial goal-setting skills, and barriers to employment (Table III.8). Impact estimates for the confirmatory outcomes across these subgroups includes 24 comparisons of program and control group means. We found evidence of differences in impacts for just three—self-reported earnings by participant age and number of children, and goal-setting and attainment skills by education level at study enrollment. Specifically, Goal4 It! led to larger impacts on self-reported earnings among participants who were age 30 or younger (versus older than 30 years) and among those with fewer than two children at study enrollment (versus two or more children), whereas the program might have been more effective for promoting goal-setting and attainment scores among participants with some college or higher (versus those with no college). As previously described, in most cases, we found no evidence of differences in impacts by group.

Table III.8. Impact of Goal4 It! by subgroup during the 9-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

Subgroup	Increased goal-setting and attainment skills	Higher average monthly self-reported earnings	Higher average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency	Reduced economic hardship
Study participant age				
Older than age 30	○	○	○	○
Age 30 or younger	○	↗***	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	**Yes**	No	No
Number of children				
Two or more children	○	○	○	○
Fewer than two children	○	↗***	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	**Yes**	No	No
Education level				
Some college or higher	↗*	○	○	○
No college	↘**	↗*	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	**Yes**	No	No	No
Race and ethnicity				
Hispanic	○	○	○	○
Not Hispanic	○	○	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No	No
Goal-setting skills				
Above median score	○	○	○	○
At or below median score	○	○	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No	No
Barriers to employment				
Above median score	○	○	↘**	○
At or below median score	○	○	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No	No

(continued)

Sources: First follow-up survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Outcome variables are drawn from the first follow-up survey unless otherwise noted. Differences in subgroup impacts reflect differences that are statistically significant at the .05 level or below, two-tailed test. Appendix Table C.7 presents these subgroup impact estimates in greater detail.

Represents a favorable impact; represents an unfavorable impact; ◯ represents no statistically significant impact.

***/**/* following the red and green arrows suggests impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01, .05, and .10 levels within a given group, respectively, two-tailed test.

The "Difference in impacts by subgroup is significant" row indicates whether these within-group impacts differ from one another.

DISCUSSION OF THE GOAL4 IT! IMPACT FINDINGS

Findings in this chapter show the impact of offering Goal4 It! in place of traditional case management in a TANF program. The study of Goal4 It! differs from the study of the other coaching programs participating in the evaluation in that participation in coaching or case management is required for study participants as a condition of receiving TANF benefits, and that the same organization that provides the coaching also provides services to the control group. Hence, the study of Goal4 It! shows the expected impacts of changing from traditional case management to Goal4 It! in a TANF program.

According to the confirmatory analysis of impacts at 9 months after study enrollment, Goal4 It! and control group members had similar goal-setting and attainment skills, average monthly earnings, and experience with economic hardship. However, secondary analysis suggests a high probability that the program led to small, positive effects on self-reported earnings and employment, particularly in the first several months after study enrollment. Exploratory analysis indicated that effects on employment were particularly concentrated within part-time jobs.

Short-term effects on self-reported earnings and employment are consistent with the types of employment-related goals Goal4 It! group members discussed with their coach.

Short-term effects on self-reported earnings and employment are consistent with the types of employment-related goals Goal4 It! group members discussed with their coach. Although the most common goals discussed for both Goal4 It! and control groups were related to employment, exploratory analysis indicated significantly more Goal4 It! group members discussed employment-related topics than did control group members (Gardiner et al. 2023). Goal4 It! coaches aim to provide nondirective support to Goal4 It! participants as they set their own goals and action steps. This focus on Goal4 It! participants' employment-related goals might explain why the program led to short-term impacts on employment in part-time jobs. However, control group members were more likely than Goal4 It! group members to be employed in full-time jobs, although this difference was not statistically significant. If this pattern continues or becomes stronger, it is possible that negative earnings impacts will emerge in longer follow-up periods.

Additionally, or alternatively, program impacts on labor market outcomes may have faded once coaching ended, which was after only 3 months, on average. Because Goal4 It! coaching is tied to receiving TANF benefits, Goal4 It! participants may have exited the program relatively quickly if they only received TANF benefits for a short duration. Three in five Goal4 It! group members were still receiving TANF cash assistance benefits 3 months after study enrollment, and just one in four were

still receiving such benefits 6 months after study enrollment. If Goal4 It! participants stopped receiving coaching after only a few months because they lost eligibility for the program, it may have been difficult to build the types of lasting relationships with coaches that could lead to longer-term impacts on labor market outcomes.

An important question is why there are no program impacts on self-regulation and goal-setting and attainment skills in the confirmatory analysis. Goal-setting skills are measured at the time of the follow-up survey—at least 9 months after study enrollment, and several months after we estimate positive impacts on labor market outcomes as part of the secondary and exploratory analysis. One possibility is that very short-term impacts on goal-setting skills may have occurred alongside those on earnings and employment before fading after Goal4 It! participants left the program. Future analysis will consider whether key features of program participation, including intensity and duration of employment coaching, further associated with program impacts on goal-setting skills.

In interpreting these findings, the Goal4 It! impacts relative to traditional case management should be compared with the additional cost of offering the program. Favorable impacts of greater value than the cost of the program relative to traditional case management would justify its use. This study does not include a formal cost analysis, but there is anecdotal evidence from the implementation study that the relative cost of implementing Goal4 It! was modest. Findings from the implementation study indicate that Goal4 It! participants received about one hour of additional contact time relative to traditional case management participants (3.0 versus 2.1 hours; Gardiner et al. 2023). Moreover, program leadership reported that the other costs of implementing Goal4 It! are similar to those of offering traditional case management. Thus, modest favorable impacts—such as those found for self-reported earnings—would justify using Goal4 It! rather than traditional case management.

A Goal4 It! participant meets with the coach

IV. Impacts of LIFT

LIFT is a nonprofit organization that provides career and financial coaching to parents and caregivers of young children who are in a relatively stable situation (for example, they have housing). LIFT operates in four cities: Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, DC. The study is taking place in all locations except Washington, DC, which was excluded due to its small size and involvement in another study.

This chapter describes LIFT's impacts during the 9 months after study enrollment. The order of the discussion aligns with the sequence in which program impacts would be expected to emerge, beginning with the program's impacts on participants' receipt of services and moving on to a series of intermediate outcomes, including confirmatory analysis of self-regulation and goal-related skills and secondary analysis of education and training, and employment challenges. Next we describe confirmatory findings related to labor market outcomes and economic well-being, and secondary analysis of public assistance receipt. After presenting the impacts for all study participants, we describe the impacts by subgroups of interest. After presenting the impacts for all study participants, we discuss impacts by subgroups of interest. We conclude with a discussion of the findings and their implications.

Box IV.1. Summary of findings for LIFT

- LIFT and control group members had similar levels of goal-setting and attainment skills 9 months after study enrollment. The impact from this confirmatory analysis was not statistically significant.
- LIFT and control group members had similar self-reported earnings, on average, during the follow-up period. The impact from this confirmatory analysis was not statistically significant.
- LIFT and control group members reported similar levels of economic hardship 9 months after study enrollment. The impact from this confirmatory analysis was not statistically significant.
- Secondary and exploratory analysis suggest LIFT group members were more likely than control group members to have participated in education programs and to be participating in training programs at the time of the follow-up survey, although they were no more likely to have completed education or training programs. These impacts were statistically significant.

THE LIFT PROGRAM

LIFT uses a coaching approach to help program participants create a plan to attain short- and long-term goals related to financial security, education, and career advancement. LIFT offices used a variety of channels to identify potential participants, including referrals from early child care centers in Chicago, partnerships with local community leaders and schools in New York City, and partnerships with community colleges, child care centers, schools, housing organizations, and other non profits in Los Angeles. LIFT also received referrals from current and former LIFT participants. Coaches are unpaid student interns from MSW programs at local universities. They work part time, and their placements last about one academic year.

Coaching begins immediately at the intake session. During the first month, LIFT participants are expected to attend two coaching sessions, and coaches and participants aim to meet monthly after that for up to 2 years, either in person or via phone. Depending on the location, in-person meetings take place at the program office or a community partner's office. LIFT participants receive financial incentives of up to $150 every 3 months if they attend sessions regularly, with an upper limit of $1,000 over 2 years. Other services, such as workshops and social gatherings, are designed to strengthen participants' skills and networks.

LIFT uses the Wheel of Life, an assessment tool, with participants to assess their satisfaction in different life areas and help determine their goals. Coaches are trained on the role of self-regulation skills in pursuing goals, but do not discuss self-regulation skills explicitly with participants.

Eligibility criteria and enrollment procedures

To enroll in LIFT, applicants must be parents or other caregivers of children younger than age 8, or expectant parents. They also must demonstrate the level of stability needed to work on long- and short-term goals, meaning they must have had stable housing for at least 6 months and (1) be employed or live with someone who is employed at least part time, or (2) be in an educational program.

From June 2018 to November 2019, 808 adults enrolled in the study. All applicants who were found eligible for the study and consented to participate in the study were randomly assigned to either the LIFT group, who could participate in LIFT, or the control group, who could not participate in LIFT. Members of both the LIFT and control groups could access other services available in the community.

Participant characteristics

LIFT study participants were almost all women (95 percent), typically single women in their 30s (Table IV.1). More than 70 percent reported they were Hispanic, and 1 in 4 were Black and non-Hispanic. On average, study participants were age 33 when they enrolled in the study. About one third (35 percent) of participants were married at baseline, and most study participants' households included two adults and an average of two children. A high percentage (38 percent) of study participants said they had no GED or high school diploma.

LIFT study participants were almost all women (95 percent), typically single women in their 30s.

In general, LIFT study participants were economically disadvantaged (Table IV.1). Eighty-four percent were receiving public assistance when they enrolled in the study. About half of study participants were employed at the time of enrollment; those who were employed had average earnings of $1,195 in the 30 days before study enrollment. To put this in context, if a three-person household had no additional income from other sources, earnings of $1,195 would represent about 67 percent of the federal poverty guideline ($1,778 per month in 2019). The federal poverty guideline does not account for the local cost of living, which is higher than average in the urban metropolitan areas in which LIFT is offered. Two in three employed study participants worked less than 35 hours per week. As is typical for participants in employment training programs, LIFT study participants reported a range of barriers to employment, most

commonly a lack of child care (40 percent) and lack of the right skills or education (32 percent). More than half of LIFT study participants did not have a valid driver's license at the time of enrollment.

Table IV.1. Characteristics of LIFT study participants at the time of study enrollment

Baseline characteristic	Mean or percentage
Demographics	
Age (in years)	33.1
Female (percentage)	95
Race and ethnicity (percentage)	
Hispanic	71
Black, non-Hispanic	28
White, non-Hispanic	1
Other	1
Currently married (percentage)	35
Number of adults in the respondent's household	2.2
Number of children respondent lives with	2.3
Socioeconomic status	
Does not have high school diploma or GED (percentage)	38
Receiving public assistance (percentage)	84
Worked for pay in past 30 days (percentage)	52
Self-reported earnings in past 30 days ($)	
All study participants	624
Among those who worked for pay in the past 30 days	1,195
Hours worked per week at current or most recent job (percentage)	
Did not work in past 30 days	48
Part time (less than 35 hours)	34
Full time (35 hours or more)	17
Employment challenges	
Challenges that made it very or extremely hard to find or keep a good job (percentage)	
Lack of transportation	20
Lack of child care	40
Lack of right clothes or tools for work	16
Lack of the right skills or education	32
Perceived lack of jobs in area	
Having a criminal record	8
Health condition	13
No valid driver's license (percentage)	58
Unstable housing (percentage)	10
Sample size	807

Source: Baseline survey.

Note: These values do not include one sample member who withdrew from the study. Appendix Table D.1 presents the full set of baseline characteristics separately for program and control group members. Unstable housing refers to being unsheltered, living in a shelter, or having another rent-free living arrangement.

GED = General Educational Development

Coaching model implementation

Our implementation study found that, overall, LIFT was implemented as designed (Gardiner et al. 2021). Coaching began immediately at enrollment with coaches conducting study intake, and assigned coaches started meeting with LIFT participants shortly thereafter. Based on information from the LIFT management information system, LIFT participants had an average of eight contacts with a coach, for a total of about eight hours of coaching, in the year after enrolling in the study.[8] About 46 percent of participants remained engaged with the program 12 months after study enrollment. Based on their level of engagement, 63 percent of LIFT participants received at least one incentive payment during the same time period.

Using multiple data sources, the implementation study found that during coaching sessions, coaches generally succeeded in providing collaborative and nondirective coaching and building strong and trusting relationships with LIFT participants. However, they were sometimes directive, such as by suggesting action steps participants should take instead of guiding participants to determine their own action steps. In addition, due in part to coaches being part-time student interns who only stay with LIFT for one academic year, LIFT participants on average worked with two coaches and thus had to build a relationship with more than one coach during their time in the program. In the year after study enrollment, 60 percent of LIFT participants set a goal related to employment, 70 percent set a goal related to finances, and 71 percent set a goal related to education.

Forty percent of LIFT group members reported receiving one-on-one job assistance since they enrolled in the study, compared with 18 percent of control group members, a statistically significant difference.

IMPACTS OF LIFT ON SERVICE RECEIPT (SECONDARY AREA)

LIFT increased the amount of one-on-one job assistance reported by LIFT group members.

Forty percent of LIFT group members reported receiving one-on-one job assistance since they enrolled in the study, compared with 18 percent of control group members, a statistically significant difference (Table IV.2). LIFT group members also reported receiving one-on-one job assistance more total times (3.6 versus 0.8) and for more months (1.9 versus 0.4). The reported rate of one-on-one service receipt among control group members enrolled in the study through LIFT is substantially lower than the rates for control group members at other study sites, which ranged from 35 to 41 percent.

Based on the program design, everyone assigned to the program group received at least one coaching session because the first session took place at the intake meeting. The fact that only 40 percent of LIFT group members reported receiving one-on-one job assistance suggests they did not consider LIFT coaching sessions as job assistance, or they did not remember having participated in a coaching session by the time of the 9-month follow-up survey (Table IV.2).

Between 34 and 37 percent of LIFT group members also reported receiving one-on-one job assistance focused on setting short- and long-term goals and on planning to achieve those goals, all of which are elements of LIFT's program model (Table IV.2). The corresponding numbers for control group members are 12 to 14 percent. These differences were all statistically significant.

[8] Data available from the LIFT management information system at the time of this report included service receipt data for a maximum 12-month follow-up period.

LIFT increased participant-reported receipt of a variety of services, including group job assistance, transportation assistance, help with work supplies, and financial education, among others.

Forty-four percent of LIFT group members reported receiving group job assistance after enrolling in the study, compared with 28 percent of control group members (Table IV.2). We also found LIFT had positive impacts on program participants' reported receipt of transportation assistance, help with work supplies, and financial education. The program did not have a statistically significant impact on receiving child care services, which the program did not offer.

Table IV.2. Impact of LIFT on service receipt during the 9-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Effect size
One-on-one job assistance				
Ever received one-on-one job assistance (percentage)	40	18	22***	0.69
Number of times received one-on-one job assistance	3.6	0.8	2.8***	0.35
Number of months received one-on-one job assistance	1.9	0.4	1.5***	0.57
Whether received one-on-one job assistance focused on (percentage):				
Setting long-term goals	34	12	22***	0.82
Setting short-term goals	36	14	22***	0.73
Planning to achieve goals	37	14	24***	0.80
Other job assistance				
Ever received group job assistance (percentage)	44	28	15***	0.41
Additional services				
Whether received the following service from a program since study enrollment (percentage):				
Child care services	17	14	3	0.14
Transportation assistance	26	19	7**	0.26
Clothes, uniforms, tools, or other supplies and equipment	14	5	9***	0.69
Tuition assistance	12	8	4*	0.30
Assistance finding stable housing	8	4	4**	0.49
Assistance with budgeting, credit, banking, or other financial matters	23	4	19***	1.22
Sample size	288	286		

Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

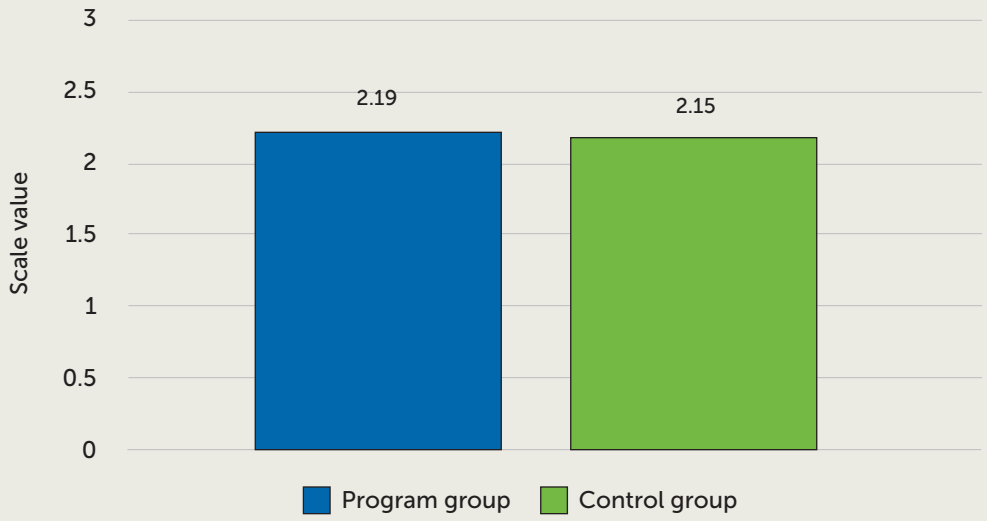
***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

IMPACTS OF LIFT ON SELF-REGULATION AND GOAL-RELATED SKILLS (CONFIRMATORY AREA)

LIFT and control group members had similar scores on goal-setting and attainment skills at the 9-month follow-up.

At the 9-month follow-up, the average scale scores for goal-setting and attainment skills were 2.19 for the LIFT group and 2.15 for the control group, a difference that was not statistically significant (Figure IV.1). As discussed, this measure represented the average level of agreement—from strongly disagree to strongly agree—with eight statements about setting goals and working to meet those goals.

Figure IV.1. Impact of LIFT on goal-setting and attainment skills during the 9-month follow-up period (confirmatory analysis)



Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. The effect size for this impact is 0.07. This analysis is based on 298 program group and 283 control group members. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group. The goal-setting and attainment scale indicates study participants' average level of agreement with eight statements about their goal-related skills. Scores range from "strongly disagree" (0) to "strongly agree" (3).

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

IMPACTS OF LIFT ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING (SECONDARY AREA)

Secondary and exploratory analysis indicated LIFT and control group members completed education and training programs at similar rates, but LIFT group members were more likely to have participated in education programs and to be participating in training programs.

LIFT increased participation in education programs during the first follow-up period—40 percent of LIFT group members reported participating in an education program compared with 30 percent of control group members, a difference that was statistically significant (Table IV.3). However, LIFT group members were no more likely than control group members to complete an education program. At the 9-month

follow-up, 8 percent of LIFT group members reported they had completed an education program, compared with 6 percent of control group members. This difference was not statistically significant.

LIFT group members' participation in training programs was at the same level as control group members' participation: about 1 in 8 study participants in both groups reported they participated in training programs (Table IV.3). However, LIFT group members were less likely than control group members to have completed a training program by the time of the follow-up survey. Only 4 percent of LIFT group members reported completing a training program, compared with 8 percent of control group members. However, LIFT group members were more likely than control group members to say they were currently participating in a training program than control group members (7 percent versus 3 percent) at the time of the survey, a difference that was statistically significant. This might suggest LIFT group members were participating in longer programs, on average, more of which were not complete at the 9-month follow-up.

Table IV.3. Impact of LIFT on education and training during the 9-month follow-up period (secondary and exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact
Participation in an education program (percentage)	40	30	10**
Completion of an education program (percentage)	8	6	3
Currently participating in an education program (percentage)	20	17	3
Participation in a training program (percentage)	13	12	1
Completion of a training program (percentage)	4	8	-4*
Receipt of a certificate, license, or diploma from a training program (percentage)	4	7	-3
Currently participating in a training program (percentage)	7	3	4**
Participation in an education or training program (percentage)	43	35	8*
Completion of an education or training program (percentage)	12	12	1
Currently participating in an education or training program (percentage)	22	17	5
Sample size	284	284	

Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

IMPACTS OF LIFT ON EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES AND HOUSING STABILITY (SECONDARY AREA)

In secondary analysis, we found LIFT and control group members were equally likely to report employment challenges and unstable housing.

LIFT and control group members did not differ significantly on their response to whether any of six individual measures of employment challenges made it very hard or extremely hard to find and keep a good job (Table IV.4). In addition, exploratory analysis revealed no significant differences between the two groups on a composite measure of the six challenges. We also found no difference in whether the study participants had a valid driver's license.

Consistent with program eligibility criteria, the percentage of respondents experiencing unstable housing was low and similar for both research groups. At the time of the 9-month follow-up survey, in both groups, fewer than 1 in 10 study participants reported unstable housing (Table IV.4).

Table IV.4. Impact of LIFT on employment challenges and housing stability during the 9-month follow-up period (secondary and exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Effect size
Employment challenges				
Challenge that made it very hard or extremely hard to find and keep a good job (percentage):				
Not having child care or family support	42	40	2	0.06
Not having reliable transportation	22	20	2	0.07
Lack of needed skills or education	33	35	-2	-0.06
Not having right clothes or tools	16	16	0	-0.02
Having a criminal record	9	13	-3	-0.22
Having limiting health condition	14	15	-2	-0.07
Employment challenges: composite	2.27	2.31	-0.04	-0.04
No valid driver's license (percentage)	57	56	1	0.02
Housing stability				
Unstable housing (percentage)	7	8	-1	-0.08
Sample size	301	291		

Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group. Unstable housing refers to being unsheltered, living in a shelter, or having another rent-free living arrangement.

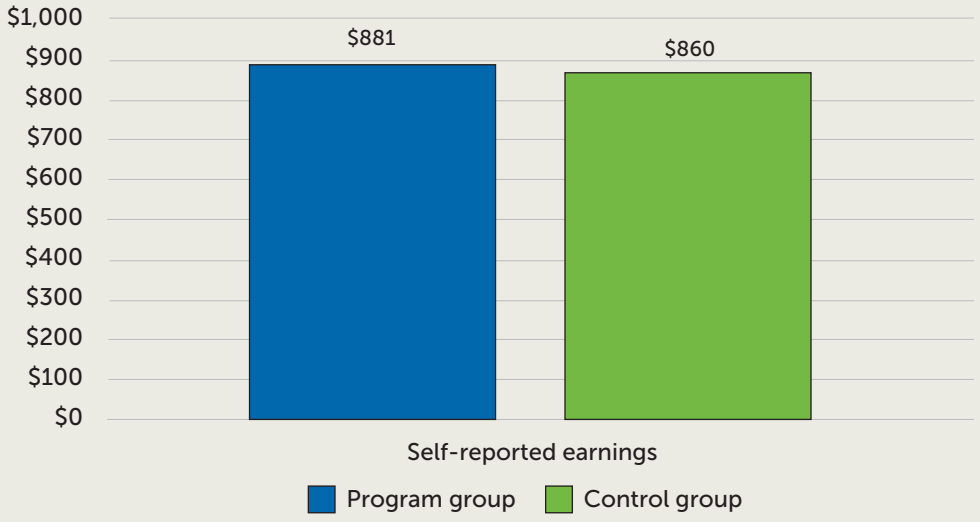
***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

IMPACTS OF LIFT ON LABOR MARKET OUTCOMES (CONFIRMATORY AREA)

LIFT and control group members had similar self-reported earnings, on average, during the follow-up period.

Average monthly earnings measured by survey data were similar for both research groups during the 9-month follow-up period. LIFT group members reported average monthly earnings of $881 and control group members reported earnings of $860 (Figure IV.2). Bayesian analysis, which gives an interpretation of program impacts on earnings that takes into account the prior evidence on the effectiveness of similar programs, aligns with the conclusion that LIFT and control group members had similar self-reported earnings (Figure IV.3). We estimated a 65 percent chance that LIFT had a positive effect on average monthly self-reported earnings and a 35 percent chance that LIFT had a negative effect on self-reported earnings.

Figure IV.2. Impact of LIFT on average monthly self-reported earnings during the 9-month follow-up period (confirmatory analysis)

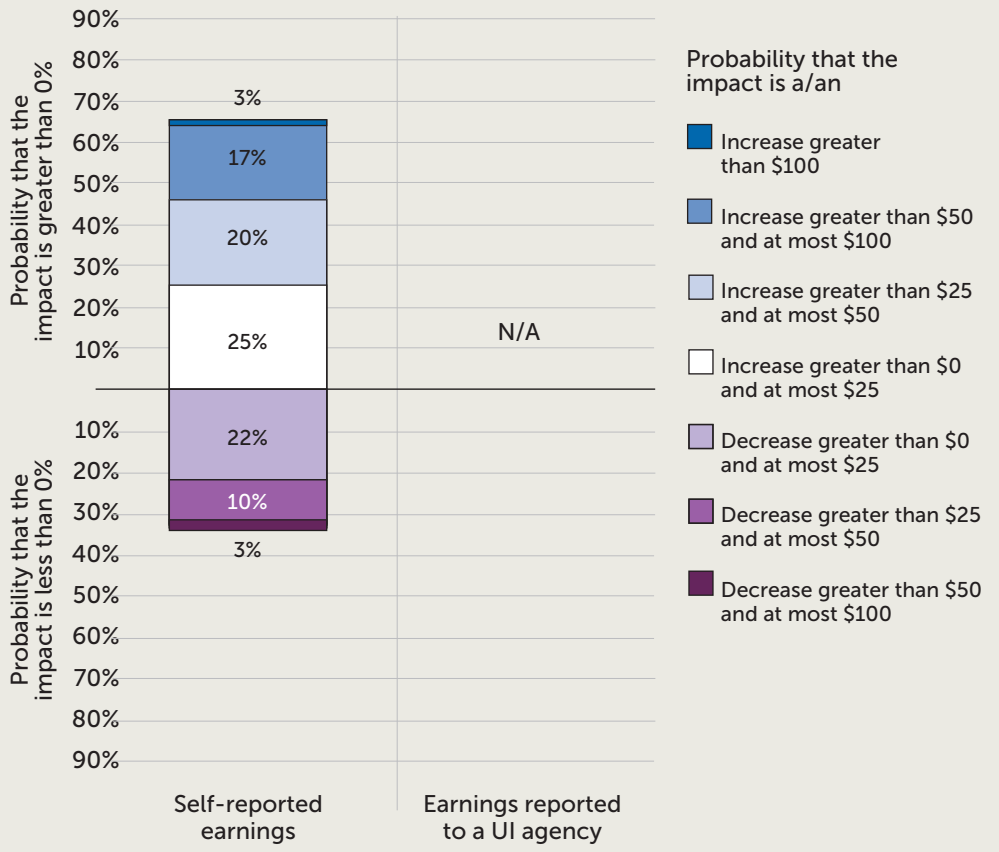


Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Analysis of average monthly earnings from the first follow-up survey is based on 293 program group and 247 control group members. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

Figure IV.3. Probability of various sizes of the impact of LIFT on average monthly self-reported earnings during first follow-up period (secondary analysis)



Sources: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Probabilities that impacts are various sizes are part of the exploratory analysis and calculated using Bayesian methods. Analysis of average monthly earnings from the first follow-up survey includes 293 program group and 247 control group members.

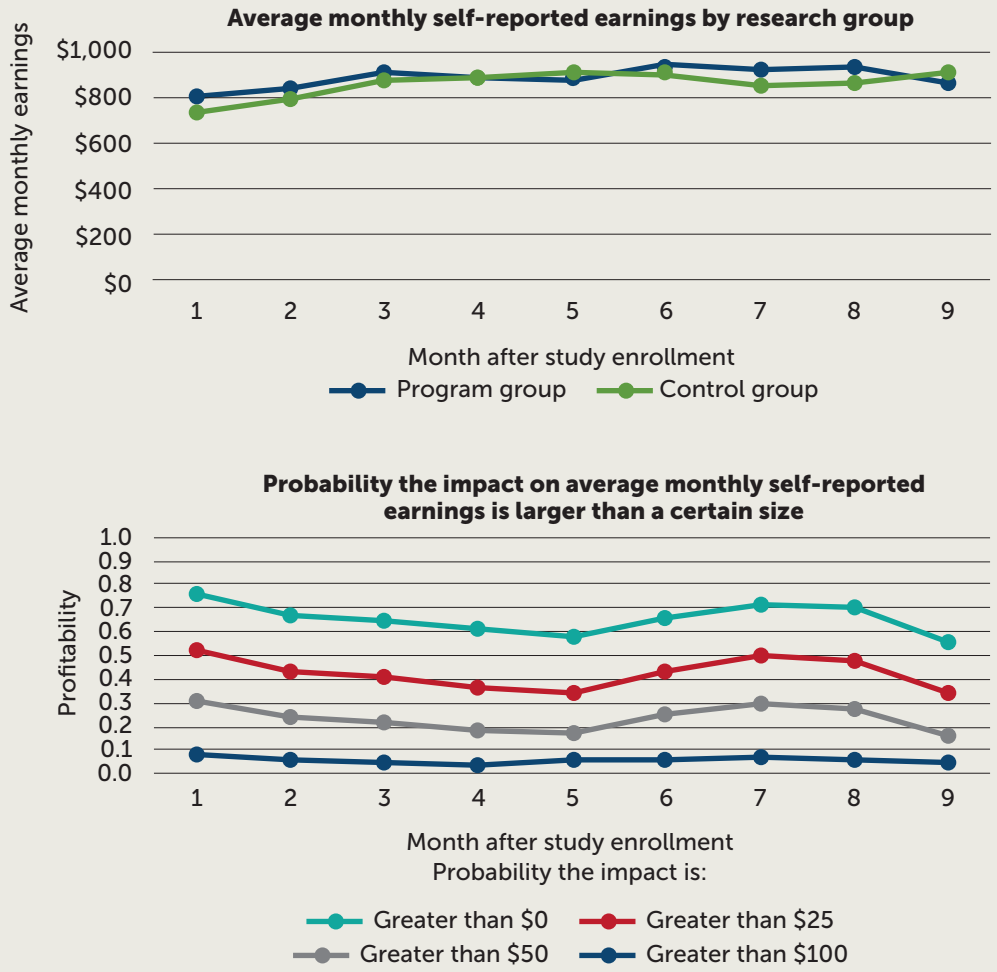
NA indicates that impact estimates are not available; we did not include earnings reported to a UI agency and collected by the NDNH in the confirmatory analysis for LIFT because this outcome is not available for the 40 percent of LIFT study participants who did not provide valid Social Security numbers when they enrolled in the study.

In an analysis conducted to complement our confirmatory analysis on earnings, we estimated LIFT's impacts on average monthly self-reported earnings by month during the first follow-up period.

Impacts on self-reported earnings are consistently small throughout the 9-month follow-up period and are not statistically significant in any month (Figure IV.4). In the 9 months following study enrollment, LIFT's impact ranged from -$31 to $65, producing small positive effects in 6 of the 9 months and small negative effects in the other 3 months.

We did not include earnings reported to the UI agencies and collected in the NDNH in the confirmatory analysis. This is because 40 percent of LIFT study participants did not provide valid Social Security numbers (SSNs) when they enrolled in the study and SSNs are needed to access the NDNH data. The LIFT study participants who did provide an SSN were not representative of LIFT study participants as a whole.

Figure IV.4. Impact of LIFT on average monthly self-reported earnings by month during the 9-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)



Sources: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. The top panel of this figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group. Probabilities that impacts are greater than a certain value are part of the exploratory analysis and calculated using Bayesian methods. Appendix Table D.7 presents these estimates in full detail.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

For example, more than 95 percent of those missing SSNs were Hispanic, compared with less than 50 percent of those not missing SSNs; 62 percent of those missing SSNs did not have a high school degree or GED, compared with fewer than 20 percent of those not missing SSNs. In exploratory analysis, we performed robustness checks by examining administrative earnings records among those for whom they are available. We found no statistically significant impacts on these outcomes, with both research groups earning approximately $1,050 per month, on average (Appendix Table D.12).

Exploratory and secondary analysis indicated that LIFT did not affect employment or employment in jobs offering benefits.

Both research groups were employed for somewhat less than half of the 9-month follow-up period (Table IV.5). About 25 percent of both groups reported ever being employed in a job offering fringe benefits in the first 9 months after study enrollment. LIFT study participants were employed in a job offering fringe benefits for about 20 percent of the 9 months in the follow-up period.

Table IV.5. Impact of LIFT on other labor market and job quality outcomes during the 9-month follow-up period (secondary and exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Effect size
Labor market outcomes				
Percentage of follow-up months employed	48	44	4	0.10
Job quality				
Employed in job offering fringe benefits (percentage)	25	27	-2	-0.06
Percentage of follow-up months employed in a job offering fringe benefits	20	23	-3	-0.07
Sample size	297	285		

Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

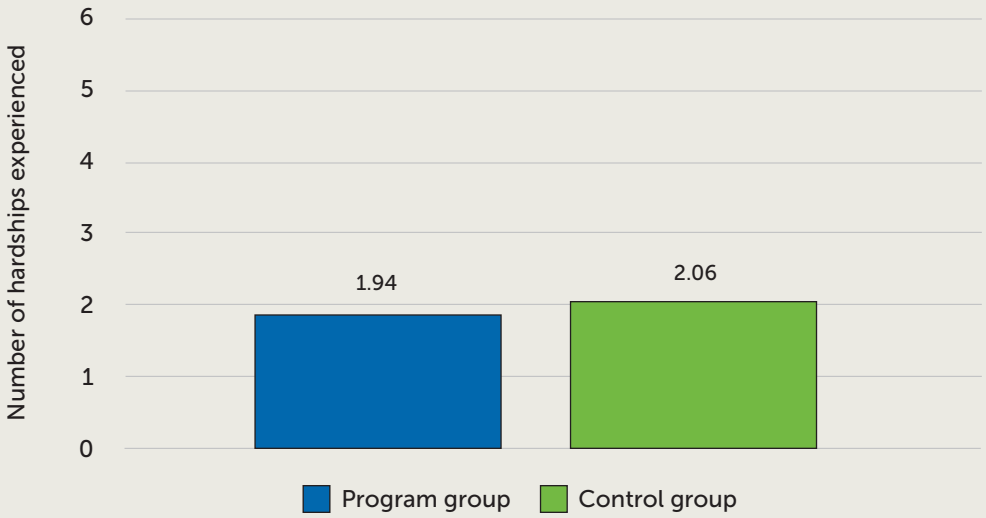
***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

IMPACTS OF LIFT ON ECONOMIC WELL-BEING AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE (CONFIRMATORY AREA)

LIFT and control group members reported facing a similar number of economic hardships.

LIFT and control group members had comparable scores on a summary measure representing how many of six economic hardships they reported on the first follow-up survey (Figure IV.5). The average scale scores were 1.94 for the LIFT group and 2.06 for the control group, a difference that was not statistically significant.

Figure IV.5. Impact of LIFT on economic hardship during the 9-month follow-up period (confirmatory analysis)



Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. The effect size for this impact is -0.07. This analysis is based on 306 program group and 290 control group members. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

Exploratory analysis indicated that LIFT and control group members had similar levels of public assistance receipt.

For the exploratory analysis of LIFT's impacts on public assistance receipt, we relied on data from the participant follow-up survey because administrative records were not available for many study participants. The survey data indicate that at 9 months after study enrollment, LIFT and control group members reported similar levels of public assistance or social insurance receipt (Table IV.6). Around 15 percent reported receiving TANF, and more than half reported receiving SNAP. In both groups, fewer than 1 in 10 reported receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and only 4 percent received Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). About half in both research groups reported receiving Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and only 5 percent received UI. One in 10 in both groups reported receiving housing assistance.

Table IV.6. Impact of LIFT on self-reported public benefit receipt during the 9-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact
Received any income from (percentage):			
TANF	15	13	2
SNAP	51	52	0
SSI	9	7	2
SSDI	4	4	0
WIC	47	47	0
UI	6	5	1
Housing assistance	12	14	-2
Sample size	307	291	

Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

IMPACTS OF LIFT BY SUBGROUP (SECONDARY ANALYSIS)

In exploratory analysis, we found the impacts of LIFT are generally consistent across groups for most outcomes.

We explored whether the impacts of LIFT differed for subgroups of study participants. We estimated impacts separately for subgroups of study participants based on nine characteristics measured at enrollment: (1) whether a participant was older than age 30; (2) whether a participant had two or more children; (3) whether a participant had some college education or higher; (4) whether a participant was Hispanic; (5) whether a participant had a score above the median for goal-setting skills; (6) whether a participant had a score above the median for barriers to employment; (7) whether a participant was employed at time of study enrollment or in the month before; (8) whether a participant's preferred interviewing language was Spanish; and (9) whether a participant was enrolled in LIFT's Los Angeles program. As described in Chapter I, ensuring adequate statistical power was a consideration in selecting the subgroups to be included in this analysis. For example, Los Angeles was the only location large enough to examine separately so the Chicago and New York locations were pooled for this analysis. We limited the subgroup analysis to confirmatory outcomes. Impact estimates for the confirmatory outcomes across these subgroups includes 27 comparisons of program and control group means. We found statistically significant differences in impacts in just 4 instances—age, number of children, employment barrier scores, and preferred interviewing language (Table IV.7). We found LIFT improved goal-setting skills for older study participants and those with scores above the median for goal-setting skills at the time of study enrollment; these group differences were statistically significant. LIFT also reduced the number of economic hardships experienced among those with fewer children and those whose preferred interviewing language was English; these group differences were statistically significant.

Table IV.7. Impact of LIFT by subgroup during the 9-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

Subgroup	Increased goal-setting and attainment skills	Higher average monthly earnings	Reduced economic hardship
Participant age			
Older than age 30	↗**	○	○
Age 30 or younger	○	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	**Yes**	No	No
Number of children			
Two or more children	○	○	○
Fewer than two children	○	○	↗***
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	**Yes**
Education level			
Some college or higher	○	○	○
No college	○	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No
Race and ethnicity			
Hispanic	○	○	○
Not Hispanic	○	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No
Goal-setting skills			
Above median score	○	○	○
At or below median score	○	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No
Barriers to employment			
Above median score	↗**	○	○
At or below median score	○	○	↗*
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	**Yes**	No	No
Recent employment status			
Employed currently or in past month	○	○	○
Not employed currently or in past month	○	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No

(continued)

Subgroup	Increased goal-setting and attainment skills	Higher average monthly earnings	Reduced economic hardship
Preferred language of interview			
Spanish	○	○	○
English	○	○	↗*
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	**Yes**
LIFT program location			
LIFT Los Angeles	○	○	○
LIFT Chicago and LIFT New York	○	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No

Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment. Differences in subgroup impacts reflect differences that are statistically significant at the .05 level or below, two-tailed test. Appendix Table D.8 presents these subgroup impact estimates in greater detail.

↗ Represents a favorable impact; ↘ represents an unfavorable impact; ○ represents no statistically significant impact.

***/**/* following the red and green arrows suggests impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01, .05, and .10 levels within a given group, respectively, two-tailed test.

The "Difference in subgroup impacts is significant" row indicates whether these within-group impacts differ from one another.

DISCUSSION OF THE LIFT IMPACT FINDINGS

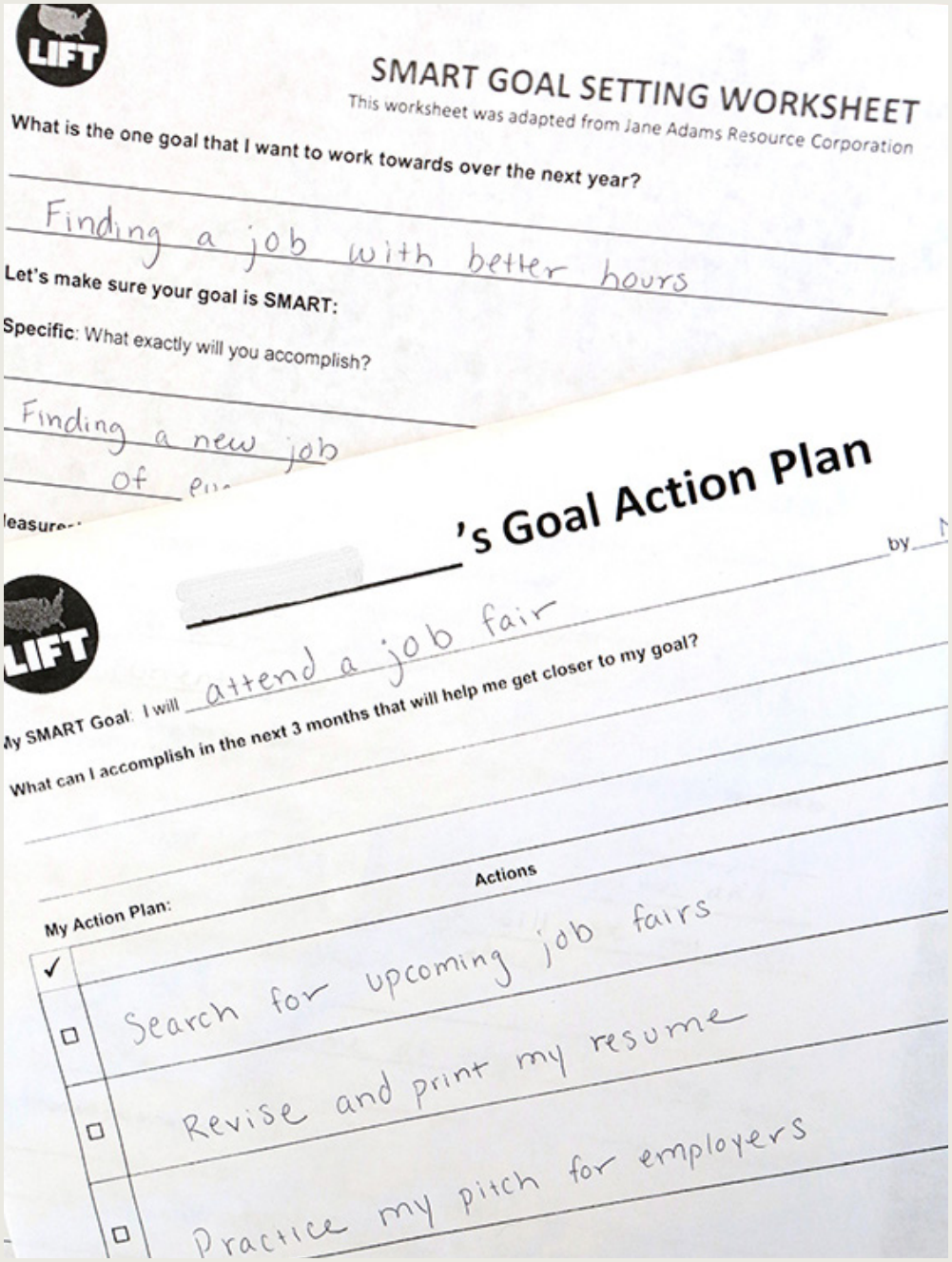
The first follow-up confirmatory impact analysis of LIFT did not find significant impacts on goal-setting and attainment skills, self-reported earnings or economic hardship. However, the program had an impact on some intermediate outcomes in secondary or exploratory analysis.

The duration of the LIFT program and the engagement of LIFT participants in services at the time of the first follow-up survey suggest LIFT might not have had a chance to reach its full impact. Nine months after enrolling in the study, most LIFT participants were still receiving program services because LIFT offers participants coaching and other services regularly for up to two years. Our earlier implementation study found participation in the program was still at high levels well after study enrollment; 60 percent of LIFT participants remained engaged with the program 9 months after enrollment (Gardiner et al. 2021). LIFT participants had seven contacts (each 58 minutes long) with the program during those 9 months, on average.

Although LIFT had no impact on confirmatory outcomes, the secondary and exploratory analysis did find impacts on outcomes related to education and training. As more than half of LIFT participants were working at the time of study enrollment, many participants may have been more interested in education or training to find a better job rather than in finding a job. The program's goal-setting coaching often focused on education, which could lead to impacts on earnings that are slower to emerge. Some exploratory evidence suggests that LIFT participants were more

likely to have participated in education programs or to be participating in training programs at the time of the first follow-up survey. However, they were no more likely to have completed education or training programs. One possibility is that LIFT group members are in longer education or training programs than their control group counterparts. Participation in education and training programs can depress earnings if participants work less because they were participating in these programs. It is possible this could contribute to larger impacts on earnings at longer-term follow-up points, though the magnitude of the differences in training is likely not large enough to lead to earnings impacts on its own.

LIFT participants work on their Goal Action Plan



V. Impacts of MyGoals

MyGoals was a coaching program for unemployed adults receiving housing assistance that offered employment coaching and financial incentives for program participation and meeting certain employment milestones. It was designed by MDRC and its partner Dr. Richard Guare, with input from the two housing agencies implementing the program. It was a demonstration program developed to provide evidence on a new approach to coaching. The Housing Authority of Baltimore City and the Houston Housing Authority operated the program. Participation was voluntary, and MyGoals participants could remain in the program even if they stopped receiving housing assistance. MyGoals ceased operations in September 2022.

The demonstration and evaluation of MyGoals began in 2017 with financial assistance from Arnold Ventures and other funders.[9] MyGoals joined the Evaluation of Employment Coaching in 2018. For this reason, the study of MyGoals collects different baseline information than did studies of the other programs, and has a 12-month first follow-up period, whereas the first follow-up period for the other coaching programs in the evaluation is 9 months after enrollment. The demonstration ended and the program was discontinued in September 2022.

This chapter describes the impacts of MyGoals during the 12-month follow-up period. The order of the discussion aligns with the sequence in which program impacts would be expected to emerge, beginning with the program's impacts on participants' receipt of services and moving on to a series of intermediate outcomes, including confirmatory analysis of self-regulation and goal-related skills and secondary analysis of education and training, and employment challenges. Next we describe confirmatory findings related to labor market outcomes and economic well-being, and secondary analysis of public assistance receipt. After presenting the impacts for all study participants, we describe the impacts by subgroups of interest. After discussing the impacts for all study participants, we describe impacts on subgroups of interest. We conclude with a discussion of the findings and their implications.

THE MYGOALS PROGRAM

The program helped participants set and achieve employment goals by following a structured process that included focusing on their self-regulation skills.

MyGoals was designed to help program participants find and keep jobs and ultimately make progress toward self-sufficiency. The program helped participants set and achieve employment goals by following a structured process that included focusing on their self-regulation skills. Coaches guided participants through a 12-step process that helped them develop their goals, which were organized into four interrelated types: (1) long-term goals, (2) milestones needed to accomplish the long-term goals, (3) SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and relevant, and timely) goals needed to reach the milestones, and (4) action steps needed to reach the SMART goals. Participants set goals in four domains: (1) employment and career development (the primary focus); (2) education and training; (3) financial management; and (4) personal and family well-being (such as participants' physical and mental health and their family members' health).

[9] The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, the Houston Endowment, Inc., the Kresge Foundation, and the JPB Foundation.

Box V.1. Summary of findings for MyGoals

- MyGoals improved program participants' goal-setting and attainment skills based on the 12-month follow-up survey. The impact from this confirmatory analysis was statistically significant.
- MyGoals group members reported higher average earnings during the 12-month follow-up period than control group members did, although the impact from this confirmatory analysis was not statistically significant. We conducted Bayesian analysis of this impact estimate to further contextualize the main findings. This secondary analysis suggests MyGoals likely had a small, positive impact on self-reported earnings.
- MyGoals group members had lower average earnings reported to a UI agency than control group members during the 12-month follow-up period; the impact from this confirmatory analysis was statistically significant at the 10 percent level. Secondary Bayesian analysis of this impact estimate suggests MyGoals likely had a small, negative impact on earnings reported to a UI agency.
- MyGoals and control group members reported similar levels of economic hardship on the 12-month follow-up survey. The impact from this confirmatory analysis was not statistically significant.
- Secondary and exploratory analysis indicate MyGoals and control group members completed education and training programs at similar rates during the follow-up period, but MyGoals group members were more likely than control group members to be in education and training programs at the time of the follow-up survey, an impact that was statistically significant

MyGoals coaches met with participants for an initial coaching session with the goal of meeting at least monthly for up to three years, either in person at the program office or by phone. MyGoals coaches used a questionnaire that assessed participants' strengths and weaknesses in self-regulation skills. Coaches used results from the questionnaire to begin discussions of self-regulation skills with participants. Coaches continued to explicitly discuss self-regulation skills in coaching interactions using the scientific names for the skills. Coaches supported participants by sharing strategies to manage self-regulation skills and challenges that got in the way of their success.

MyGoals participants were eligible to earn up to $5,000 in incentives tied to initial engagement in the program, continued engagement (such as attending monthly coaching sessions), finding a job, and remaining employed. For example, MyGoals participants could have earned $150 if they found a full-time job and $450 for staying employed 3 months in a row. Other program resources available to participants included budgeting and financial management education on a range of topics (such as home ownership and maintaining checking accounts) and regularly updated information on the local labor market.

Eligibility criteria and enrollment procedures

To be eligible to enroll in MyGoals, participants must have been an adult member of a household receiving federal housing assistance (through the Housing Choice Voucher program or living in public housing) and either have been unemployed or working fewer than 20 hours per month. Participants also must have been legally able to work in the United States and must not have been participating in Jobs Plus or the Family Self-Sufficiency Program, which were also managed by the public housing agencies and provided similar services. Study participants were referred to MyGoals by the housing agencies in Baltimore and Houston, or they learned about the program from a

MyGoals coach at a recruitment event. MyGoals coaches conducted outreach at community locations such as job fairs, libraries, and TANF offices, and at public housing developments in Baltimore.

From March 2017 to November 2019, 1,799 adults enrolled in the study. All study applicants who were found eligible for the study and consented to participate in the study were randomly assigned to either the MyGoals group, who could participate in MyGoals, or a control group, who could not participate in MyGoals. Both MyGoals group and control group members could access other services available in the community.

Participant characteristics

MyGoals study participants were typically Black, non-Hispanic women who were economically disadvantaged (Table V.1). Ninety-five percent of study participants identified as Black, non-Hispanic, and 88 percent identified as female. On average, study participants were age 38, and lived with 1.6 children; 70 percent lived in households without another adult. Although about half of the study participants reported they had worked 12 months before they enrolled in the study, only 2 percent said they were working at the time of study enrollment. This is consistent with the eligibility requirement that applicants must be unemployed or working fewer than 20 hours per month. Based on administrative records of earnings reported to a UI agency, 35 percent had any earnings in the quarter prior to study enrollment, and those with positive earnings made an average of $980 per month during that quarter. To put this in context, if a three-person household had no additional income from other sources, earnings of $980 would represent about 55 percent of the federal poverty guideline ($1,778 per month in 2019).

Only adults who either reside in public housing or use housing vouchers were eligible for MyGoals; hence, all study participants received public assistance benefits at the time of enrollment (Table V.1). In addition, 22 percent of study participants received public assistance from a source other than a housing program, including TANF, SSI, or SSDI. Thirty-eight percent of study participants had been in the housing program seven years or longer.

Coaching model implementation

Our earlier implementation study of MyGoals found it was generally implemented as designed, although its implementation evolved in response to ongoing communication between program designers and coaches (Saunders et al. 2022). Coaches reported challenges implementing the 12-step coaching process and received additional training on the program's flexibility. Using multiple data sources, the implementation study found that coaches developed strong relationships with MyGoals participants and explicitly discussed their self-regulation skills. Coaches generally succeeded in being nondirective, but they said it was not easy, particularly when a participant was not making progress. Data from MyGoals' management information system indicate MyGoals participants had contact with their coach an average of about once a month in the first 12 months after enrollment. By the 12th month, about 56 percent of MyGoals participants were still actively participating in the program.

Table V.1. Characteristics of MyGoals study participants at the time of study enrollment

Baseline characteristic	Mean or percentage
Demographics	
Age (in years)	38.0
Female (PHA; percentage)	88
Race and ethnicity (PHA; percentage)	
Hispanic	3
Black, non-Hispanic	95
White, non-Hispanic	2
Other	1
Number of adults in the respondent's household (PHA; percentage)	
One adult	70
Two adults	22
Three or more adults	8
Number of children younger than 18 living with respondent (PHA)	1.6
Socioeconomic status	
Does not have high school diploma or GED (percentage)	25
Receiving income from a public assistance program (housing, TANF, or SSI) or a social insurance program (SSDI) (PHA; percentage)	100
Receiving income from TANF, SSI, or SSDI (PHA; percentage)	22
Housing program tenure	
One year or less	10
Between 1 and 4 years	34
Between 4 and 7 years	18
Seven years or longer	38
Employment status and history	
Reported working for pay in past year (percentage)	47
Reported currently working for pay (percentage)	2
Worked for pay in past quarter (NDNH; percentage)	35
Monthly earnings reported to a UI agency in the past quarter (NDNH; $)	
All study participants	340
Among those with positive earnings reported to a UI agency	980
Sample size	1,799

Sources:MyGoals Baseline Questionnaire data, public housing agency administrative data, and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Baseline characteristics are drawn from the MyGoals Baseline Questionnaire unless otherwise noted. Appendix Table E.1 presents the full set of baseline characteristics separately for program and control group members.

GED = General Educational Development; NDNH = National Directory of New Hires; PHA = Public Housing Agency; SSDI = Social Security Disability Insurance; SSI = Supplemental Security Income; TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; UI = Unemployment Insurance.

IMPACTS OF MYGOALS ON SERVICE RECEIPT (SECONDARY AREA)

MyGoals increased self-reported receipt of a range of services aligned with its program model.

During the 12-month follow-up period, MyGoals group members reported receiving one-on-one job assistance at higher rates than the control group (64 versus 35 percent), with greater frequency (6.6 versus 3.0 times), and for more months (5.3 versus 1.5 months); all these differences were statistically significant (Table V.2). In addition, data from MyGoals' management information system indicated 79 percent of MyGoals group members received a coaching session as specified and recorded by the program (Saunders et al. 2022), whereas the survey data indicated 64 percent reported one-on-one job assistance. This difference suggests some MyGoals members either received coaching in a domain other than employment, did not view their coaching sessions as one-on-one job assistance, or did not remember receiving those services.

MyGoals also had positive impacts on several specific dimensions of service receipt that aligned with its model. It increased the percentage of respondents who reported receiving one-on-one job assistance focused on setting long-term goals (57 percent versus 22 percent), setting short-term goals (58 percent versus 25 percent), or planning to achieve goals (59 percent versus 23 percent). These three areas were elements of the planned MyGoals coaching sessions (Table V.2). In line with MyGoals' financial incentive structure, members in the MyGoals group reported higher rates of receiving cash or gift cards (57 percent versus 22 percent). Similarly, the MyGoals group reported higher rates of receiving help with budgeting, consistent with the program's emphasis on financial management (16 percent versus 5 percent). MyGoals had significant impacts on receipt of other services that could align with some MyGoals participants' goals, including the percentage who received group job assistance (51 percent versus 35 percent), completed career assessments (54 percent versus 30 percent), received job leads (54 versus 25 percent), had a criminal record expunged (7 percent versus 4 percent), and received relationship assistance (7 percent versus 3 percent).

Table V.2. Impact of MyGoals on service receipt during the 12-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Effect size
One-on-one job assistance				
Ever received one-on-one job assistance (percentage)	64	35	29***	0.73
Number of times received one-on-one job assistance	6.6	3.0	3.6***	0.41
Number of months received one-on-one job assistance	5.3	1.5	3.7***	0.78
Received one-on-one job assistance focused on (percentage):				
Setting long-term goals	57	22	34***	0.92
Setting short-term goals	58	25	33***	0.85
Planning to achieve goals	59	23	36***	0.95
Other job assistance				
Ever received group job assistance (percentage)	51	35	16***	0.39
Took a career assessment (percentage)	54	30	24***	0.60
Received job leads from a program (percentage)	54	25	30***	0.78
Additional services				
Whether received the following service from a program since study enrollment (percentage):				
Assistance with budgeting, credit, banking, or other financial matters	16	5	11***	0.79
Assistance expunging a criminal record or other legal assistance	7	4	3***	0.43
Help with marital and other family relationships	7	3	4***	0.50
Cash or a gift card	57	22	35***	0.94
Sample size	648	617		

Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 12 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

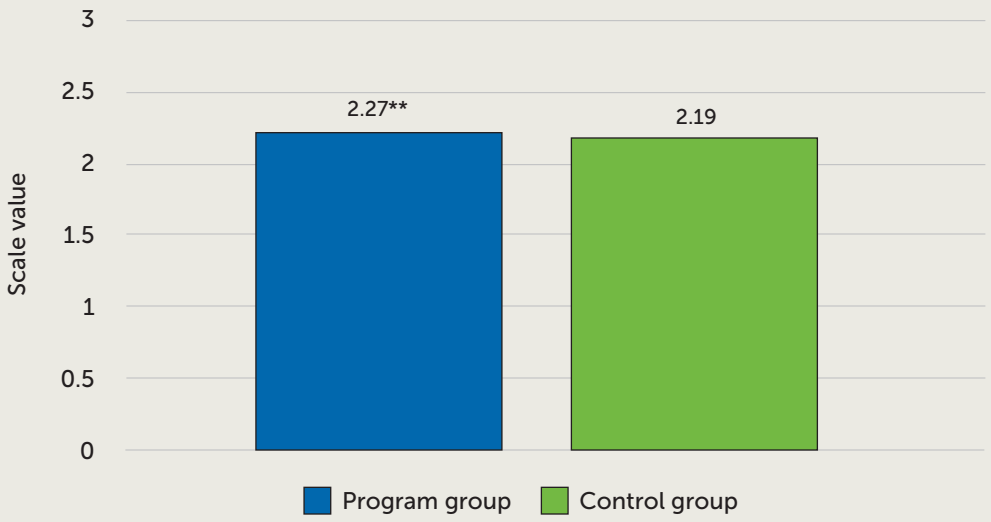
IMPACTS OF MYGOALS ON SELF-REGULATION AND GOAL-RELATED SKILLS (CONFIRMATORY AREA)

MyGoals improved goal-setting and attainment skills.

MyGoals group members scored 0.07 points higher than the control group on an 8-item scale designed to capture a person's ability to set and work toward attaining employment goals. This difference was statistically significant (Figure V.1). Exploratory analysis indicated that impacts on the overall scale were driven by significant impacts on four of the eight items on the scale that relate directly to MyGoals' 12-step goal-setting process, including the extent to which MyGoals participants (1) set goals based on what was important to them or their family; (2) set short-term goals in service of long-term goals; (3) believed they could achieve their goals; and (4) tracked progress toward their goals and adjusted plans as needed (Table V.3).

Other exploratory analysis indicated MyGoals had statistically significant impacts on the percentage of study participants who set an employment goal (96 percent versus 93 percent) and improved a measure of emotional control and self-monitoring, with an effect size of 0.13 standard deviations.

Figure V.1. Impact of MyGoals on goal-setting and attainment skills during the 12-month follow-up period (confirmatory analysis)



Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 12 months after study enrollment. The effect size for this impact is 0.13 standard deviations. This analysis includes 663 program group and 619 control group members. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group. The goal-setting and attainment scale indicates participants' average level of agreement with eight statements about their goal-related skills. Scores range from "strongly disagree" (0) to "strongly agree" (3).

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

Table V.3. Impact of MyGoals on other self-regulation and goal-related skills during the 12-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Effect size
Self-regulation and goal-related skills				
Self-esteem (range: 0 to 3)	2.15	2.15	0.00	0.00
Emotional control and self-monitoring (range: 0 to 2)	1.52	1.46	0.06**	0.13
Task monitoring, planning, and initiation (range: 0 to 2)	1.51	1.49	0.01	0.03
Employment self-regulation (range: 0 to 3)	2.58	2.53	0.05*	0.10
Set an employment goal (percentage)	96	93	3**	0.30
Goal-setting and attainment scale inputs (range: 0 to 3):				
I know I need to get a job or a better job and really think I should work on finding one.	2.20	2.13	0.07	0.07
I set employment goals based on what is important to me or my family.	2.38	2.24	0.14***	0.16

(continued)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Effect size
I set long-term employment goals that I hope to achieve (such as finding a job, getting promoted, or enrolling in further education).	2.42	2.37	0.05	0.06
I set specific short-term goals that will allow me to achieve my long-term employment goals.	2.26	2.15	0.11**	0.14
Based on everything I know about myself, I believe I can achieve my employment goals.	2.41	2.31	0.11**	0.13
When I set employment goals, I think about barriers that might get in my way and make specific plans for overcoming those barriers.	2.11	2.09	0.02	0.02
Even when I face challenges, I continue to pursue my employment goals.	2.23	2.17	0.06	0.07
I keep track of my overall progress toward my long-term employment goals and adjust my plans if needed.	2.13	2.04	0.09**	0.12
Sample size	674	635		

Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 12 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

IMPACTS OF MYGOALS ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING (SECONDARY AREA)

Secondary and exploratory analysis indicated that the two research groups had similar rates of completing education and training programs during the follow-up period, but MyGoals group members were more likely to be in education or training programs at the time of the survey.

Secondary analysis did not reveal statistically significant differences in completion of education or training programs between MyGoals and control group members. However, exploratory analysis found that, compared with members of the control group, MyGoals group members were 9 percentage points more likely to be participating in either an education or training program at the time of the follow-up survey (17 percent versus 8 percent), a statistically significant difference (Table V.4). Of the two types of programs, the impacts were greater for education programs, with a significant difference of 6 percentage points between the two groups. Because the education and training completion rates were similar for MyGoals and control group members, the difference in participation rates does not suggest MyGoals members enrolled in longer-term programs than control group members did. Instead, the difference may reflect that MyGoals group members were more likely to enroll in any education or training program, a possibility consistent with the goals set by MyGoals group members. Records from the MyGoals management information system show 50 percent of MyGoals group members set a goal related to education or training (Saunders et al. 2022). Because MyGoals group members were more likely

Table V.4. Impact of MyGoals on education and training during the 12-month follow-up period (secondary and exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact
Completion of an education program (percentage)	4	5	-1
Currently participating in an education program (percentage)	13	7	6***
Completion of a training program (percentage)	7	6	1
Receipt of a certificate, license, or diploma from a training program (percentage)	6	5	1
Currently participating in a training program (percentage)	7	4	3**
Completion of an education or training program (percentage)	10	10	1
Currently participating in an education or training program (percentage)	17	8	9***
Sample size	644	610	

Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 12 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

to be participating in education or training programs at the time of the survey, later follow-up surveys may reveal a difference in completion rates if MyGoals members persisted in the programs.

IMPACTS OF MYGOALS ON EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES AND HOUSING STABILITY (SECONDARY AREA)

Secondary analysis suggest MyGoals and control group members were similarly likely to report experiencing employment challenges and unstable housing on the 12-month follow-up survey.

MyGoals and control group members did not differ significantly on their response to whether any of six individual measures of employment challenges made it very hard or extremely hard to find and keep a good job (Table V.5). In addition, exploratory analysis revealed no significant differences between the two groups on a composite measure of the six challenges. We also found no difference in whether the study participants had a valid driver's license. The two groups also reported similar levels of unstable housing (that is unsheltered, living in a shelter, or having another rent-free living arrangement).

Table V.5. Impact of MyGoals on employment challenges and housing stability during the 12-month follow-up period (secondary and exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Effect size
Employment challenges				
Challenge that made it very hard or extremely hard to find and keep a good job (percentage):				
Not having child care or family support	36	34	2	0.04
Not having reliable transportation	43	43	0	0.01
Lack of needed skills or education	38	36	2	0.05
Not having right clothes or tools	26	28	-2	-0.05
Having a criminal record	21	20	1	0.03
Having a limiting health condition	29	30	0	-0.01
Employment challenges: composite	2.60	2.57	0.03	0.03
No valid driver's license (percentage)	51	51	0	0.01
Housing stability				
Unstable housing (percentage)	7	8	-1	-0.07
Sample size	667	634		

Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 12 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group. Unstable housing refers to being unsheltered, living in a shelter, or having another rent-free living arrangement.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

IMPACTS OF MYGOALS ON LABOR MARKET OUTCOMES (CONFIRMATORY AREA)

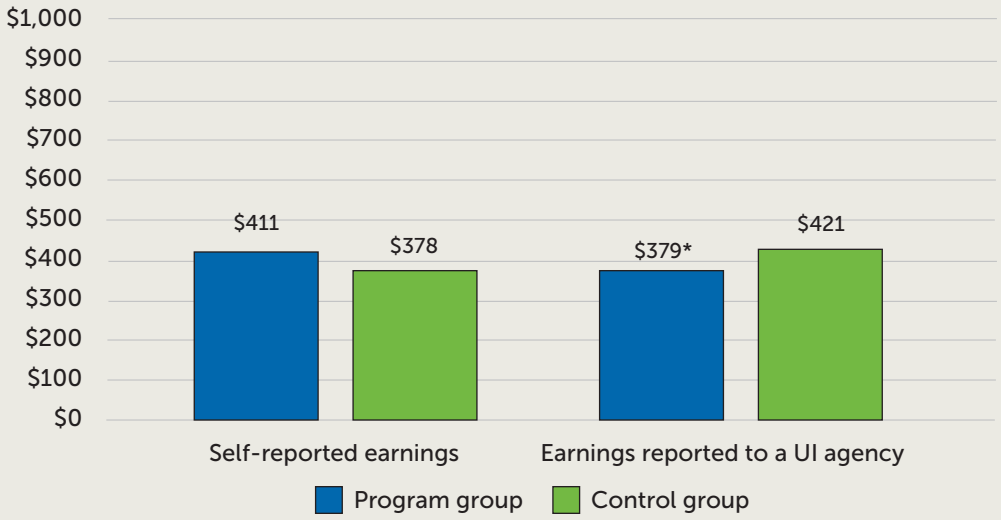
MyGoals group members had higher average self-reported earnings than control group members during the 12-month follow-up period, although the difference was not statistically significant. Bayesian analysis suggests this impact was likely positive but small.

Based on survey data, average monthly earnings during the 12-month follow-up period were higher for MyGoals group members than for control group members ($411 versus $378), although the difference was not statistically significant (Figure V.2). Bayesian analysis, which gives an interpretation of program impacts on earnings that takes into account the prior evidence on the effectiveness of similar programs, suggests this impact was likely positive; MyGoals had a 76 percent chance of having a positive impact on average monthly self-reported earnings (Figure V.3). However, this impact was also likely to be small; there was a 68 percent chance it was between $0 and $50, and only an 8 percent chance of the impact exceeding $50.

MyGoals group members had lower average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency than control group members did—a difference that was statistically significant at the 10 percent level. Bayesian analysis suggests this impact is likely negative but small.

When using administrative data, average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency during the 12-month follow-up period were lower for MyGoals group members than for control group members ($379 versus $421), a difference that was statistically significant at the 10 percent level (Figure V.2). Bayesian analysis also suggests the impact was likely to be negative; the estimates suggest a 77 percent chance of the impact being less than $0, but only a 14 percent chance it was less than –$25 (Figure V.3). We discuss possible reasons for the difference between survey and administrative data later in the chapter.

Figure V.2. Impact of MyGoals on average monthly self-reported earnings and average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency during the 12-month follow-up period (confirmatory analysis)

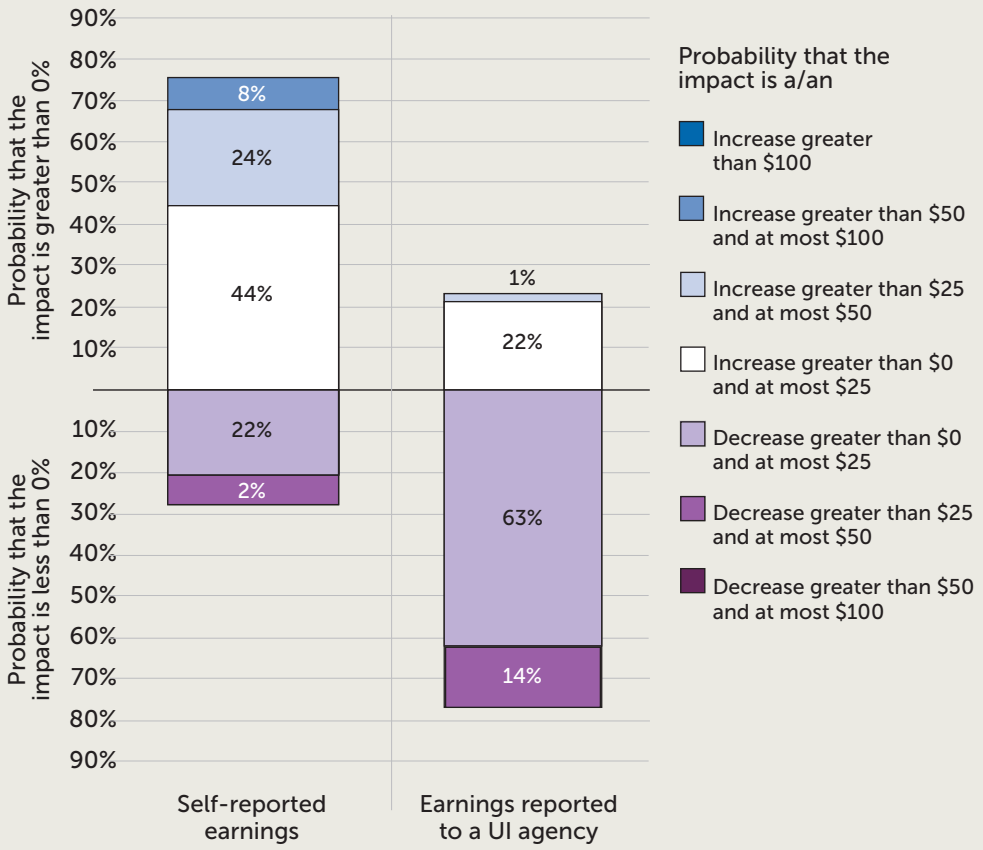


Sources: First follow-up survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 12 months after study enrollment. Analysis of average monthly earnings from the first follow-up survey includes 636 program group and 616 control group members. Analysis of average monthly earnings from the National Directory of New Hires includes 881 program group and 883 control group members. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

Figure V.3. Probability of various sizes of the impact of MyGoals on average monthly self-reported earnings and average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency during the 12-month follow-up period (secondary analysis)



Sources: First follow-up survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

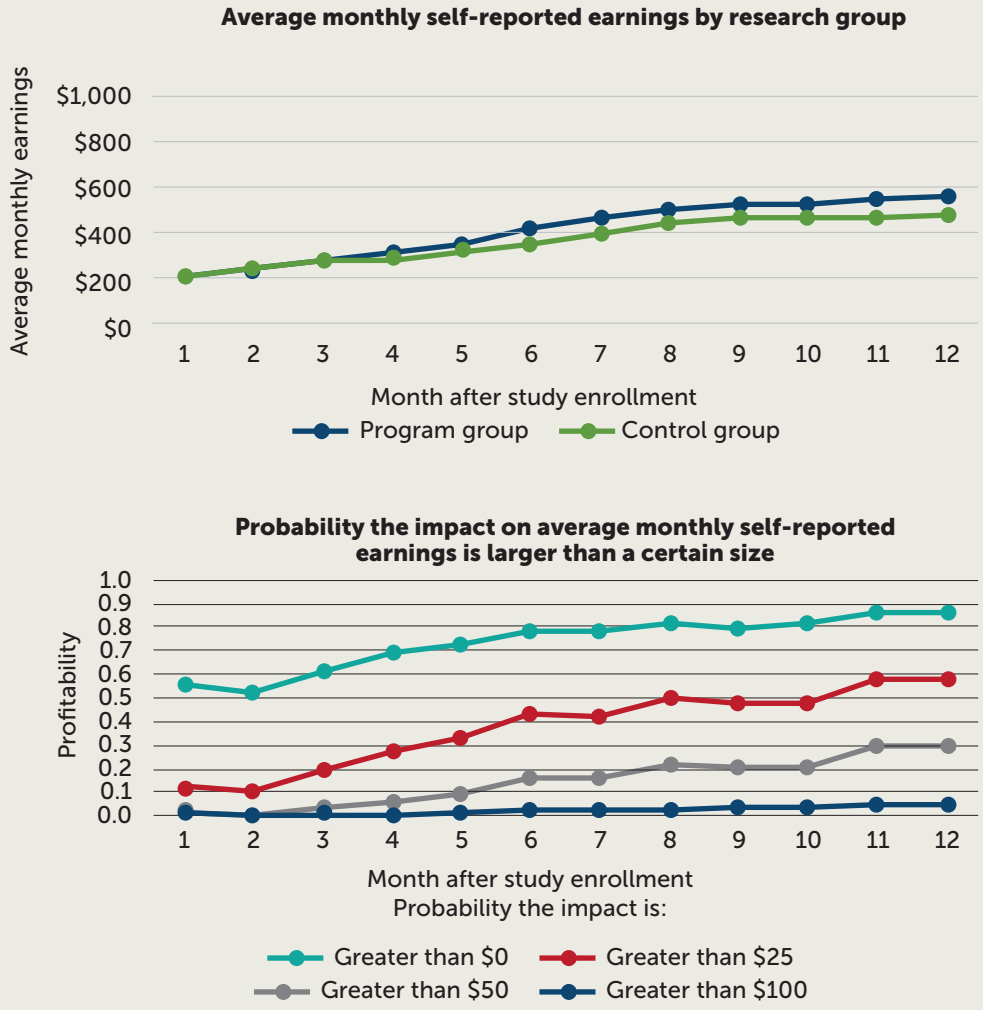
Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 12 months after study enrollment. Probabilities that impacts are various sizes are part of the exploratory analysis and calculated using Bayesian methods. Analysis of average monthly earnings from the first follow-up survey includes 636 program group and 616 control group members. Analysis of average monthly earnings from the National Directory of New Hires includes 881 program group and 883 control group members.

Analysis of the timing of impacts on self-reported earnings suggests the probability of a positive impact increased after the first 4 months of the follow-up period, but a similar analysis of earnings reported to a UI agency does not confirm this.

The estimated impact of MyGoals on self-reported earnings increased over the follow-up period (Figure V.4). During the first 4 months of the follow-up period, the probability that MyGoals had a positive impact on self-reported earnings ranged from 52 to 69 percent. In the 5th month, it was 73 percent. After the 5th month, the probability of a positive impact ranged from 79 to 87 percent. Exploratory analysis indicated the increased probability of impacts on self-reported earnings during later months was not associated with higher employment rates but with more hours worked (Appendix Table E.12). Relative to the control group, MyGoals group members reported working 1 to 2 more hours per week after the 4th month of the follow-up period. However, the differences were only statistically significant during the 11th and 12th months of the follow-up period. We did not observe similar patterns when

examining earnings reported to a UI agency (Table V.6). The impact on earnings reported to a UI agency was more likely to be negative than positive starting in the second quarter after study enrollment, although the negative impact on such earnings was likely to be between $0 and -$25 per month. The magnitude of the negative impact was largest in the third quarter after study enrollment, the only quarter for which the impact was statistically significant.

Figure V.4. Impact of MyGoals on average monthly self-reported earnings by month during the 12-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)



Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 12 months after study enrollment. The top panel of this figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group. Probabilities that impacts are greater than a certain value are part of the exploratory analysis and calculated using Bayesian methods. Appendix Table E.6 presents these estimates in detail.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

Table V.6. Impact of MyGoals on average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency by quarter during the 12-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

				Probability that the impact is:							
Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Less than -$100	Less than -$50	Less than -$25	Less than $0	Greater than $0	Greater than $25	Greater than $50	Greater than $100
Average monthly earnings by quarter after study enrollment (NDNH; $)											
Quarter 1	266	271	-5	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.47	0.53	0.06	0.00	0.00
Quarter 2	373	404	-31	0.00	0.00	0.12	0.66	0.34	0.04	0.00	0.00
Quarter 3	412	496	-84**	0.00	0.07	0.41	0.88	0.12	0.01	0.00	0.00
Quarter 4	471	516	-44	0.00	0.02	0.21	0.67	0.33	0.06	0.01	0.00
Sample size	881	883									

Source: The National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 12 months (4 quarters) after study enrollment. Probabilities that impacts are greater than a certain value are part of the exploratory analysis and calculated using Bayesian methods. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

NDNH = National Directory of New Hires.

In analysis conducted to complement our confirmatory analysis on earnings, we found MyGoals did not affect employment or employment in jobs offering benefits but did increase job search activity.

MyGoals and control group members were employed for about the same number of months and quarters and were similarly likely to have held a job that offered fringe benefits (Table V.7). Nevertheless, exploratory analysis suggests MyGoals group members may have searched more intensely for jobs and had more choices. Specifically, MyGoals group members who were employed at any time during the survey period reported more job search activities (3.1 versus 2.8) and higher rates of job offers (0.8 versus 0.4), differences that are both statistically significant.

Table V.7. Impact of MyGoals on other labor market, job quality, and job search outcomes during the 12-month follow-up period (secondary and exploratory analysis)

Outcome	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact	Effect size
Labor market outcomes				
Percentage of follow-up months employed	29	30	-1	-0.02
Percentage of follow-up quarters employed (administrative)	38	41	-3*	-0.08
Job quality				
Employed in job offering fringe benefits (percentage)	21	22	-2	-0.06
Percentage of follow-up months employed in a job offering fringe benefits	11	12	-1	-0.03
Job search outcomes				
Number of job search activities conducted	3.1	2.8	0.3***	0.21
Number of job offers received when working (if ever employed since study enrollment)	0.8	0.4	0.4***	0.26
Sample size (survey)	674	636		
Sample size (administrative)	881	883		

Sources: First follow-up survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 12 months (4 quarters) after study enrollment. Outcome variables are drawn from the first follow-up survey unless otherwise noted. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

IMPACTS OF MYGOALS ON ECONOMIC WELL-BEING AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE (CONFIRMATORY AREA)

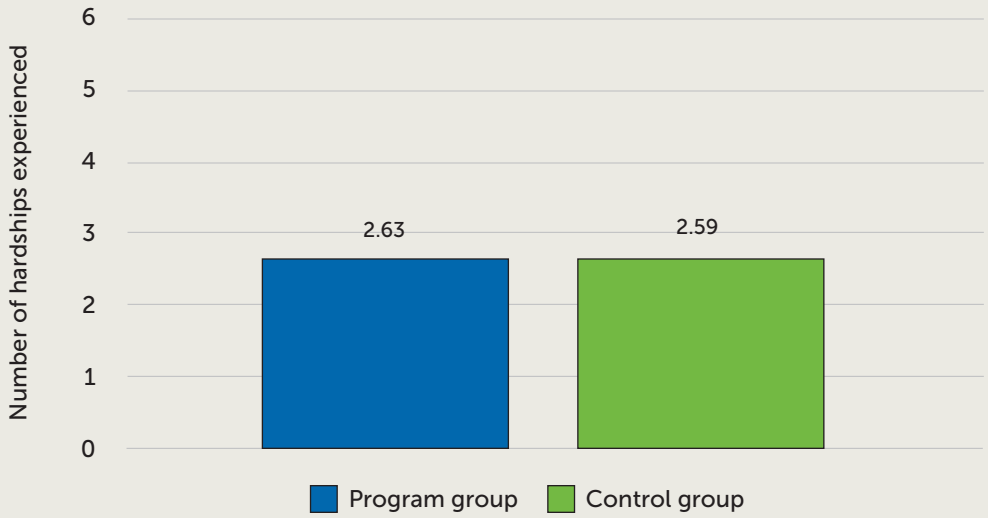
MyGoals and control group members reported similar levels of economic hardship.

A measure of the number of economic hardships revealed little difference between the MyGoals and control group members (Figure V.5). 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.

Exploratory analysis indicated that MyGoals did not affect public assistance benefit receipt.

MyGoals and control group members had similar rates of TANF, SNAP, UI, and housing subsidy receipt and monthly benefits (Table V.8). In addition, according to administrative data, more than 99 percent of study participants in both groups received housing subsidies since random assignment. These rates may have been so high because receipt of housing subsidies was required for study enrollment.

Figure V.5. Impact of MyGoals on economic hardship during the 12-month follow-up period (confirmatory analysis)



Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 12 months after study enrollment. The effect size for this impact is 0.02. This analysis includes 668 program group and 634 control group members. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

Table V.8. Impact of MyGoals on public benefit receipt during the 12-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

Outcome (administrative data)	Program group	Control group	Estimated impact
Received TANF cash assistance benefits since study enrollment (percentage)	16	16	0
Average monthly TANF cash assistance benefits ($)	55	55	0
Received SNAP benefits since study enrollment (percentage)	93	93	-1
Average monthly SNAP benefits ($)	325	330	-5
Received UI benefits since study enrollment (percentage)	11	12	-2
Average monthly UI benefits ($)	37	36	2
Received housing subsidy since study enrollment ($)	100	99	0
Average monthly housing subsidy ($)	939	928	11
Sample size (public assistance agency records)	887	879	
Sample size (PHA)	899	898	
Sample size (NDNH)	881	883	

Sources: The National Directory of New Hires, public assistance agency administrative records, and public housing agency administrative records.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 12 months after study enrollment. Because sample sizes vary by outcome, we report the largest sample size in each research group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

NDNH = National Directory of New Hires; PHA = Public Housing Agency; SNAP= Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; UI=Unemployment Insurance.

IMPACTS OF MYGOALS BY SUBGROUP (SECONDARY ANALYSIS)

In exploratory analysis, we found the impacts of MyGoals are generally consistent across groups for most outcomes.

We examined whether impacts on the four confirmatory outcomes differed for subgroups defined at study enrollment including program location, participant age, number of children, education level, employment status at baseline, and disability status. Impact estimates for the confirmatory outcomes across these subgroups includes 24 comparisons of program and control group means. We found statistically significant differences in impacts in just four instances (Table V.9). MyGoals had larger, positive impacts on goal-setting and attainment skills in Houston than in Baltimore, and on people older than age 30 (versus those age 30 or younger). Based on administrative records, MyGoals had smaller, more negative impacts on earnings reported to a UI agency for participants in Houston compared to those in Baltimore, and for people without a disability at baseline compared to those with a disability.

The greater impact on goal-setting and attainment skills in Houston compared to Baltimore is consistent with differences in impacts on service receipt between the two locations.

The greater impact on goal-setting and attainment skills in Houston compared to Baltimore is consistent with differences in impacts on service receipt between the two locations. The impacts of MyGoals on the percentage of respondents reporting that they received job assistance on goal-related topics were larger in Houston; the impacts were larger on receipt of job assistance on: (1) setting long-term goals (40 percent impact in Houston versus 27 percent in Baltimore), (2) setting short-term goals (39 percent versus 24 percent), and (3) planning to achieve goals (41 percent versus 30 percent) (Appendix Table E.7). These differences in impacts likely arose because MyGoals participants in Houston reported receiving goal-related services at higher rates than those in Baltimore and control group members in Houston reported receiving goal-related services at lower rates than the control group members in Baltimore.

Table V.9. Impact of MyGoals by subgroup during the 12-month follow-up period (exploratory analysis)

Subgroup	Increased goal-setting and attainment skills	Higher average monthly self-reported earnings	Higher average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency	Reduced economic hardship
Program location				
Baltimore	○	○	○	○
Houston	↗***	○	↘**	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	**Yes**	No	**Yes**	No
Participant age				
Older than age 30	↗***	○	↘**	○
Age 30 or younger	○	○	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	**Yes**	No	No	No
Number of children				
Two or more children	○	○	↘*	○
Fewer than two children	↗**	↗*	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No	No
Education level				
Some college or higher	○	○	↘*	○
No college	↗**	○	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No	No
Employment status				
Employed in the past year	○	○	↘*	○
Not employed in the past year	↗**	○	○	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	No	No
Disability status				
Has disability	○	○	○	○
Does not have disability	↗**	○	↘**	○
Difference in subgroup impacts is significant	No	No	**Yes**	No

Sources: First follow-up survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

(continued)

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 12 months after study enrollment. Outcome variables are drawn from the first follow-up survey unless otherwise noted. Differences in subgroup impacts reflect differences that are statistically significant at the .05 level, two-tailed test. Appendix Tables E.7 and 8 presents these subgroup impact estimates in greater detail.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

↗ Represents a favorable impact; ↘ represents an unfavorable impact; ◯ represents no statistically significant impact.

***/**/* following the red and green arrows suggests impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01, .05, and .10 levels within a given group, respectively, two-tailed test.

The "Difference in subgroup impacts is significant" row indicates whether these within-group impacts differ from one another.

DISCUSSION OF THE MYGOALS IMPACT FINDINGS

According to the confirmatory analysis of impacts during the 12-month follow-up period, MyGoals had a statistically significant impact on goal-setting and attainment skills. Findings from exploratory analysis suggest MyGoals' structured approach to setting goals in the coaching sessions may have contributed to these improvements in participants' skills in setting and attaining goals. For example, exploratory analysis revealed MyGoals group members were more than twice as likely as control group members to report receiving one-on-one job assistance that focused on various dimensions of setting goals, a difference that was statistically significant. In addition to impacting the overall measure of goal-setting and attainment skills, exploratory analysis revealed that MyGoals impacted several individual items of the measure that aligned with MyGoals' 12-step goal-setting process, including setting goals that align with MyGoals participants' preferences, setting goals MyGoals participants believe they can achieve, setting explicit short-term goals, and monitoring progress toward goals. Exploratory analysis also found that MyGoals improved emotional control and self-monitoring, which in turn may have contributed to improvements in goal-setting and attainment skills.

MyGoals had a statistically significant impact on goal-setting and attainment skills."

The confirmatory analysis did not find a statistically significant difference in the average self-reported earnings of the MyGoals and control groups; secondary Bayesian analysis of this impact suggests that MyGoals likely had a small and positive effect on self-reported earnings. Confirmatory analysis of administrative earnings data found a small and negative effect on earnings that was statistically significant at the 10 percent level. The difference in estimated impacts on earnings from survey reports and administrative records may have arisen because the administrative data do not cover all types of earnings. As discussed in detail in Chapter VI, the administrative data may understate earnings because (1) the data do not cover certain types of jobs, such as self-employment and contracting, and (2) employers may underreport employee earnings to UI agencies. It is also possible that study participants may not accurately recall their earnings when responding to surveys. Additional follow-up analysis may shed light on the sources of these differences.

Because MyGoals continued to provide services after the first 12 months and had impacts on intermediate outcomes, it is possible that larger, positive impacts on earnings and economic hardship could emerge in later follow-up periods. We found that MyGoals and control group members had similar levels of earnings and economic hardship during the first follow-up period. However, it is possible that MyGoals could have larger longer-term impacts on these outcomes for two main reasons. First, MyGoals is a three-year program, so the 12-month follow-up may be too short to

capture the program's full impact on economic outcomes. Second, the impacts on some intermediate outcomes may not have translated into impacts on economic outcomes within the first follow-up period. For example, MyGoals had positive impacts on whether study participants were enrolled in education or training at the time of the 12-month follow-up survey, which could translate into higher earnings in the future, especially if MyGoals participants complete their training and education. In addition, participation in education and training may have temporarily depressed earnings during the 12-month follow-up period. Similarly, the improvements in goal-setting and attainment skills may take more time to lead to improvements in economic outcomes. For example, MyGoals group members may need more time to meet their longer-term employment goals. Consistent with the possibility that impacts on economic outcomes could increase over time, the probability of positive impacts on self-reported earnings was higher during the second half of the follow-up period.

A MyGoals coach listens to a participant.

VI. Conclusion

This report describes the early impacts of four employment coaching programs that are quite different from each other. It presents the estimated impacts of the programs at 9 or 12 months (depending on the program) after study enrollment. This is a short-term look at impacts—some program participants were still receiving coaching at the time of the first follow-up. Future reports on later follow-up periods covering 21 months after study enrollment and 48 to 67 months after study enrollment will describe how these impacts evolve over time. This chapter synthesizes the findings, discusses some overall findings, and poses some questions to be addressed in subsequent analysis.

THE FOUR COACHING PROGRAMS VARIED IN IMPORTANT WAYS

All four programs in the evaluation offered employment coaching that was collaborative and focused on personalized goals directly or indirectly related to employment. However, the coaching approach used differed across programs in some key ways. The differences included whether the coaching primarily took place in the home or the program office; the amount of structure coaches used to help program participants set and work toward goals; whether financial incentives were offered; whether the coaches were paid professionals or unpaid graduate students; and the length of time program participants could meet with their coaches (Table VI.1). Another important difference was that coaching in Goal4 It! was mandatory for those assigned to the program group; the participants could be sanctioned or lose their benefits if they did not meet with their coaches. The programs varied from a well-established decades-long program (FaDSS) to programs that had been operating for a few years or less (Goal4 It! and MyGoals).

The programs were implemented in different settings: a TANF agency (Goal4 It!), a state human rights department (FaDSS), local housing agencies (MyGoals), and a nonprofit organization (LIFT). FaDSS and Goal4 It! served TANF participants; MyGoals served recipients of public housing assistance; and LIFT served parents. The fact that FaDSS and Goal4 It! served TANF participants who had to meet requirements to retain benefits potentially could affect which goals they set, the speed in which they make progress, and their relationships with their coaches (McConnell et al. 2023). The participants served by the programs varied in terms of race and ethnicity, to a large extent mirroring the racial and ethnic make-up of the local community. Although the study participants in all four programs were typically not well established in the labor market when they enrolled in the study, reflecting the differences in program eligibility requirements, the study participants in MyGoals had by far the lowest employment and earnings before they enrolled.

The amount of coaching received by participants in the program group also varied (Table VII.1), reflecting program eligibility rules and the needs and characteristics of study participants, among other factors. The amount of coaching received was lowest for Goal4 It!, mainly because program participants stopped receiving coaching when they left TANF, which was within approximately 4 months on average. In contrast, MyGoals participants received 12 interactions on average in the 12 months after study enrollment, and most program participants were still in contact with their coach after a

year and could potentially receive coaching for another two years. Nearly half of LIFT participants were still in contact with their coach after a year and could potentially receive coaching for another year. FaDSS participants had an average of 18 interactions with coaches in the first 12 months after study enrollment. About 27 percent of those assigned to the FaDSS group were still in contact with their FaDSS coach after a year.

The counter factual we compared the four programs against also differed. We tested LIFT and MyGoals against all other employment services in the community. We tested FaDSS and TANF case management against TANF case management alone. We tested Goal4 It! against traditional case management provided by the same TANF agency.

Table VI.1 Differences in receipt of coaching by program

Measure of service receipt	FaDSS	Goal4 It!	LIFT	MyGoals
Average number of contacts with program participants in first 12 months	18	4	8	12
Percentage still in contact with coach after 12 months	27	9	46	56
Duration of time eligible to receive coaching	While receiving TANF and up to 7 months after leaving TANF	While receiving TANF	2 years	3 years

Source: Study management information systems.

SHORT-TERM IMPACT FINDINGS DIFFERED BY PROGRAM

As shown in Table VI.2, the impacts at the first follow-up point (9 months after study enrollment for FaDSS, Goal4 It!, and LIFT, and 12 months after enrollment for MyGoals) on the confirmatory outcomes differed by program. No program had large impacts on either measure of earnings and none of the impacts on earnings were statistically significant. However, there was evidence of small, likely positive effects on self-reported earnings for three of the four programs and a small, likely negative effect on earnings reported to a UI agency for one program. Some findings suggest promise for future impacts including statistically significant improvements in goal-setting and attainment skills for two of the four programs, impacts on self-reported earnings that were likely positive albeit small and not statistically significant for three of the four programs, and a statistically significant reduction in economic hardship for one program. In the rest of this section, we discuss the pattern of impacts across programs for key outcomes and their implications.

Table VI.2. Summary of impacts on select outcomes (confirmatory outcomes in bold)

Outcome	FaDSS	Goal4 It!	LIFT	MyGoals
Increased amount of one-on-one job search assistance	+	❍	+	+
Increased goal-setting and attainment skills	+	❍	❍	+
Increased participation in education or training programs	❍	❍	+	+
Increased completion of training programs	+	❍	❍	❍
Higher average monthly self-reported earnings	❍ Likely between $0 and $50	❍ Likely between $0 and $50	❍ Likely between -$25 and $25	❍ Likely between $0 and $50
Higher average monthly earnings from administrative data	❍ Likely between -$25 and $25	❍ Likely between -$25 and +$25	NA	❍ Likely between $0 and -$25
Reduced economic hardship	–	❍	❍	❍
Reduced receipt of public assistance	❍	❍	❍	❍

Source: First follow-up survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: The statements about the likely size of the impact are based on a Bayesian analysis. "Likely" refers to a probability of more than 50 percent.

+ indicates a positive impact that is significantly different from 0 at the .05 level.

– indicates a negative impact that is significantly different from 0 at the .05 level.

❍ indicates no impact that is significantly different from 0 at the .05 level.

NA indicates that impact estimates are not available; we did not include earnings reported to a UI agency for LIFT because this outcome is not available for the 40 percent of LIFT study participants who did not provide valid Social Security numbers when they enrolled in the study.

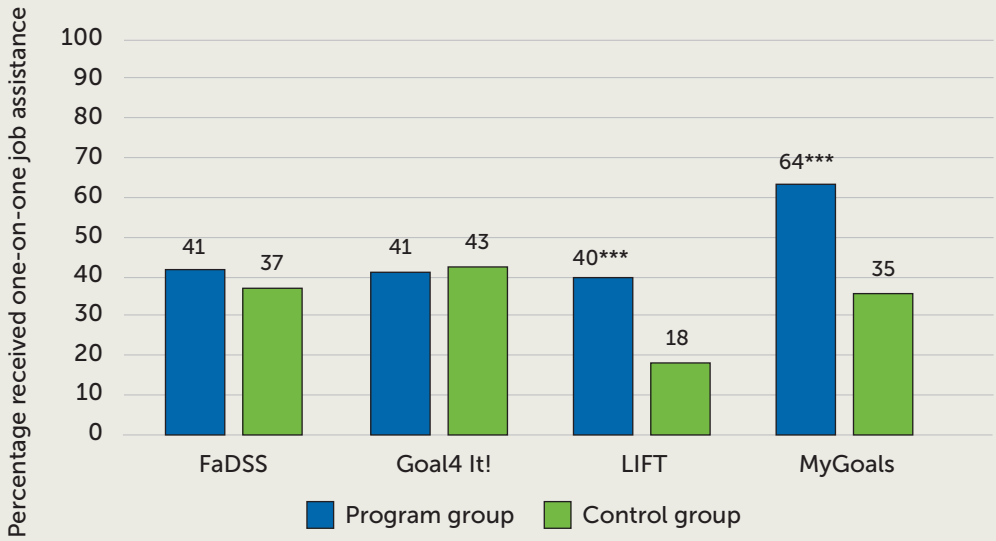
ALL PROGRAMS EXCEPT GOAL4 IT! INCREASED RECEIPT OF ONE-ON-ONE JOB ASSISTANCE

The employment coaching programs in the evaluation all offered services in communities where other employment services are available. In all programs, control group members received employment services from other programs in the community. For three programs (FaDSS, Goal4 It!, and MyGoals), 35 to 43 percent of control group members reported receiving one-on-one job assistance since study enrollment (Figure VI.1), suggesting that employment services are available in the community. LIFT control group members used fewer employment resources in the community—only 18 percent of control group participants reported receiving any one-on-one job assistance.

FaDSS, MyGoals, and LIFT all increased the number of hours of reported one-on-one job assistance. There was no significant difference in number of hours of one-on-one job search assistance for the Goal4 It! program and control groups. This is not surprising given that members of both the program group and control group were offered one-on-one job assistance either as coaching (the program group) or as traditional TANF case management (the control group).

It is notable that in all programs, the self-report of receipt of one-on-one job assistance is lower than the receipt of coaching suggested by the program records. This indicates program participants either did not remember receiving coaching, or did not consider coaching to be one-on-one job assistance. Some program participants might have thought that because coaches were not directing them, it was not job assistance. This is consistent with participants' desire to receive more job assistance, as expressed in interviews conducted as part of the implementation study (Gardiner et al. 2023). MyGoals participants were more likely than participants in other programs to report receiving one-on-one job assistance in the survey. This might have been because MyGoals participants were offered labor market information.

Figure VI.1. Impact of programs on one-on-one job assistance during the first follow-up period (exploratory analysis)



Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment for FaDSS, LIFT, and Goal4 It!, and over the first 12 months after study enrollment for MyGoals. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group.

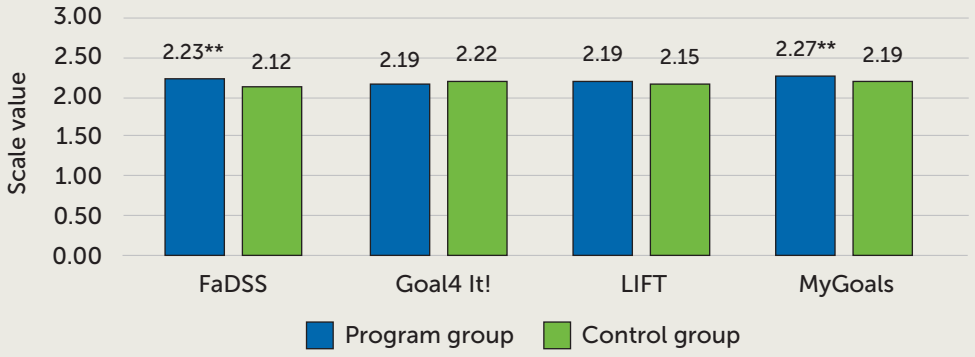
***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO EMPLOYMENT COACHING CAN IMPROVE GOAL-SETTING AND ATTAINMENT SKILLS

FaDSS and MyGoals—two programs that implemented coaching in very different ways—had positive and significant impacts on the study's measure of goal-setting and attainment skills (0.22 and 0.13 standard deviations, respectively) (Figure VI.2). MyGoals featured a structured 12-step process to setting goals in which coaches explicitly assessed and discussed self-regulation skills with program participants. Notably, MyGoals was also the only program with an impact on other measures of self-regulation skills, such as emotional control and self-monitoring. In contrast, FaDSS involved less structure, giving the coach much more autonomy. In addition, FaDSS coaches were not trained on self-regulation skills and did not assess program participants for those skills or name the skills in discussion with participants.

Neither Goal4 It! nor LIFT had significant impacts on goal-setting and attainment skills. Goal4 It! used a structured 4-step process for setting goals; LIFT used a less structured process for setting goals. Coaches of both programs learned about self-regulation skills as part of their training but did not assess or discuss them with program participants. That two programs improved goal-setting and attainment skills using different approaches is consistent with the broader literature on skill development. Evidence suggests structured programs that explicitly address self-regulation skills can improve those skills (Almlund et al. 2011; Cavadel et al. 2017). At the same time, other evidence suggests less structured programs—such as mentorship programs and apprenticeships—that do not explicitly discuss self-regulation skills are also promising ways to improve them (Kautz et al. 2014). Our analysis demonstrates that coaching that is effective in improving goal-setting and attainment skills can take different forms. It is possible that Goal4 It! would have larger impacts on goal-setting and attainment skills

Figure VI.2. Impact of programs on goal-setting and attainment skills during the first follow-up period (confirmatory analysis)



Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment for FaDSS, LIFT, and Goal4 It!, and over the first 12 months after study enrollment for MyGoals. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group. The goal-setting and attainment scale measures participants' average level of agreement with eight statements about their goal-related skills. Scores range from "strongly disagree" (0) to "strongly agree" (3).

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

if the participants had more contacts with their coaches—Goal4 It! participants had on average only four contacts with their coaches, less than participants in the other programs. Similarly, it is possible that LIFT would have had more impact on self-regulation skills if the turnover of coaches had been lower.

Future follow-ups from this study may shed light on whether the impacts on the measure of goal-setting and attainment skills could reflect a lasting change in skills or a temporary change in behavior. Program participants may set goals and practice self-regulation skills while in the program, but may not be able to continue those behaviors without the support of a coach. Analysis of data from future follow-up periods will allow investigation of this possibility.

THREE PROGRAMS HAD IMPACTS ON TRAINING AND EDUCATION OUTCOMES

Secondary analysis revealed FaDSS group members were more likely programs than their control group counterparts to complete training (7 percent and 2 percent, respectively), a difference that was statistically significant. In exploratory analysis, we found MyGoals had a statistically significant impact on whether participants were participating in an education or training program at the time of the follow-up survey (17 percent versus 8 percent). Similarly, we found LIFT had statistically significant impacts on whether participants had participated in an education program during the first follow-up period (40 versus 30 percent) and on whether participants were participating in a training program at the time of the follow-up survey (7 percent versus 3 percent). These findings may reflect the short-term goals program group members set for themselves in service of long-term employment goals. For example, staff reported in the program's management information system that 50 percent of MyGoals group members set a goal related to education and training.

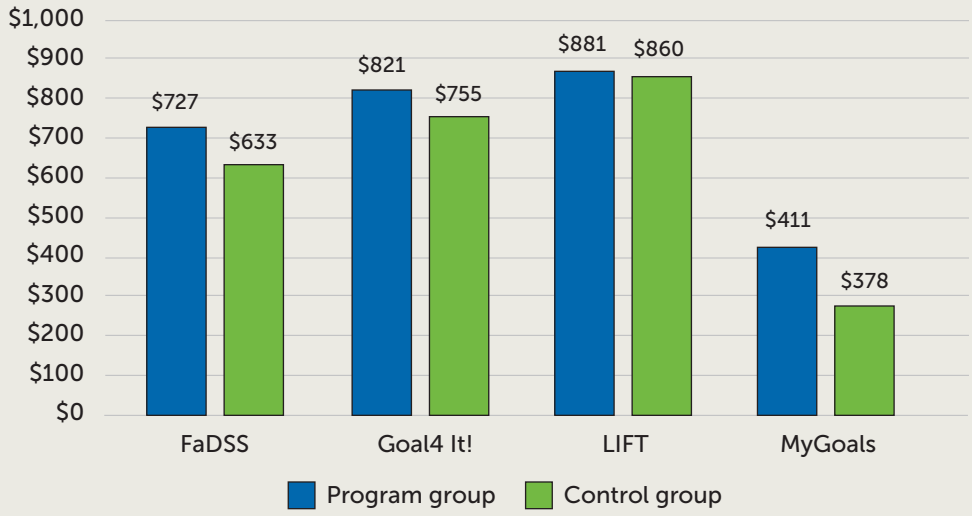
These impacts on education and training could potentially lead to greater impacts on labor market outcomes in future follow-up periods for two reasons: (1) participation in education and training programs could have depressed the earnings of program group members during the first follow-up period if they worked less because they were participating in these programs; and (2) completion of education and training programs could improve program group members' ability to find a job or a better job, resulting in higher future earnings.

SOME PROGRAMS LIKELY HAD SMALL IMPACTS ON SELF-REPORTED EARNINGS, BUT NONE HAD POSITIVE IMPACTS ON EARNINGS REPORTED TO UI AGENCIES

In all study programs, program group members had higher average self-reported earnings during the first follow-up period than control group members did, although the difference was not statistically significant (Figure VI.3). Bayesian analysis indicates that all programs had a 65 to 80 percent chance of having a positive impact on average monthly earnings, but only a 32 to 47 percent chance of the impact exceeding $25 (Figure VI.4).

Exploratory analysis suggest the FaDSS and MyGoals impacts on self-reported earnings likely increased over time, whereas the Goal4 It! impacts on self-reported earnings did not reveal a clear trend over time. The LIFT impacts on self-reported earnings were consistently close to $0 throughout the 9-month follow-up period.

Figure VI.3. Impact of programs on average monthly self-reported earnings during the first follow-up period (confirmatory analysis)

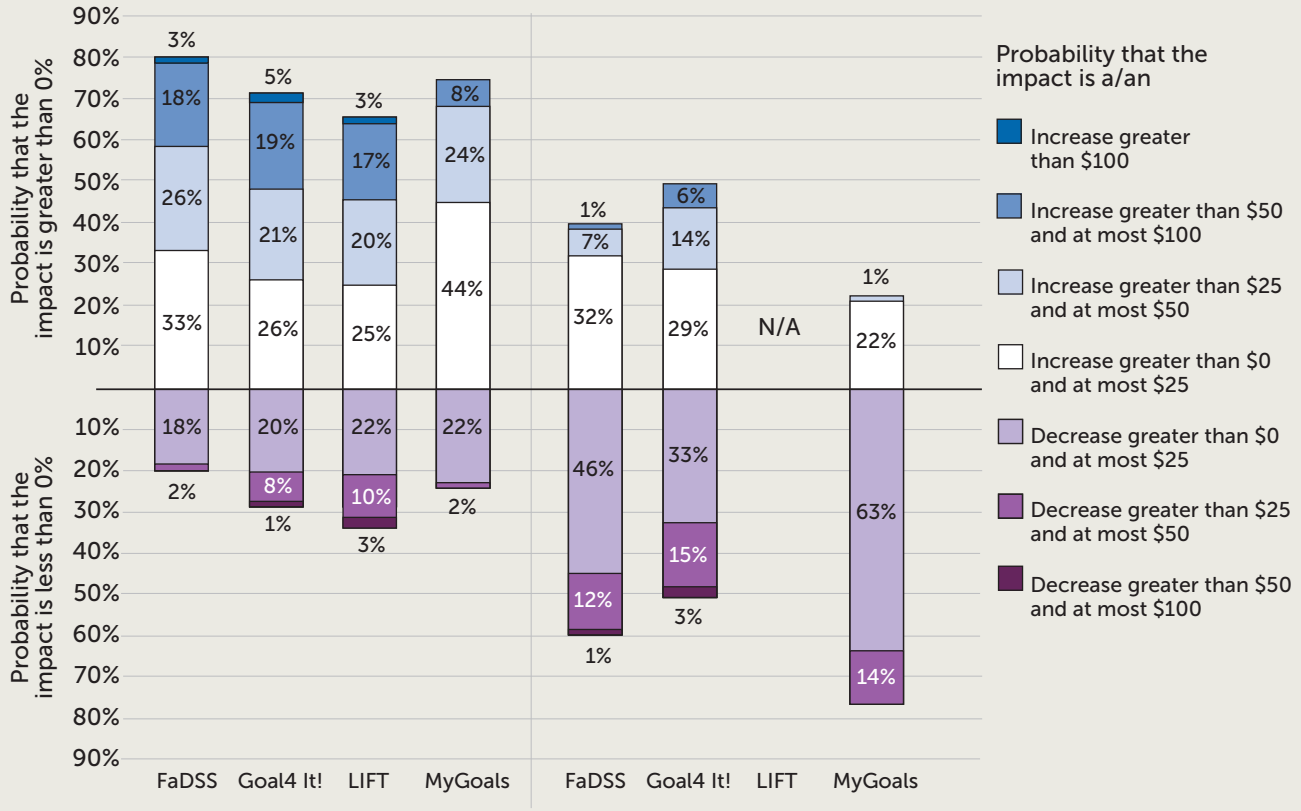


Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment for FaDSS, LIFT, and Goal4 It!, and over the first 12 months after study enrollment for MyGoals. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

Figure VI.4. Probability of various program impact sizes on average monthly self-reported earnings and average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency during the first follow-up period (secondary analysis)

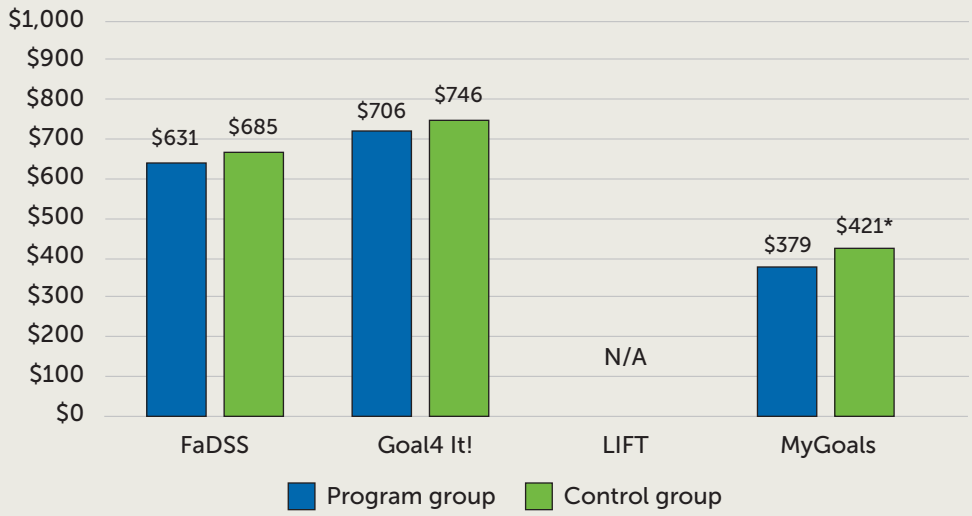


Sources: First follow-up survey and the National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 (12 for MyGoals) months after study enrollment. Probabilities that the impacts are various sizes are part of the secondary analysis and calculated using Bayesian methods.

NA indicates that impact estimates are not available; we did not include earnings reported to a UI agency for LIFT because this outcome is not available for the 40 percent of LIFT study participants who did not provide valid Social Security numbers (SSNs) when they enrolled in the study.

Figure VI.5. Impact of programs on average monthly earnings reported to a UI agency based on administrative records during the first follow-up period (confirmatory analysis)



Source: The National Directory of New Hires.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment for FaDSS and Goal4 It! and the first 12 months for MyGoals. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group.

***/**/* indicates impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

NA indicates that impact estimates are not available; we did not include earnings reported to a UI agency for LIFT because this outcome is not available for the 40 percent of LIFT study participants who did not provide valid Social Security numbers (SSNs) when they enrolled in the study.

The self-reported earnings data from the participant follow-up survey and the administrative data on jobs reported to a UI agency paint somewhat different pictures of the programs' impacts. Although the self-reported earnings for program group members were higher than the self-reported earnings for control group members in all study programs, the opposite was true when we looked at the administrative data. The evidence suggests FaDSS, Goal4 It!, and MyGoals did not have positive impacts on earnings reported to the UI agencies, and MyGoals likely had a small negative impact (Figures VII.4 and VII.5) (We did not have enough Social Security numbers for LIFT members to conduct analysis using administrative data.)

Neither source of data captures all earnings accurately, but the differences in impacts suggest coaching may have increased earnings from jobs that were not reported to the UI agency. The NDNH data only include earnings that were reported to a UI agency. They exclude earnings from jobs by independent contractors, such as ride app drivers and food delivery app workers, which is a growing employment sector and often concentrated in the bottom half of the income distribution (Lim et al. 2019, Tollestrup 2019; Katz and Krueger 2016). The administrative data also exclude self-employed workers, federal employees, military personnel, railroad employees, workers in service for relatives, most agricultural labor, some domestic service workers, part-time employees of nonprofit organizations, and some workers who are casually employed "not in the course of the employer's business" (U.S. Department of Labor

2004). Additionally, other studies have found that some employers do not report earnings that they should as a way to avoid paying UI taxes; this is especially an issue with the reporting of earnings from low-paying jobs (Abraham et al. 2013; Blakemore et al. 1996). Because the survey asked study participants to report earnings on all paid jobs they held since study enrollment, it should include jobs not reported to the UI agency. However, self-reported earnings may suffer from recall bias—some survey respondents may have incorrectly reported the jobs they had and their earnings (Moore et al. 2018). Taken together, the data suggest that any small impacts on earnings of members of the program group were likely the result of earnings increases at jobs that were not reported to a UI agency. This could mean program group members are taking jobs less likely to be reported to a UI agency, such as low-paying or temporary jobs.

We conducted some exploratory analysis to shed light on the differences of earnings impacts based on different data sources. We found some suggestive evidence associated with differences in job characteristics between two research groups. For FaDSS, program group members were more likely than control group members to be employed in jobs other than regular full- or part-time jobs, such as working for a temporary help agency, as an independent contractor or freelance worker, as a day laborer, or as an on-call employee; these jobs are less likely than regular full- or part-time jobs to be reported to a UI agency. For Goal4 It!, program group members were more likely than control group members to be employed in part-time jobs. Future research should continue to investigate the sources of measurement errors that could explain the differences in impact estimation based on different data sources.

FaDSS reduced economic hardship, on average, by about 10 percent, or 0.2 standard deviations.

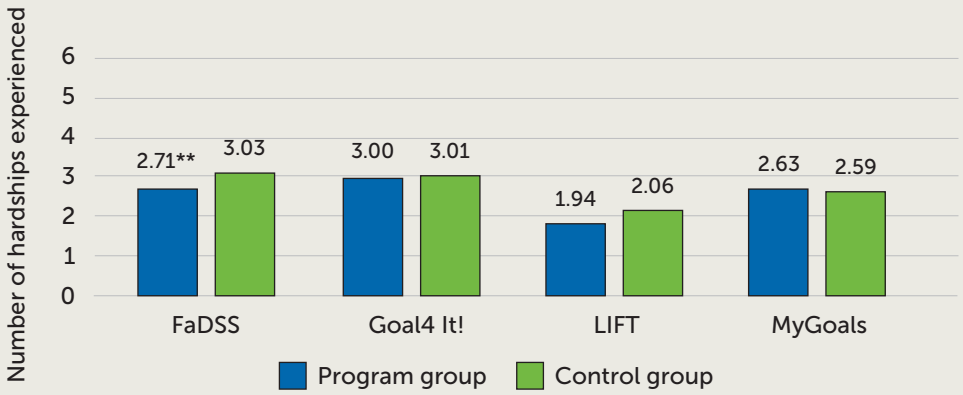
FADSS REDUCED ECONOMIC HARDSHIP; THE OTHER THREE PROGRAMS DID NOT

FaDSS reduced economic hardship, on average, by about 10 percent, or 0.2 standard deviations (Figure VI.6). The reduction in economic hardship could have taken place for one or more of the following reasons: (1) coaching increased participants' earnings; (2) coaching helped the participants access other resources to help them meet their needs; and/or (3) coaching helped the participants manage their resources more effectively. There is some suggestive evidence FaDSS did all three to some degree—that it increased earnings slightly, that coaches referred participants to other services in the community (Schwartz 2020), and that coaches improved participants' goal-setting and attainment skills, which could include improving their ability to manage resources.

NO PROGRAM AFFECTED RECEIPT OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

We found no statistically significant impacts on any of the outcomes related to public benefit receipt for any program, including the two programs (FaDSS and Goal4 It!) for which participation in TANF is a requirement for program enrollment. These findings suggest the programs' coaching does not affect these outcomes in the short term. Possibly, it will take more time for such impacts to emerge.

Figure VI.6. Impact of programs on economic hardship during the first follow-up period (confirmatory analysis)



Source: First follow-up survey.

Note: Outcomes are measured over the first 9 months after study enrollment for FaDSS, LIFT, and Goal4 It!, and over the first 12 months after study enrollment for MyGoals. This figure shows the regression-adjusted means for the program group and control group. The estimated impact of the program can be calculated by subtracting the adjusted mean of the control group from the adjusted mean of the program group.

***/**/* Impact estimates are statistically significant at the .01/.05/.10 levels, respectively, using a two-tailed t-test.

Box VI.1. Findings of impact analysis pooling across programs

The four programs had different strategies and were offered to different people in different contexts. All of them, however, offered coaching on goals related directly or indirectly to employment, so they may have common impacts on outcomes. We explored this possibility through a pooled analysis that estimates the average of the four program-specific impacts during the first follow-up period (12 months for MyGoals and 9 months for the other programs). Because the four programs in this evaluation do not represent all possible employment coaching models, these analysis are not intended to test the effectiveness of employment coaching as a strategy. Appendix F provides more details on this analysis. Findings from this analysis are summarized below:

- Study participants who were offered employment coaching had higher goal-setting and attainment skills at the time of the first follow-up survey than those who were not offered coaching. The impact was statistically significant.
- Study participants who were offered employment coaching had higher average self-reported earnings than those who were not offered coaching, although the difference was not statistically significant. Bayesian analysis indicates that the impact was likely positive but small.
- Administrative records suggest that people who were offered employment coaching had lower average earnings reported to a UI agency than control group members did, although the difference was not statistically significant. Bayesian analysis indicates the impact was likely negative but small.
- Study participants who were offered employment coaching and those who were not reported similar levels of economic hardship at the time of the first follow-up survey.

QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED IN FUTURE ANALYSIS

Our early analysis of impacts of four different coaching programs found that none of the programs had large impacts on earnings, yet there were some promising findings.

Our early analysis of impacts of four different coaching programs found that none of the programs had large impacts on earnings, yet there were some promising findings. Follow-up analysis at 21 months after study enrollment and again at 48 and 67 months after study enrollment will address whether the impacts on goal-setting and attainment skills persisted or decreased once participants were no longer in the program. Further analysis will also shed light on the programs' longer-term impacts on earnings. Does the contrast between the small, likely positive impacts on self-reported earnings and the small (and sometimes likely negative) impacts on earnings reported to the UI agencies suggest coaching leads to program participants taking jobs less likely to be reported to UI agencies, such as low-paying or temporary jobs? Will the self-reported earnings impacts fade over time as participants leave the programs? Conversely, will more interactions with coaches lead to more favorable impacts on the main outcomes the programs intend to influence? And will the improvements in goal-setting and attainment skills for two of the four programs and the increased training and education for three of the programs lead to higher earnings impacts in the future? Will any positive earnings in the future translate into reduced reliance on public assistance? A report on the programs' impacts at 21 months after study enrollment, anticipated in 2023, will begin to answer these questions.

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