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MOVING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE:

Universal Assessment for Workforce Development Programs

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PUTTING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE: Universal Assessment for Workforce Development Programs. May 2020.

This document is intended for use by Community Action Agencies and other CSBG Eligible Entities within the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Network.

Publication Contributors
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Community Action Partnership
The Community Action Partnership is the nonprofit, national membership organization representing the interests of the 1,000+ Community Action Agencies (CAAs) across the country that annually helps 17 million low-income Americans achieve economic security. Whether it's a Head Start program, weatherization, job training, housing, food bank, energy assistance, financial education, or any of the other 40 distinct programs, CAAs work to make America a better place to live.

The purpose of the CSBG Learning Community is to analyze Community Action outcomes and identify effective, promising, and innovative practice models that alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty.

The Learning Community, a project of the LCRC, is an opportunity for Community Action Agencies to build capacity to increase impact by:

- Capitalizing on Peer Knowledge and Expertise;
- Creating Effective Strategies; and
- Promoting Promising Practices

The Learning Community is comprised of topical Learning Community Groups (LCGs) which consist of a cadre of agencies that are currently working on a program or service delivery strategy related to each of the LCG focus areas. Learning Community members meet bi-monthly, either virtually or in-person and assist each other by discussing "what works", sharing data findings, solving problems, and offering support for implementing new ideas.

The **CSBG TTA Resource Center** is also a project of the LCRC and serves as a wonderful compliment to ***The Learning Community*** as it is the "clearinghouse" for a broad array of resources to assist Community Action with its important anti-poverty work. The Resource Center allows for electronic submission of requests for T/TA, ensures the coordination of resources, and allows experts to meet the T/TA needs of the CSBG Network. It hosts a consultant bank; a resource bank which provides a broad array of evidence-based, evidence-informed and exemplary program practice models; a shared calendar; and a discussion forum. A valuable tool, the Resource Bank includes information, toolkits, webinars, articles and other information focused on a full range of services to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities served by the CSBG Network.

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MOVING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE
UNIVERSAL ASSESSMENT FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

OVERVIEW

The continued need for workforce and human service agencies to conduct early engagement practices requires reliable upfront assessment. Upfront assessment strategies can help to identify barriers and immediately direct participants toward appropriately tailored activities and services. Up-front assessments can help workforce and human service programs identify and make more appropriate referrals.

While powerful, assessment alone is not sufficient for improving practice. Rather, marrying assessment with case management techniques like motivational interviewing, coaching practice, and positive regard streamlines connection to appropriate services, situates the participant as driver of their own journey, and promotes longer-term self-sufficiency.

This resource packet provides information as it relates to assessment in the following areas:

I. Setting the Stage: The Importance of Assessment
II. Addressing Employability Needs in Human Services and Workforce Development through Assessment
III. Universal Assessment in Practice
    a. Motivational Interviewing
    b. Coaching
    c. Positive Regard

RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Setting the Stage: The Importance of Assessment

A Comprehensive Approach to Economic Opportunity, 2020

This report discusses the evolution and impact of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Center for Working Families (CWF) framework, which is an integrated service delivery approach designed to help low-income families achieve financial security. Introduced in 2004, CWF focused on three core service strands: 1) workforce development and employment services; 2) financial literacy education and coaching; and 3) improved access to public benefits. In addition to this document, readers can explore a series of profiles that capture the implementation experiences of three CWF sites. The three organizations profiled are: 1) The Jane Addams Resource Corporation in Chicago; 2) Local Initiatives Support Corporation Indianapolis; and 3) SparkPoint at Skyline College in San Bruno, California. *(author abstract)*

TANF Recipients with Barriers to Employment. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program – Research Synthesis Brief Series, 2011

Most TANF recipients have at least one barrier to work, and many have multiple barriers. The likelihood of work declines as the number of barriers increases. This brief summarizes the strategies that states use to help TANF recipients with barriers to employment. It reviews the limited research evidence on the short- and long-term effects of employment-focused and treatment-focused interventions. It draws implications for policy, including recommendations for more effective screening and assessment, faster resolution of applications for disability benefits and the need for case management and broad support services. *(author abstract)*

TANF Recipients' Barriers to Employability: Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence, 2010

Recipients of temporary assistance for needy families (TANF) encounter a variety of expectations and sanctions. Recipients face work requirements, limited resources, and barriers to employability, including the barrier of substance use. This article addresses the sanctions that are applied to clients who do not meet expectations of the policy, barriers to employability, disparities in resources, and factors influencing referrals for substance abuse treatment for TANF clients. *(author abstract)*

Barriers to Independence among TANF Recipients: Comparing Caseworker Records and Client Surveys, 2008

Survey-based studies reveal the prevalence of employment barriers among Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) recipients. However, the extent to which welfare caseworkers are aware of, and therefore able to address, particular barriers is unknown. This study compares survey data with electronic case records to measure the rate of agreement in barrier identification, and finds that although agreement rates are high, barriers were more likely to have been documented by caseworkers for certain subgroups of recipients. It is suggested that welfare agencies consider using validated scales and measures to assess some barriers in order to increase the likelihood of identifying and removing barriers to work for more recipients, particularly in light of new, more stringent work participation requirements. *(author abstract)*

II. Addressing Employability Needs in Human Services and Workforce Development through Assessment

Creating a Tool for Assessing Domestic Violence Risk and Impact among TANF Clients, 2019

The Family Violence Option (FVO), a provision of the 1996 welfare legislation, allows states to waive certain program requirements for domestic violence (DV) survivors in order to protect them from danger or penalties. The absence of a standardized method for assessing risk and impact has been an impediment to states' use of the FVO, particularly in the granting of waivers. The purpose of this study was to address this limitation by developing and testing a risk and impact assessment tool for DV survivors applying for waivers under the FVO. Therefore, a collaborative effort between state administrators and researchers was formed which included input from welfare staff and DV advocates. Background research included reviews of validated risk assessments and FVO policies, as well as primary data from focus groups and surveys with staff from the state human services organization, county welfare agencies, and DV organizations. A tool was then created with 131 questions covering demographics, abuse experiences, partner access and risk, perceptions of safety, and emotional health, and piloted in four counties. Two hundred and thirty-seven completed assessments were analyzed using descriptive statistics, principal component analysis, and feedback from assessors. The final tool (n= 95 items) was informed by validated evidence and frontline practice wisdom, recommended to improve FVO utilization and survivor outcomes. From this study, the authors recommend that other states seeking changes to their FVO risk assessment policy and practice explore collaborative partnerships between practitioners and researchers in order to make decisions informed by best practices and systematic research. They should also pursue cross departmental training of risk assessment tools to prevent a siloed approach to FVO implementation. *(author abstract)*

Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies, Pilot Project Process Evaluation Report, 2019

The Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies Pilot Project was developed by The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center in 2013 to test innovative approaches outlined in the Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies: Reducing Recidivism and Promoting Job Readiness white paper. The CSG Justice Center, which administers the National Reentry Resource Center, provided technical assistance and led a process evaluation of the project. This report presents findings of that evaluation. *(author abstract)*

Launching Careers with Assessment Data and Labor Market Information, 2017

For long-term employment and career advancement, it is important that clients are placed in jobs that align with their education, experience, interests, and skills, as well as local labor market information (LMI). Workers can utilize assessment data and labor market information (LMI) to help clients make informed decisions about their career aspirations, including potential earnings, projected number of job openings, and entry level education needed. The Online Work Readiness Assessment (OWRA) has linked work experiences and career interests of individuals with LMI to strengthen client pathways toward self-sufficiency. In this facilitated webinar, attendees learned how programs have used assessment data and LMI to enhance the types of services offered to clients and improve employment outcomes. The webinar also explored the comprehensive OWRA tool and its LMI functionality. *(OFA PeerTA abstract)*

Promoting Reentry Well-Being: A Novel Assessment Tool for Individualized Service Assignment in Prisoner Reentry Programs, 2017

Reentry programs in the United States absorb a steady stream of former prisoners, and many of these individuals have multiple service needs that are not fully met by one-size-fits-all approaches to treatment. In this Practice Update, the authors describe the Reentry Well-Being Assessment Tool, which is designed to facilitate the assignment of individualized treatment services in such programs. The authors provide specific guidance on treatment principles and targets, implementation, and fidelity monitoring, emphasizing the tool's ability to tailor services to individual needs. *(author abstract)*

Office of Family Assistance National Policy Academy Webinar, Family Assessment Tools, 2016

The Office of Family Assistance and its Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy hosted a webinar on Assessing Family History, Needs, and Well-Being to Improve TANF Services to Families on Wednesday, May 18, 2016 EDT. Many Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs, and other programs serving low-income individuals and families, are seeking ways to better measure and assess how family histories and current family functioning affect service planning and delivery. With the increased focus on intergenerational approaches across human service systems, many are seeking new and improved ways to improve overall family well-being. This webinar was designed to help Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy, TANF, and other human service system stakeholders understand how assessing family functioning, history, and experience can improve outcomes for TANF and other human service system participants. Speakers discussed how family assessment tools are administered and used by TANF, child welfare, and other stakeholder programs. They also addressed how these tools can be used to measure improvements in family well-being and create opportunities to use data to improve service planning. Presenters included: Lisa Washington-Thomas from the Office of Family Assistance; Jill Tichenor from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services; Debbie Davis from the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services; and Karla Aguirre and Marion Eckersley, both from the Utah Department of Workforce Services. *(OFA PeerTA abstract)*

Assessment of Families Experiencing Homelessness: A Guide for Practitioners and Policymakers, 2015

The purpose of this investigation was to begin to fill this knowledge gap by analyzing current assessment practices of providers serving homeless families across the United States. First, we broadly reviewed what is known about the risk factors for family homelessness. Next, we sampled various emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, and supportive housing programs, and collected the initial assessment/intake protocols from 55 geographically diverse programs. Based on knowledge of homeless families, we developed a protocol for determining the comprehensiveness and relevance of the assessments and reported the findings. We conclude with a discussion of how the study results can help close the research-practice gap and inform policy regarding assessments of homeless families. *(author abstract)*

Assessing and Serving TANF Recipients with Disabilities, 2013

In order to understand how best to help TANF recipients with disabilities, ACF and SSA contracted with MDRC and its partners, MEF Associates and TransCen, to conduct the TANF/SSI Disability Transition Project (TSDTP). The goals of the TSDTP are to explore the connection between the two programs, build knowledge about ways to encourage work among TANF recipients with disabilities, facilitate informed decisions about applying for SSI when appropriate, and help eligible SSI applicants receive awards as quickly as possible while also reducing administrative costs. Through MDRC's close collaboration with ACF, SSA, and participating state and county TANF agencies, the TSDTP conducted field assessments of existing services for TANF recipients who may have disabilities, tested pilot programs targeted to this population, and analyzed national- and state-level program data. TANF recipients with disabilities represent a sizable portion of the adult TANF population, but identifying the needs of clients with disabilities and offering them appropriate services can prove difficult for TANF programs and their staffs. Previous research estimates that around one in four adult TANF recipients has a disability, commonly defined as a physical, mental, or emotional issue that keeps a person from working or limits the kind or amount of work that person can do. TANF programs employ many different types of assessments to identify disabilities among recipients, including disability screenings, psychosocial and psychological assessments, clinical assessments, functional needs assessments, and vocational assessments. This practice brief describes different assessment strategies used by local agencies and organizations participating in the TANF/SSI Disability Transition Project, discusses strengths and weaknesses of various approaches to assessment, and offers some points for program administrators and practitioners to consider in choosing methods of assessment. *(author abstract)*

Six-Month Follow-Up Changes for TANF Eligible Clients Involved in Kentucky's Targeted Assessment Program, 2012

Welfare reform has been successful in helping clients achieve self-sufficiency. However, some individuals experience problems associated with basic needs, physical health, mental health, substance abuse, and intimate partner violence (IPV) that can impede transitioning from welfare to work and/or interfere with parental responsibilities. The Targeted Assessment Program (TAP) was created more than a decade ago to identify and address these problems and help clients move off the welfare rolls in Kentucky. Self-reported interview data were used to examine changes and effect sizes between baseline assessment and 6-month follow-up from a sample of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families-eligible clients participating in Kentucky's TAP. Using McNemar's test for correlated proportions, paired-sample t-tests, and measures of effect size, significant changes with varied effect sizes were found for selected basic needs, as well as physical health, mental health, substance use, and IPV barriers. Findings suggest that social service practitioners could incorporate strengths-based case management and motivational interviewing into their practice. Further research is suggested utilizing longitudinal and controlled studies on evidence-based practice that address pretreatment and assessment

strategies involving case management and motivational interviewing. *(author abstract)*

Welfare Caseworker Assessments and Domestic Violence Services Findings From Administrative Data and Case Narratives, 2011

The Family Violence Option (FVO) protects welfare recipients who are domestic violence victims or survivors by providing service referrals and waivers from certain requirements. Implementation of the FVO has been difficult for welfare agencies and disclosures and service uptake have been low. Using administrative data and caseworker notes, this study compares demographic and case characteristics and abuse experiences among four analytic groups. Although differences in demographics are most pronounced between victims and nonvictims, experiences with abuse and services differed between victims who received waivers versus those who did not. Findings indicate that caseworkers may base service decisions on abuse experiences. *(author abstract)*

Development of a Screening Tool to Improve Management of the Welfare Caseload in Kentucky, 2011

As part of the evaluation of the welfare program in Kentucky, descriptive and multivariate techniques were used to develop and test a brief screening tool. The purpose of this tool is to identify clients at risk of using 80% or more of the lifetime limit for cash assistance provided through the Kentucky's Transitional Assistance Program (KTAP). The variables for the screening tool were identified through discriminant analysis and logistic regression using data from the KTAP administrative records and from two surveys: a panel study conducted with a representative group of KTAP recipients, and a point-in-time survey conducted with a representative sample of clients who reached their lifetime limit of cash assistance in 2001. Descriptive analyses using panel data show the stability of measures over time and their ability to set apart the segment of population at risk for high utilization of their available time on KTAP. The predictive value of the screening tool was tested with regression models using the KTAP utilization information available from the administrative records. *(author abstract)*

Helping Low-Income Mothers Overcome Multiple Barriers to Self-Sufficiency: Strategies and Implications for Human Services Professionals, 2011

Women involved in public assistance and child welfare systems often must overcome multiple barriers to self-sufficiency and family stability or face sanctions or loss of benefits. Kentucky's Targeted Assessment Program (TAP) is an innovative model for assisting these women by placing human services professionals in public assistance and child welfare offices to provide support services and promote integrated service delivery This article discusses TAP program data for years 2005 through 2008, as well as initial 6-month follow-up data. These data suggest that TAP is effective in reducing the burden of barriers faced by participants. TAP strategies are discussed for their utility in informing practice models of human services agencies to proactively promote participant success in overcoming barriers. *(author abstract)*

Online Work Readiness Assessment: Barriers to Work and Post-Assessment Experiences, 2011

OWRA is a set of web-based modules designed to measure barriers to employment among welfare applicants. Caseworkers can then develop individualized self-sufficiency plans that will assist welfare clients in their successful transition off public assistance. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families Office of Family Assistance sponsored a pilot project to allow states, counties, and tribal jurisdictions to test the first two modules—which include intake and assessment of employment barriers—and offer suggestions for improvement. Nine sites (including Maryland) that represent the diversity among TANF programs were chosen to pilot the tool. The nine sites include jurisdictions in the following states: California, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, North Dakota, New Jersey, South Carolina, and Washington.

Three of Maryland's local jurisdictions— Baltimore City (Orangeville District), Carroll County, and Frederick County—were chosen to participate. ICF International and Maryland's Family Investment Administration trained local department staff to use the tool on March 19 and 20, 2009.

The goal of this report is to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the demographic makeup of the individuals assessed during the OWRA pilot? How does this profile compare to the population of active TCA recipients?
2. What general barriers to work do respondents face? What specific barriers do they face? Are there certain barriers that tend to co-occur?
3. What are the post-assessment experiences of respondents, i.e. do they go on to employment, TCA, or other support programs?
4. How are these post-assessment experiences shaped by the presence of particular barriers or combinations of barriers?

(abbreviated author abstract)

Developing the Welfare-to-Work Participation and Employability Appraisal Screening: A Retrospective Study, 2010

CalWORKs recipients, unless exempt, are required to participate in welfare-to-work (WTW) program activities as a condition of receiving cash aid. A number of clients, however, may have issues that impede successful engagement in WTW program activities, such as substance abuse, mental health concerns, or domestic violence issues. The Riverside County (California) Department of Mental Health (RCDMH) and the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) sought to develop a structured case management system to help ensure early identification of WTW customers with barriers to employment and, if necessary, to help facilitate quicker engagement in services to address those barriers and move customers into successful employment. A key component of the structured case management system is an actuarial appraisal screening to help identify those customers most in need of support to make a successful transition to self-sufficiency. This report describes the study conducted by Children's Research Center (CRC) to develop an appraisal screening that classifies customers by the likelihood of subsequent WTW program participation and employment. Employment counselors can complete the screening assessment soon after WTW assignment to help identify which customers are in greatest need of additional support and engagement to increase the likelihood of successful program participation. *(author abstract)*

TANF Policies for the Hard to Employ: Understanding State Approaches and Future Directions, 2007

This study examines states' approaches to serving TANF recipients facing multiple barriers to work in fall 2006. It also describes changes states anticipate (partly in response to TANF reauthorization) in the near future to help these recipients move into work and off the caseload. Study results are based primarily on structured interviews with state TANF program officials in 17 states including the states with the largest TANF caseloads. The findings highlight the different approaches taken by state TANF programs on how to best help recipients with serious barriers and provide early information on states' thinking on how their approach may change for this group in the future. Authors discuss upfront screening and assessment strategies from the following states: Georgia, Minnesota, New York City, Washington, and Wisconsin. *(author abstract)*

Screening and Assessment in TANF/Welfare-to-Work Ten Important Questions TANF Agencies and Their Partners Should Consider, 2001

Changes to the welfare system brought about by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), and state and local welfare reform efforts, carry serious implications for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) recipients with disabilities and barriers to employment. Specifically, work participation and time limit requirements are two key provisions of the federal welfare law which provided a new sense of urgency encouraging states to develop strategies to assist clients with their transitions from welfare to work. As a first step in this process, TANF agencies are considering strategies to identify the barriers that are inhibiting or prohibiting this transition. PRWORA offers unprecedented flexibility to develop such strategies and design programs and services to assist with the transition from welfare to work. This paper is merely a first step in considering some of the many challenges associated with identifying unobserved barriers to employment. *(author abstract)*

A Two-Generational Child-Focused Program Enhanced with Employment Services: Eighteen-Month Impacts from the Kansas and Missouri Sites of the Enhanced Services for the Hard-to-Employ Demonstration and Evaluation Project, 2011

Children living in poverty face considerable developmental risks. This report presents interim results from an evaluation of parental employment and educational services delivered within a two-generational, early childhood program targeting low-income families who are expecting a child or who have a child under age 3. This study is part of the Enhanced Services for the Hard-to-Employ Demonstration and Evaluation project, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, with additional funding from the U.S. Department of Labor. The program model tested here aims to dually address both the employment and educational needs of parents who are at risk of unemployment and the developmental needs of their young children. The program's effects are being studied by examining 610 families who were randomly assigned to a program group, which received the enhanced two-generational program, or to a control group, which could only access alternative services in the community. *(author abstract)*

III. Universal Assessment in Practice

This section provides an overview of resources that describe tactics for supporting universal assessment, specifically: motivational interviewing, coaching case management, and positive regard.

a. Motivational Interviewing

Harnessing the Power of High Expectations, 2018

In the face of increasingly intractable poverty and a widening gap between the rich and poor, government and nonprofit programs are searching for new ways to make their interventions more effective. Many organizations are turning to emerging evidence, from the social and biological sciences, showing the clear impacts of poverty, trauma, and oppression on the ways people develop, think, and behave. They are taking this science and designing new interventions, such as goals-based coaching. The early results are in: some of these coaching interventions are producing highly promising outcomes. *(author abstract)*

The PILOT Assessment: A Guide to Integrating Positive Youth Development into Workforce Training Settings, 2018

Growing evidence suggests that Positive Youth Development (PYD), a holistic approach to developing assets and competencies, can help prepare young people for success in adulthood, including success in the workplace. At its core, PYD focuses on creating a supportive, developmentally appropriate learning setting by emphasizing positive relationships; supporting youth to improve academic, soft, and technical skills; creating linkages that support young adults across schools, family, work, and community; providing opportunities to give back to one's community or program; and investing in the creation of trustworthy, safe spaces. As part of its Generation Work initiative, the Annie E. Casey Foundation is working with local partners in five cities and a network of national organizations to understand how practitioners in workforce training settings can use PYD strategies to prepare young people-—especially low-income young people of color-—for employment in several high-growth industries. Each industry was chosen based on its competitiveness in each of the five cities. Employment training represents a new setting for PYD, and this brief highlights some of the first evidence for how to incorporate PYD approaches into such training settings. *(author abstract)*

Establishing Coaching and Motivational Interviewing Practices in TANF Programs, 2017

This practice brief highlights the efforts of four Office of Family Assistance, Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy teams that redesigned their TANF case management systems to support client coaching and motivational interviewing strategies. The Academy was an 18-month initiative that supported TANF programs in designing and creating collaborative systems across agencies to improve family economic security. *(OFA PeerTA abstract)*

SSRC Selections: Motivational Interviewing, 2016

This set of selections focuses on motivational interviewing. SSRC Selections highlight research, evaluation reports, and other publications that inform the field about key issues in, and effective practices for, fostering economic self-sufficiency. *(SSRC abstract)*

Motivational Interviewing Training New Trainers Manual, 2014

The primary mission of the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT) is to promote the quality of training and practice of motivational interviewing. Toward that goal, this manual provides a variety of training ideas, specific exercises, metaphors and activities all designed to help learners understand the spirit and practice of motivational interviewing. Most of these training ideas were originally designed for a workshop format, but many are also suitable for individual training and supervision as well. This manual was compiled through the generosity of MINT trainers, who volunteered their ideas without restriction or compensation. In that same spirit, this manual is offered as a free gift for potential trainers or supervisors of motivational interviewing. Any sale or duplication of this manual is prohibited. We ask that you provide proper attribution when you quote or use this manual. This manual organizes training methods by content areas with which they are often used. Most of the training exercises described in this manual, however, can also be used flexibly in learning other content and aspects of motivational interviewing. *(abbreviated author introduction)*

Integrative Health Coaching and Motivational interviewing: Synergistic Approaches to Behavior Change in Healthcare, 2013

As rates of preventable chronic diseases and associated costs continue to rise, there has been increasing focus on strategies to support behavior change in healthcare. Health coaching and motivational interviewing are synergistic but distinct approaches that can be effectively employed to achieve this end. However, there is some confusion in the literature about the relationship between these two approaches. The purpose of this review is to describe a specific style of health coaching—integrative health coaching—and motivational interviewing, including their origins, the processes and strategies employed, and the ways in which they are similar and different. We also provide a case example of how integrative health coaching and motivational interviewing might be employed to demonstrate how these approaches are synergistic but distinct from each other in practice. This information may be useful for both researchers and clinicians interested in investigating or using behavior change interventions to improve health and cost outcomes in chronic disease. *(author abstract)*

b. Coaching

Employment Coaching: Working with Low-Income Populations to Use Self-Regulation Skills to Achieve Employment Goals, 2019

New research has led policymakers and researchers to argue that some people might not achieve economic independence in part because of difficulty applying the self-regulation skills needed to get, keep, and advance in a job (Pavetti 2018; Cavadel et al. 2017). These self-regulation skills—sometimes referred to as soft skills or executive functioning skills—include the ability to finish tasks, stay organized, and control emotions. Evidence suggests that facing poverty, and the multiple stresses that accompany it, can make it particularly difficult to develop and use self-regulation skills (Mullainathan and Shafir 2013). However, research indicates that interventions can strengthen these important skills (Kautz et al. 2014). Based on the potential link between self-regulation skills and successful employment outcomes for low-income people, some employment programs, including some offered as part of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, pair program participants with coaches (Derr et al. 2018; Pavetti 2014; Ruiz De Luzuriaga 2015; Dechausay 2018). The coaches work with participants to set individualized goals and provide motivation, support, and feedback as the participants pursue their goals. The coaches aim to help the participants use and strengthen their self-regulation skills, succeed in the labor market, and move toward economic security. To assess whether coaching can improve employment outcomes for low-income people, the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation is currently sponsoring the Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations.

Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations: Evaluation Design Report, 2019

This report describes the design of the Evaluation of Employment Coaching. It identifies the types of employment coaching interventions that are the focus of this evaluation and how coaching is expected to affect participants' economic security. Next, it discusses the process for selecting employment coaching interventions to study in the evaluation. It then provides details on the design of the impact study, including the process for conducting random assignment, data needs and sources, and the analytic approach to estimating intervention impacts. It also describes the implementation study, including the research questions to be addressed, the data collection strategy, and the analytic approach. The report concludes with an overview of the evaluation and reporting schedule.

Bridge to Self-Sufficiency, 2015

Crittenton Women's Union's Bridge to Self-Sufficiency is a theory of change that takes a multi-faceted approach to fostering economic mobility. The theory describes a person's advancement from poverty to economic self-sufficiency as a journey across a bridge supported by five critical pillars—family stability, well-being, education and training, financial management, and employment and career management. Coaches work with clients to identify strengths and help them cross the 'bridge" to long-term goals of economic self-sufficiency. *(OFA PeerTA abstract)*

Coaching for Economic Mobility, 2015

Coaching is used at EMPath because it improves individuals' ability to self-regulate; to make informed, future-oriented decisions that lead to economic mobility. It builds up important mindsets necessary for sustained change, including self efficacy and motivation. These skills and mindsets are not built up in traditional case management, or in more didactic training or workshop formats, because they must be repeatedly practiced in order to be built. A large field of academic research on the brain has determined that these skills and mindsets are built up through interaction with others, and that they are built over time; a relatively long-term coaching relationship is the best place to see real growth. Most importantly, coaching is particularly well-suited to deal with the impacts of poverty.

c. Positive Regard

Using Brain Science to Transform Human Services and Increase Personal Mobility from Poverty, 2018

We can use emerging scientific findings on the ways poverty affects behavior and decision-making to help people living in poverty achieve dramatic gains in mobility. We can revolutionize human services delivery by moving away from strategies that seek modest gains and instead designing interventions that create pathways to the middle class and beyond. *(author abstract)*

Relationship-Based Social Work and Its Compatibility with the Person-Centered Approach: Principled versus Instrumental Perspectives, 2012

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in social work towards relationship-based practice. In this article, we discuss the conceptualization of relationship-based practice from a person-centered point of view and its applicability to contemporary social work. It will be shown that the person-centered point of view has a meta-theoretical basis that makes it incompatible with modern statutory social work practice. First, we outline the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the person-centered approach and argue that a potential conflict lies at the heart of the contemporary social workers' capacity to truly accommodate person-centered theory. Next, the resurgence of interest in relationship-based practice, paying particular attention to the person-centered approach, is considered within the context and influence of risk management, managerialism and consumerism on social work. We then challenge the assumption that relationship-based social work founded on the person-centered approach legitimately supports service users' ability and capacity towards self-determination. Our challenge is based on the premise that the person-centered approach is defined by principled non-directive practice. On this basis, we conclude that a person-centered relationship-based approach to contemporary social work is untenable. *(author abstract)*

LOOKING FORWARD

We encourage you to stay up-to-date with the current literature by utilizing the following online resource libraries:

- The Self-Sufficiency Research Clearinghouse (SSRC) is an ever growing virtual portal of research on low-income and TANF families and an online hub for professional networking among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners who serve these populations.

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance's Peer Technical Assistance Network, which is a targeted peer-to-peer model of information sharing, technical assistance, and training between and among States, Counties, Tribes, and community-based organizations.

- Funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, the Online Work Readiness Assessment (OWRA) is a web-based tool that offers an innovative approach to creating a plan for clients. OWRA assesses and summarizes client strengths and barriers, and makes recommendations on placement into work activities and work supports.

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