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# Nonprofit Welfare-to-Work Programs: A Study of the Programmatic Factors Related to Success for Single TANF Women in Readiness Programs

Kathy Guidi

*University of San Francisco*

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Nonprofit Welfare-to-Work Programs:  
A Study of the Programmatic Factors Related to Success for  
Single TANF Women in Job Readiness Programs

A THESIS SUBMITTED

by

Kathy Guidi

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of

Nonprofit Administration

The University of San Francisco

December 17, 1999

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**Nonprofit Welfare-to-Work Programs:  
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This Thesis written by

Kathy Guidi

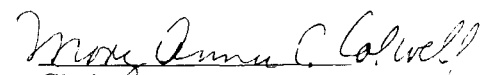
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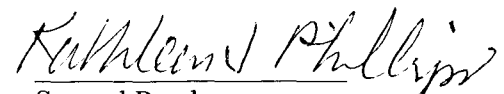
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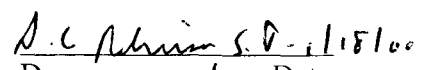
University of San Francisco

Research Committee:

  
Chairperson

  
Second Reader

  
Program Director Date 12/6/99

  
Dean Date 1/15/00

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## ABSTRACT

This research project was a qualitative study with data collected primarily through interviews with three constituencies of welfare-to-work job readiness programs: TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) clients, nonprofit agency staff, and Department of Human Services (DHS) CalWORKs Department employment specialists. Specifically, six TANF clients, six nonprofit agency staff, and two DHS CalWORKs Department employment specialists were interviewed by the researcher. The study was conducted to determine which programmatic factors were related to success for single TANF women participating in nonprofit organizations' work readiness programs in San Francisco. Program factors were divided into four areas: program model/structure, program curriculum, additional support services, and philosophy of agency staff. The study demonstrated that program model/structure and philosophy and attitudes of agency staff were perceived to be the most important factors influencing whether or not a TANF woman was likely to complete a work readiness program. Curriculum offerings did not appear to have any bearing on program completion levels, and all the organizations reviewed in this study provided instruction on similar topics under the categories of job seeking skills, computer skills, workplace skills, and life management skills. Support services offered by nonprofit agencies, such as counseling, housing, medical care, and childcare referrals, were also not considered important criteria in determining whether a TANF woman would complete a work readiness program. Most respondents cited the following factors as contributors to the success of TANF participants in completing work readiness programs and subsequently finding work: TANF participants developed confidence and a sense of self-worth; the nonprofit agency was able to connect clients

with employers; TANF clients and employment specialists developed good relationships with agency staff; TANF participants received structure/goal setting from agencies and employment specialists; and TANF participants were able to overcome language barriers.

## VITA AUCTORIS

Name:	Kathy Guidi
Date of Birth:	October 17, 1963
High School:	Harrison High School Harrison, New York
Graduated:	1981
Baccalaureate Degree :	Bachelor of Science, Finance
College:	San Francisco State University San Francisco, California
Graduated:	1991



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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Background

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 1997, more than 35 million people in America, or 13 percent of the U.S. population, were classified as poor and living in poverty. The official poverty threshold for a family of four was \$16,000 per year at that time. Thirty percent of these people (including adults and children) were receiving welfare assistance through one of the many government welfare programs (Department of Health and Human Services, 1998). During the past decade, single women with children have comprised from 85 to 93 percent of adults on public assistance (Rose, 1995).

Throughout American history, the responsibility for caring for the poor has been shared between federal and state governments and the nonprofit sector. Nonprofit organizations have provided a variety of social welfare services to the poor including convalescent care, care of dependent children and the aged, employment and vocational guidance, family services, and children's health. From the early eighteenth century when the first voluntary associations began to appear, the independent sector has taken on the role of caretaker for the ill and destitute, providing for the community by helping orphaned children, caring for the sick, and housing the poor. Not until the enactment of the Social Security Act of 1931 did the federal government begin to provide welfare assistance to the poor with programs such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), food stamps, and Medicaid. Aid was means-tested and unlimited; if one met the basic eligibility requirements, one could receive aid for life.

Our national welfare policy has alternated throughout this century, calling for either an entitlement approach or a work-first approach to aiding the poor. The philosophy espoused has depended upon the political environment at any given time. The most recent edict for reform supports the work-first approach in moving people off of public assistance. Under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) signed into law by President Clinton in August 1996, the federal government again revised the way it provides welfare services. Among its provisions, the new legislation eliminates AFDC, federal matching funds to states, and the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) training program which emphasized education, training, and skills-building as a means of achieving self-sufficiency. The new legislation replaces AFDC with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), introduces block grants to states, sets a lifetime welfare eligibility limit of five years, and requires welfare recipients to engage in a work-related activity in exchange for aid. People must not only get jobs, but also must retain them.

Under the new legislation, 50 percent of the entire welfare caseload must be placed into the workforce by the year 2002. When signing the PRWORA, President Clinton issued a call to action to private employers, community based organizations (CBOs), and state welfare agencies to form partnerships to move welfare recipients into the labor force. Three years have passed since the enactment of this legislation and no one can say for certain what the impact of time limits or the other changes will be for the poor. Many states are only in the beginning stages of implementing their welfare-to-work programs. Today's political agenda supports the reduction of federal responsibility

for the provision of welfare services and calls on nonprofit and for-profit organizations in the private sector to take on the responsibility for reducing poverty.

In San Francisco, at the end of 1997, 30 percent of the 2.2 million people on aid were adults and 70 percent were children (California Department of Social Services, 1997). An estimated 85 percent of the adult recipients in San Francisco were single mothers. The Private Industry Council (PIC) estimates that more than 600 adults in San Francisco need to be moved into the workforce each month in order to meet the new federal government requirements for funding. The county welfare agency, in conjunction with the PIC, is working to develop local collaborative efforts to provide welfare services. As a result, more welfare-to-work services, such as job readiness and job training programs, are being subcontracted to community-based organizations, the majority of which are nonprofit organizations.

#### Statement of the Issue

Nationally, single parenting women comprise almost 93 percent of those families on welfare (TANF), others being dual-parenting families or single male head of households (Rose, 1995). Faced with burdensome childcare costs and other supportive service needs, single parenting women will continue to be impacted hardest by welfare reform legislation. Benefits will be reduced or discontinued if TANF recipients do not sustain employment or participate in pre-employment workfare programs such as job readiness programs.

To meet the federal mandates, nonprofit organizations offering work readiness programs will be challenged to train and find jobs for a diverse population of welfare

recipients, many of whom face significant barriers to employment such as physical disabilities, mental health issues, and substance abuse and domestic violence issues, not to mention the need to find adequate and affordable child care. A large number of the welfare population are low-skilled and uneducated and are not experienced in the daily routines of the business world. Educating TANF clients about general business etiquette, basic computer and business skills, and life management skills, will be a demanding task. The success of nonprofit organizations in placing TANF clients into the workforce will also be dependent on the nation's economic situation. Trends in local and state wages, growth of local industries, the location of jobs, and understanding gender, racial, and ethnic differences in job opportunities will be important factors in moving recipients into the workforce. The country has been fortunate to experience a robust economy over the last seven years pushing unemployment to the lowest levels seen in decades, but it is hard to predict how much longer this may last.

The PRWORA legislation specifies that each state must develop a welfare-to-work plan and mandates that large numbers of welfare recipients be moved into work-related programs by specified dates or else suffer monetary sanctions. California responded with CalWORKs, the California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids act (AB1542), which was signed into law on September 11, 1997. Each of California's 58 counties had to develop its own programs to meet its needs in moving a diverse welfare population into the workforce. The welfare-to-work plan for the City and County of San Francisco was adopted in April 1998. The programs under the plan are administered jointly by the Private Industry Council of San Francisco and the county's welfare department, the Department of Human Services (DHS).

In February 1998, the PIC and DHS solicited proposals from the general community seeking qualified organizations to provide welfare-to-work services under two general categories: Work Readiness/Job Search/Job Retention Services and Job Training/Placement/Job Retention Services. Within five months, more than 40 organizations had submitted more than 54 proposals. At least 35 of these organizations were nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations. Given the large numbers of TANF recipients expected to need basic job-readiness training, the PIC and the DHS elected to concentrate first on awarding work readiness contracts so that the CalWORKs program could commence, and then to focus their attention on reviewing proposals for job training services. By October 1998, six nonprofit organizations were awarded work readiness contracts.

The City and County of San Francisco seem ready to face the challenge. The work readiness component of the City's welfare-to-work plan states that any agency seeking government funding must demonstrate that their curricula include certain training categories to ensure that TANF clients will meet the basic job-readiness standards adopted by the DHS, and that they have the ability to provide a continuum of work readiness, job search, and placement/retention services either directly or through partnership with other agencies.

San Francisco welfare and employment agencies are working together to make an effort to streamline and coordinate the provision of welfare services. These agencies include: the Private Industry Council, which is responsible for the general oversight and management of the city's employment and training programs; the Department of Human Services, which administers the county's welfare program and is responsible for overall



case management; and all of the PIC subcontractor agencies, the large majority of which are nonprofit organizations. If the collective goal is to help the needy by providing a path to self-sufficiency, then all the partners involved in welfare reform must provide appropriate services to help welfare women make the transition to employment. All the partners involved in providing welfare-to-work services, such as job-readiness programs, must demonstrate that they understand the programmatic and personal factors that will help single TANF women succeed in these programs.

This research project seeks to understand, through discussions with three constituencies—recipients (TANF clients), providers (nonprofit agency staff), and funders (DHS CalWORKs Department staff)—the factors that enable single TANF women to succeed in work readiness programs, and thus begin the long road to achieving economic self-sufficiency. As discussed later in the literature review section, studies have shown there are several aspects of comprehensive programs which can enable TANF women to succeed in completing a job readiness program. These have been categorized into four areas: program structure/model, program curriculum, additional support services, and philosophy of agency staff.

### Research Questions

Several questions were explored through interviews with the following groups:

- 1) Staff of nonprofit agencies offering job readiness programs
- 2) Clients of nonprofit agencies' job readiness programs
- 3) Staff of the DHS CalWORKs Department.

What are the components of job readiness programs offered by nonprofit organizations? (Groups 1, 2, and 3)

What program factors do nonprofit program administrators and staff perceive to be related to the ability of TANF clients to successfully complete their programs? (Group 1)

What program factors do TANF clients feel were important in helping them successfully complete a job readiness program? (Group 2)

What program factors do the Department of Human Services staff consider to be related to the ability of TANF clients to successfully complete a nonprofit job readiness program? (Group 3)

What do these three constituencies believe to be the reasons some TANF clients benefit from certain nonprofit job readiness programs and not others? (Groups 1, 2, and 3)

### Definitions of Major Concepts

For the purposes of this research project, the following definitions will be used:

Social welfare services: Includes, but is not limited to, supportive services such as child care, food stamps, and medical care, and welfare-to-work services.

Welfare-to-work services: Includes, but is not limited to, job readiness, job search, vocational training, job placement, and job retention services.

Job/work readiness program: A program which provides participants with job-seeking and interviewing skills and interpersonal skills necessary to retain unsubsidized employment.

Successful completion of job readiness program: The completion of a nonprofit organization's job readiness program as defined by the requirements of the particular nonprofit. This may include meeting attendance requirements, participation in the classroom, and the completion of assignments.

Program structure/model: The descriptors of a job readiness program which may include attendance requirements, class size, and length of course.

Additional support services: The services provided by a nonprofit organization in addition to their job readiness program. These may include childcare, transportation vouchers, counseling, and referrals.

Program curriculum: The subjects taught in a nonprofit organization's job readiness program. These may include, but are not limited to, computer training, money management, interviewing, resume writing, and life skills classes.

Welfare assistance or public assistance: Government programs providing money, food, or housing subsidy or a combination of these. These terms will be used interchangeably.

TANF client: Although technically a TANF client could signify a male head-of-household or a dual-parenting family, the majority of TANF clients are single parenting women. In this paper, the phrase "TANF client" will be synonymous with the phrase "single parenting woman."

### Importance of the Study

Nonprofit organizations are an integral part of the social and economic fabric of our society and have been providing and caring for the less fortunate members of our

country for centuries. The data collected through this research project may help nonprofit organizations understand which programmatic requirements are needed for TANF clients to successfully participate in work readiness programs and may assist agencies in selecting specific clientele for their programs and in modifying their programs to address client needs. These data may aid the DHS employment specialists, who are the first point of contact for many TANF recipients, in directing clients to programs where they are most likely to succeed. The information provided in this report describes factors that may enable TANF clients to succeed in job readiness programs and be better prepared for entry into the workforce. Finally, since there appears to be a substantial lack of empirical research on program-specific offerings by nonprofit organizations in the field of welfare-to-work services, the data collected from this project will add to the body of literature in this growing field.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature review explores four areas related to the topic of welfare-to-work programs and the nonprofit sector. First, a history of the role of the nonprofit sector/public sector relationship in the field of social welfare will be briefly reviewed. Second, the theoretical framework of job readiness will be discussed. Third, previous welfare-to-work programs and evaluations will be explored. And, finally, women and welfare will be discussed. It is important to note that there is a substantial lack of empirical research on program-specific offerings by nonprofit organizations in the field of welfare-to-work services.

### History of Nonprofit/Public Sector Relations

The social services subsector of the independent sector encompasses a wide variety of organizations. M. O'Neill (1989) provides Hodgkinson and Weitzman's definition of the sector as "organizations . . . providing services to individuals and families, job training and related services, child day care, and residential care . . ." (p. 94). Analyzing the correlation between federal government spending for social welfare programs and the proliferation of nonprofit organizations during the New Deal era, Mohr and Guerra-Pearson (1996) divide the sector into six general categories of social welfare service delivery: convalescent care, dependent children, aged, employment and vocational guidance, family services, and children's health services. While there does not appear to be an abundance of literature on nonprofit organizations and government relations under the specific topic of welfare-to-work services, many esteemed authors

have written about the role of the nonprofit sector and the public sector in the provision of social services in the welfare state.

The earliest development of the nonprofit private sector/public sector relationship in the field of social welfare can be traced to colonial America. Two central institutions prevailed at the time, church and state, and the politics of church, state, and family were seen as complementary to one another. According to Hall (1987), families, compelled by religious affiliation and state law, were required to provide for basic literacy and religious training of members, provide training in a craft or occupation, and care for sick and poor relatives. If families lacked resources, then local public authorities would pay individual households to care for the needy. Hall (1987), M. O'Neill (1989), and Ostrander (1989) all cite the colonies' adoption of England's "Elizabethan Poor Law," beginning in 1647, as the point in time in which state localities became the social service provider of last resort, responsible for financing and dispensing relief for the poor. Church related charities were about the only nonprofit organizations involved in aiding and assisting the poor during this early period.

Hall (1987), Katz (1986), Mohr and Guerra-Pearson (1996), M. O'Neill (1989), and Ostrander (1989) provide historical accounts of the development of the social welfare state and the roles that the nonprofit sector and government sector played in it. The extent of the provision of services by both sectors stemmed from the political, social, and economic ideas about the causes of poverty. As cities grew and changes in religious attitudes developed during the 1800s, voluntary associations dedicated to helping the less fortunate became more numerous and active. Most notably, welfare reformers formed the Charity Organization Societies which sought to "coordinate, investigate, and counsel"

with regard to services for the poor (Katz, 1986, p. 75). The Charity Organization Societies opposed government aid and were successful in eliminating public relief as a municipal function in 12 large urban cities toward the end of the nineteenth century (Kramer, 1987, p. 241).

The onset of the Great Depression of the 1930s permanently changed the relationship between the public and private sectors in the field of social service provisions. The private nonprofit sector and even local and state governments could not cope with the millions of people who suddenly found themselves without jobs and in need of assistance. For the first time, the U. S. federal government became heavily involved in welfare assistance through the enactment of the Social Security Act of 1935. The federal government put billions of dollars into the social services arena during the New Deal Era (1933 -1941) and subsequent programs including the Great Society programs of the Johnson Era (1964 through the early 1970s). Large amounts of money authorized by federal legislation during the Johnson and Nixon administrations were poured into nonprofit social service agencies, mainly through the mechanisms of grants and purchase-of-service contracts (M. O'Neill, 1989, p. 104). Poverty rates declined during this time, although the causes for the declines have been disputed. By the late 1970s, poverty rates were again on the rise and government spending was deemed too high. Severe cutbacks in funding for social service programs became the norm during the Reagan administration; yet as M. O'Neill (1989) and Salamon (1989) point out, the federal government still remained a large funder of nonprofit social service agencies throughout this period.

Lester Salamon conducted much theoretical and empirical research on the relationships between the government and nonprofit sectors in the area of social welfare and has shown evidence to support his “paradigm of partnership” (Salamon, 1989, p. 42) and “partners in public service” theory (Mohr & Guerra-Pearson, 1996, p. 526) which asserts that the financing and delivery of social services has been, and continues to be, conducted through an elaborate network of partnership arrangements between the government and the voluntary sector. This is in direct contrast to the “paradigm of conflict” theory or “crowding out” theory developed by Marvin Olasky (Mohr & Guerra-Pearson, 1996, p. 526) which says that the government/nonprofit relationship is a “zero-sum” game whereby the expansion of one sector leads to the contraction of the other. Mohr and Guerra-Pearson (1996) analyzed the federal spending patterns on social welfare programs during the New Deal era to see if there was a correlation between the increase in federal spending and the growth of nonprofit organizations providing social service programs in New York City during this time. They found that as federal funding in the social welfare sector increased, so too did the number of nonprofit organizations that became working partners in federal welfare programs. Mohr and Guerra-Pearson support Salamon’s thesis that the relationship between the two sectors is symbiotic and conclude that it is as partners in social service that nonprofit organizations are likely to flourish.

In the early 1980s, Salamon and his associates at the Urban Institute conducted research under the Nonprofit Sector Project to bring the current status of government support to the nonprofit sector into clearer focus. The project sought to show the extent of spending by all levels of government in the nonprofit sector by collecting government



statistics and surveying more than 3,400 nonprofit organizations at 16 representative sites. Their findings showed that government support of nonprofit organizations is extensive and is particularly important to social service and community development organizations, with most of the support reaching nonprofit organizations indirectly, through individuals or state and local governments. Their data suggest that the government does not displace nonprofit organizations, but rather, is a major force in underwriting nonprofit operations, providing a larger portion of revenues to nonprofit service providers than private giving (Salamon, 1987, p. 107).

Salamon points out two very good reasons why a government/nonprofit relationship makes sense in the delivery of social services. First, the partnership takes advantage of the government's strengths in raising resources (through taxation) and ensuring equity through a democratic political process, while the nonprofit sector has the advantage of being a deliverer of services in a more informal, smaller-scale fashion than large government bureaucracies. Second, it is more economical and efficient for government to work with established organizations. Where existing institutions are already performing social service functions, the government can carry out its purposes more simply and with less cost by enlisting them in the government program, thereby avoiding the need to create new organizations or specialized staffs. This has been especially true where programs are experimental (Salamon, 1989).

The roots of government/nonprofit sector cooperation lie deep in American history and, as Waldemar Nielsen wrote, "collaboration, not separation or antagonism between the government and nonprofit sector . . . has been the predominant characteristic" through much of our history (Salamon, 1989, p. 101). In today's political

climate, under the new welfare reform laws, the political agenda supports policy to reduce federal responsibility for the provision of welfare services and calls on nonprofit and for-profit organizations in the private sector to take on the responsibility for reducing poverty. The new legislation under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act brings an end to the guarantee of federal income support for single women with children. M. O'Neill (1989, p. 108) and Salamon (1989, pp. 56-58) point out that we are moving into a new arena where both the nonprofit sector and the for-profit sector will need to work together alongside the public sector to help alleviate poverty and to aid the less fortunate along the path to economic self-sufficiency.

### Theories of Job Readiness

Several studies have been conducted to evaluate workplace readiness skills and to develop a theoretical framework for measuring job readiness. Cockrell (1992), Hashim (1992), and O'Neil, Allred, and Baker (1992) looked at various aspects of evaluating workforce readiness skills, although they did so with different populations in mind.

O'Neil, et al. (1992) from the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing at the University of California, Los Angeles, reviewed the findings of five national studies conducted between 1984 through 1991 which sought to determine common job readiness categories required for high school students entering the workforce. Their purpose was to develop a common framework for assessing workforce readiness skills from these five previous studies. Four major themes emerged from the five studies.

First, basic skills were identified among all five studies as being important and constituted the subcategories of reading, writing, arithmetic, speaking, and listening skills.

Second, interpersonal and teamwork skills were identified as being especially important in the five studies cited, although this area exhibited the greatest diversity in terms of the specific subskills which constituted it. Three skill subsets, however, were apparent: leadership skills, cooperation skills (ability to work with others from diverse backgrounds), and negotiation/conflict resolution skills.

Third, higher-order thinking skills were cited as necessary for job readiness due to the rapidity of change in the workforce. These skills, mentioned although not necessarily included in all five studies, were problem solving, creativity, decision making, and learning how to learn.

And fourth, personal characteristics and attitude skills were found to be important. These included self-esteem, motivation, and responsibility.

From these findings, the authors developed two prototype testing instruments to aid in measuring workforce readiness among high school students. The Conflict Resolution test prototype would be used to measure interpersonal and negotiation skills, and the Problem Solving test prototype would be used to measure basic competency skills. The authors found that their prototype items could be highly generalized across various theoretical frameworks, and they continue to conduct research to determine the reliability and validity of their assessment measures (O'Neil et al., 1992, pp. 27-28).

Hashim (1992) worked with college level students to determine whether students, upon graduating and prior to entering the workforce, could benefit from participation in a

one-day job readiness workshop. Using a control/experimental group design, Hashim randomly selected 100 students from Western Michigan University and split the group in half. Fifty students were assigned to an experimental group and participated in a one-day job training workshop, and 50 students were assigned to a control group. All 100 students were then tested using the Job Search Readiness Instrument (JSRI) which was developed by A. Schlossman at the University of Florida in 1977. The JSRI consisted of 38 questions related to three important components of job readiness: self-awareness, job analysis, and interview preparation. Hashim found that those participating in the workshop scored significantly higher than those in the control group, thereby supporting the notion that students could increase their job readiness competencies by participating in a very brief work readiness program.

The job readiness competencies discussed above are not the only important factors TANF clients need to display in order to be assessed as job-ready. Other challenges must be overcome before entering the workforce. The majority of TANF clients have children, and therefore the issue of childcare must be satisfied before looking for and accepting a job. Other barriers to employment common to those on public assistance are physical disabilities, substance abuse, mental health disabilities, domestic violence issues, and lack of adequate housing and transportation. Ensuring that welfare recipients have access to community resources to aid them in dealing with the aforementioned issues are also important factors in determining whether TANF clients are job-ready (Brown, 1997; Cockrell, 1992; and Strawn, 1998).

Cockrell (1992) reviewed local welfare agency assessment practices used on welfare clients participating in the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills training program in

four states. She found that job readiness assessment as practiced by most welfare departments considered the following factors: client's current family circumstances and need for support services; prior work and educational history; current job skill set; and client's job preferences. Cockrell found that determining the job readiness of a client was a process that combined objective factors and intuitive understanding. Completion of courses and activities in the education and training components of a program were not the only conditions related to success in finding employment. Other factors case managers noted as important for the success of welfare clients were: reduction of the number and severity of barriers in the participant's life circumstances; meeting the minimum qualifications of the chosen employment goal in terms of education, work experiences, and skills; determining whether the participant's career choice would provide a wage adequate to support her family; acquiring job-finding and interviewing skills; and demonstrating attention to personal appearance. Intuitive factors mentioned by case managers included the participant's maturity level and attitude towards work (i.e. displaying self-awareness, a high level of self-esteem, and willingness to assume responsibility); motivation to work; emotional stability; and whether both the case manager and participant felt the participant was "job ready."

The job readiness checklist currently used by the DHS in San Francisco in ascertaining a TANF client's job readiness abilities incorporates many of the factors cited in the literature review above. The job readiness check-off list to be filled out by the DHS employment specialist includes such categories as basic reading, math and communication skills; resume writing, interviewing, and job search skills; behavioral skills (positive attitude, independent, cooperative); access to transportation, childcare,

and housing; and ability to manage disability (through support groups, therapy, and doctor's supervision), all of which were mentioned as important in the Cockrell (1992), Hashim (1992), and O'Neil et al. (1992) studies. If a TANF client is deemed to fall short in satisfying any of these job readiness competencies upon the initial assessment by the DHS employment specialist, she will be referred to one of many job readiness programs offered by either the county welfare department or local community organizations, many of which are nonprofit agencies.

### Welfare-to-Work Evaluations

Many evaluations have been conducted throughout the country studying the impact welfare-to-work programs have had on the reduction of welfare dependency. Most notable are the studies conducted by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation which has published hundreds of evaluations on welfare demonstration projects such as the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) programs in California, and the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) and Work Incentive (WIN) programs of major U.S. cities implemented over the last two decades. None of the studies reviewed for this research project were conducted specifically on welfare-to-work programs offered by nonprofit organizations per se, as the studies are typically conducted at the macro level, collecting data from county welfare departments, even though the administration of the welfare programs is done at the micro level, through hosts of public and nonprofit social service agencies. Also, program successes are usually measured by the ability to reduce welfare caseloads and not by the ability to move women out of poverty. In fact, many studies have shown that only modest increases to annual earnings

have been achieved from welfare-to-work programs with most of the increase due to the increase in the amount of time worked rather than an increase in earnings rates and that earnings increases tend to diminish after one to two years in the workforce (Brown, 1997; Moffit, 1998; D. O'Neill & J. O'Neill, 1997; and Strawn, 1998). Much of the literature does not offer specifics on the individual program offerings. Rossi (1997, p. 145) cites the lack of detail provided on programs as analogous to "black boxes," saying that detailed descriptions of programs as designed or delivered are not provided by many studies. Also, it is important to note that studies tend to focus on the entire range of welfare-to-work strategies employed, which typically encompass job readiness, job training, job search, and job retention and support services, and not on job readiness strategies alone. Nonetheless, pieces of information drawn from these studies can be, and are, valuable to all parties involved in aiding a TANF client through a job readiness program. The providers of the programs, the funders of the programs, and the clients of the programs can benefit from this knowledge.

What have the evaluations shown? The positive job-readiness program factors drawn from these studies can be divided into four categories: the program model/structure, the specific curriculum offerings, the philosophy of the agency staff, and the additional support services provided by the agency.

There have been two commonly tried welfare-to-work approaches: the Quick Employment (job search) approach and the Skills Building (training/education) approach. Strawn (1998) concluded in her research that the most successful programs fall somewhere in the middle of the job search and basic education continuum, favoring a balanced approach to welfare reform. The mixed strategy model that maintains a focus

on securing employment, but is also combined with education, skills development, and training, has been found to work best, and is more likely to help the most disadvantaged TANF recipients (Brown, 1997; and Strawn, 1998). The length of the program itself has not been studied to show whether there is a correlation with program completion success rates. And, no data appears to exist on other specific components of a program model, such as class size and class composition (co-ed or gender specific). However, the 16 programs covered in Strawn's (1998) research, Goldsmith's (1998) PG&E evaluation, and Gustavson's (1997) analysis of JOBS programs in Kansas' three metropolitan areas, show that programs consisting of classroom training and unpaid work/internships average between 20 and 40 hours per week and last anywhere from 15 to 42 weeks. The national Job Training Partnership Act evaluations showed that very short-term classroom training has not been successful with welfare participants (Strawn, 1998, p. vi.). Programs having positive impact tend to simulate the real-world work environment, requiring participants to attend classes from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. as one would in a typical office job.

Most of the literature on welfare-to-work evaluations does not discuss curriculum details except within the broader context of stating that basic math, writing, and computer skills are necessary for entry-level work. These job readiness competencies have been identified and discussed earlier in this chapter. However, curriculum data drawn from Strawn's (1998) research on 16 innovative welfare-to-work programs being conducted throughout the country and Goldsmith's (1998) evaluation of the PG&E Education and Employment Training Pilot Program can be grouped into four areas of curriculum importance: computer skills such as learning the Microsoft suite of applications; workplace skills such as office procedures and protocol, business math and writing, and



customer relations; job search skills such as resume writing, job interviewing, and personal grooming; and life management skills, such as money management, stress management, conflict resolution, and teamwork. These criteria, or subsets thereof, have explicitly been required to be offered as part of the curriculum of any agency seeking CalWORKs funding from the City and County of San Francisco. Several studies state that a sectoral approach in training, i.e. training for a specific industry, is also helpful to participants and future employers (Goldsmith, 1998; Roberts & Padden, 1998; and Strawn, 1998).

Brown (1997), Cockrell (1992), Geen, Zimmerman, Douglas, Zedlewski, & Waters (1998), and Goldsmith (1998) all mention in one form or another the importance of an esprit de corps between staff, counselors, and program participants. Common attitudes displayed by those on welfare are feelings of powerlessness, low self-esteem, and feelings of alienation and isolation. Through no fault of their own, the attitudes of people on public assistance are formed by the laws, the treatment they get at individual agencies, and the opinions of the general population (Easley, 1995, p. 22). While not specifically stated as such, the message that is communicated to clients by staff can act as a positive psychological charge for participants, impacting their view of their self-worth and self-esteem. Participants in the PG&E Education and Employment Training Pilot Program in San Francisco praised their instructors, commenting on the individualized attention they received and the display of personal concern about their progress throughout the course. The initial assessment of the program also cited the relationships between the DHS caseworker, nonprofit agency staff, and TANF participants as a positive factor in guiding participants through the county welfare services maze

(Goldsmith, 1998). The message communicated to clients is also reflected in the environment in which the services are delivered. When California implemented the GAIN program in 1986, the state decided to deliver GAIN services from locations other than welfare offices. Respondents commented favorably on the attempt of the GAIN offices to look and operate like professional employment offices, in dramatic contrast to the stereotypical characteristics of welfare offices – long lines, little client/caseworker interaction, and bulletproof glass (Geen et al., 1998).

Virtually all of the literature recommended comprehensive support services in addition to basic skills development as necessary to promote client readiness for the workforce (Brown, 1997; Cockrell, 1992; Goldsmith, 1998; Roberts & Padden, 1998; and Strawn, 1998). Strawn (1998) states that “other services do matter, and employment and training services by themselves are unlikely to succeed with the most disadvantaged clients” (p. 2). Common areas for additional services are case management and counseling, childcare, access to a health clinic, domestic violence and depression support groups, career counseling, and stipends for transportation and childcare. In fact, the candidates who responded to the PG&E pilot program flyer said that the critical elements that sparked their interest in applying to the program were “computer skills, child care, transportation, and the fact that PG&E was listed as a program sponsor” (Goldsmith, 1998, p. 15).

Additionally, partnership with a local employer was mentioned as an important factor in transitioning TANF clients into the workforce (Cockrell, 1992; Goldsmith, 1998; Gustavson, 1997; Roberts & Padden, 1998; and Strawn, 1998). A common thread

found among programs was the effort to tie training closely to the workplace by involving employers in the design of training programs.

Strawn (1998) sums it up nicely, writing that “the most effective welfare-to-work programs generally offer a wide range of individualized services, have a central focus on employment, have close ties to local employers, and are intensive, setting high expectations for participation” (p. 23).

### Women and Welfare

Single unskilled mothers with children have traditionally had the highest poverty rate in America. Due to decades of stagnant wages, ineffective child support enforcement, and dwindling welfare benefits, single unskilled women have found themselves at the bottom rung of the socioeconomic ladder (Edin & Lein, 1997). Current welfare reform, with its time limitations for aid and imposed sanctions for not working, may reinforce poverty for women who lack sufficient education and training or the mental and physical health to make the transition from welfare to wage employment. Children will also suffer if women cannot find the resources to provide suitable day care for their children.

Many legislators and policymakers have designed legislation based on the myth that women choose welfare as an alternative to work. Edin and Lein (1996, 1997), Hershey (1997), D. O'Neill and J. O'Neill (1997), and Rose (1995) found in their studies that women on welfare do work, and tend to work to subsidize their meager welfare checks. Most TANF mothers interviewed said their total benefits do not cover even their basic housing and food expenses. A 1995 study by the Institute for Women's Policy

Research found that 43 percent of a sample of single mothers who received public assistance combined those funds with earnings (Hershey, 1997). The study found that the women either shifted between work and welfare or received welfare and earned income simultaneously. The federal statistics do not reflect this information for the simple reason that TANF recipients choose not to report their additional earnings to welfare caseworkers for fear of losing their benefits. Neither wages in the unskilled labor market alone, nor welfare benefits alone, are sufficient to cover the average expenses a single mother incurs in a month. Edin and Lein (1997) conducted in-depth interviews with 379 low-income single mothers in four U.S. cities to show that welfare recipients and low-wage workers have to employ a set of survival strategies to make ends meet. Women tended to employ three supplemental income strategies: wages from employment, assistance from their personal social network, or help from community agencies. The mix of strategies employed depended upon the social-structural characteristics of the cities in which they lived and varied by the quality of their private social safety nets.

Many women express the desire to leave welfare and do not want to rely on the system for life. More than 60 percent of welfare recipients leave the rolls within two years, but unfortunately, more than half return for a subsequent spell (Edin & Lein, 1997; D. O'Neill & J. O'Neill, 1997). Fewer than 15 percent stay on for five continuous years (Rose, 1995). Factors contributing to high rates of job loss include: temporary jobs, frequent layoffs, low pay in relation to expenses, lack of experience in meeting employer expectations, and personal or family problems (Hershey, 1997).

According to Hershey (1997, p. 18), there are several factors that can make it difficult for welfare recipients to stay employed once they find a job. These include the

abrupt termination of welfare benefits once employed; difficulty obtaining transitional child care or Medicaid benefits; limited case management services available to the newly employed who leave welfare; and the incentive to return to welfare if a job is lost. Hershey states, "The system seems designed to push people off of welfare, not to sustain them in employment" (p. 18).

The five-year lifetime welfare eligibility limitation under the new legislation makes it all the more important for a TANF recipient to select, or be referred to, the job readiness program best suited to her needs. The sooner she receives job readiness training and is assessed as employable, the sooner she can begin the journey of seeking and securing employment, preferably in a position that will raise her economic status above the poverty level. Her biggest challenge will be to maintain employment in a position where she can earn a livable wage and thus begin to break the cycle of dependency.

Leaving welfare is a process, not an event (Hershey, 1997). Women need policies that respect the dignity of the individual and give them choices about combining caretaking work in the home with wage labor while maintaining an adequate standard of living (Rose, 1995). Instead of blaming the poor for their impoverishment, the structural causes of poverty must be addressed in legislation. The solution to poverty is access to, and sustained employment in, decent-paying jobs in the labor market (Rose, 1995).

### Conclusion

The answer to the age-old question of how to move welfare recipients off public assistance, into the work place, and out of poverty, is complex. For centuries, the

nonprofit and government sectors have partnered to provide social services to the poor. This partnership takes advantage of the government's strengths in raising resources (through taxation) and the nonprofit sector's ability to deliver services in a more informal, smaller-scale fashion than larger government bureaucracies. Studies by Salomon (1987, 1989) and Mohr & Guerra-Pearson (1996) have shown that the government does not displace nonprofit organizations, but is a major force in underwriting nonprofit operations.

Although many strategies have been employed, no one strategy has been found completely effective. The Quick Employment (job search) approach and the Skills Building (training/education) have had mixed results. Many studies have shown that only modest increases in annual earnings have been achieved from welfare-to-work programs, with most of the increase due to the increase in the amount of time worked rather than an increase in earnings rates. Earnings increases tend to diminish after one to two years in the workforce.

Assessing a person as job-ready is the first step in transitioning single parenting women off of welfare and into the workforce. Positive factors that have been found in the existing body of literature on welfare-to-work strategies for job readiness programs can be divided into four categories: the program model/structure, program curriculum, additional support services, and philosophy of agency staff.

Leaving welfare is a process, not an event. The providers (nonprofit organizations) of job readiness programs, the funders (DHS) of the programs, and the clients (TANF women) of the programs all stand to benefit from understanding the

programmatic factors that can aid TANF clients through job readiness programs and thus begin the path to economic self-sufficiency.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### Subjects/Respondents

The City of San Francisco was the region for the selection of subjects for this research. The primary subjects/respondents of this study were threefold: staff from the Department of Human Services CalWORKs Department, staff from nonprofit organizations offering job readiness programs, and TANF clients from nonprofit job readiness programs. More specifically, two employment specialists from the DHS CalWORKs Department, three staff directly responsible for implementing job readiness programs within each nonprofit organization, and six female TANF clients who were enrolled in or had completed a work readiness program from each of the selected nonprofit organizations' job readiness programs participated in an interview conducted by the researcher. Personal interviews were conducted with each of the respondent constituencies to determine the factors related to success in aiding TANF clients through work readiness programs.

More than 30 nonprofit agencies offer job readiness programs in San Francisco. Since the emphasis of this research project was to gain the perspectives of all the parties involved in assisting TANF clients through work readiness programs, only those nonprofit agencies which were awarded CalWORKs funding by the DHS were potential candidates for inclusion in this study. According to a list compiled by the PIC, as of May 1999, there were nine nonprofit organizations which had been awarded CalWORKs work readiness subcontractor contracts and were eligible for participation in this study.



## Research Design

This was a descriptive study of a complex situation. The design used a qualitative, cross-sectional approach based on observation and in-depth interviews. The data collected served as the basis for developing an understanding of the important program factors which allow TANF clients to successfully participate in a nonprofit job readiness program as perceived by those parties involved in the process: funders (DHS), providers (nonprofit agencies), and recipients (TANF clients).

## Instrumentation

Several sources of data were used to gather information for the research project. First, data about the nonprofit agency and related work readiness program were collected from currently available written materials. These included annual reports and program description materials obtained directly from the nonprofit agencies selected for the study and copies of the Request for Qualifications proposals and Qualitative Evaluations submitted by nonprofit agencies to the Private Industry Council. These documents provided a narrative on each nonprofit agency's work readiness program curriculum, its program budget, and the challenges encountered in implementing the programs.

Second, an interview guide containing open-ended questions was used for face-to-face interviews with subjects/respondents. The interview guide asked similar questions of the DHS staff, nonprofit staff, and work readiness program clients. Each interview lasted between one half hour to an hour. The survey was pre-tested with staff at Florence Crittenton's Young Parent Center. The staff at this agency run a work readiness program

serving TANF clients. However, since the Young Parent Center did not receive a CalWORKs work readiness contract, it was not included in the survey population.

As reflected in the interview guide, the researcher asked open-ended questions. To the extent these questions were not answered by the respondents, the researcher asked further questions related to four categories which were thought to be important to the success of TANF clients in completing a job readiness program. These four categories were: program model/structure, program curriculum, additional support services, and philosophy of agency staff.

### Procedures

The PIC was asked to provide a list of the organizations which had been awarded CalWORKs work readiness subcontractor contracts. Nine agencies were in this category. However, in discussing the list with the welfare-to-work special assistant at the DHS, it was suggested to the researcher that contact be made with those agencies that had received the largest numbers of referrals to date. Five of the nine agencies met this criterion.

A letter introducing the researcher and the research project was sent to the program director of each agency. The letter described the study, stated that the information collected during the project would be kept confidential, and made known that a copy of the research would be given to those participating in the study. A week later, the researcher placed a follow-up call to the agency contact. This telephone contact re-introduced the research project, solicited her cooperation, and determined the number of respondents from each facility that would participate in the study. This contact clarified

the purpose of the survey—to understand the program factors which allow TANF clients to successfully participate in a nonprofit organization’s job readiness program as perceived by those parties involved in the process: funders (DHS), providers (nonprofit agencies), and recipients (TANF clients). A mutually agreeable interview date was set during this initial phone contact.

The researcher also asked each agency for permission to interview one graduating class from the agency. The researcher proposed to conduct a group interview, akin to a focus group, consisting of no more than six women. If a graduating class was composed of more than six women, the researcher attempted to arrange the class into smaller groups and conduct multiple group interviews per organization. Class members were also given the option of not participating in the group interview if they felt uncomfortable sharing their experiences. The structure of the interviews with the TANF clients was designed to be flexible, because the researcher did not know the exact cycle of each nonprofit organization’s job readiness program and the number of students in each class until contact was made with the agency.

The researcher also contacted the manager of the Department of Human Services CalWORKs unit by letter. The letter introduced the research project and solicited DHS participation in the study. The researcher then placed a follow-up telephone call to reintroduce the research project and asked for approval to participate in the study. This contact served to clarify the purpose of the survey as indicated in the paragraphs above.

Subsequent to the initial phone contact, a letter was mailed to each nonprofit agency representative contactee confirming the interview date. A consent form indicating the staff person’s voluntary participation in the study was enclosed.

Subsequent phone calls were made to the nonprofit agency contact person to arrange for scheduling of interviews with the program TANF clients. Interviews were conducted over the course of two months from the date of the initial contact letters.

### Operational Definition of Relevant Variables

Perceptions of program factors: Perceptions of job readiness programs were collected by talking with nonprofit agency staff, DHS CalWORKs Department staff, and clients of nonprofit job readiness programs through the use of the interview guide.

Clients: Women who are on TANF and are participating in a job readiness program offered by a nonprofit organization.

Program structure/model: The structure of a nonprofit job readiness program. Program structure may include attendance requirements, class size, unisex classroom, length of course, and continuum of services. Questions related to program structure were asked in interview guide questions A3, B4, and C4.

Additional support services: The ancillary services offered by a nonprofit organization. Additional support services may include childcare, transportation vouchers, counseling, and housing/medical care referrals. Questions related to additional support services were asked in interview guide questions A4, B5, and C6.

Program curriculum offerings: The job readiness curriculum taught by a nonprofit organization. Curriculum offerings may include computer training, money management, self-esteem building, personal growth skills, interviewing techniques, resume writing, and workplace skills. Questions related to curriculum offerings were asked in interview guide questions A2, B3, and C5.

Philosophy of agency staff: The esprit de corps exhibited by agency staff.

Descriptors of agency staff may include positive or negative adjectives such as friendly, helpful, strict, resourceful, uncaring, professional, or dedicated. Questions related to agency staff were asked in interview guide questions A5, B6, and C7.

### Treatment of Data/Data Analysis

In conducting the analysis, the researcher looked for patterns in responses from the three constituencies of job readiness programs. Responses included both similarities and differences in the perceptions by the constituencies in any of the four areas of program model/structure, program curriculum, philosophy of agency staff, and additional support services, all of which were believed to be important programmatic factors related to the successful completion of a job readiness program by TANF clients.

Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used to report and interpret the data. Facts on the subject of program structure, program curriculum, and additional agency services were extracted from published materials such as annual reports, printed materials, the Report for Qualifications proposal, and from information collected in the interviews. Perceptions of agency staff came from the interviews. Data are organized by program model, program curriculum, and agency support services, and are presented in written and table form. These data describe the components of job readiness programs offered by nonprofit organizations.

The face-to-face interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The perceptions gleaned in the four areas of program structure/model, program curriculum, philosophy of agency staff, and additional support services were coded for factors as

described in the operational definitions above. Data from the interviews are presented in a qualitative format. These data describe the perceptions of those parties involved in aiding TANF clients through successful completion of a nonprofit job readiness program.

### Limitations of the Study

The project was limited in sample size involved. Due to the newness of the CalWORKs legislation, only a small number of nonprofit agencies had been awarded work readiness subcontractor contracts at the time of this study. Only nine nonprofit agencies met the inclusion criteria for this study. Given this small sample size, it is difficult to extrapolate sample findings to the TANF population as a whole.

The respondents selected were limited to the geographic area of the City of San Francisco. Participating agencies offering work readiness programs were limited to those designated with 501c(3) nonprofit status, although several for-profit and government agencies offer similar programs.

The research findings were also limited to describing respondents' perceptions about job readiness programs and did not report on actual outcomes. It was too early to monitor outcomes because the new welfare legislation had only recently been enacted.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

### Introduction

This chapter summarizes results of the data collected through interviews with nonprofit agency staff, TANF clients participating in work readiness programs, and DHS CalWORKs Department employment specialists. Data collected from written materials such as annual reports and program brochures are also presented. The chapter begins with a discussion of the interview response rate and a description of the nonprofit agencies selected for the study. This is followed by a review of the data, addressing the research questions as stated in Chapter One:

1. What are the job readiness program components offered by the nonprofit organizations selected for this research?
2. What program factors do program administrators and staff perceive to be related to the ability of TANF clients to successfully complete their programs?
3. What program factors do TANF clients feel helped them successfully complete a job readiness program?
4. What program factors do the Department of Human Services staff perceive to be related to the ability of TANF clients to successfully complete a nonprofit organization's job readiness program?
5. What do these three constituencies believe to be the reasons some TANF clients benefit from certain job readiness programs and not others?

## Description of Agencies

Five agencies were initially selected for participation in this study. An additional two agencies were added after two of the initial five agencies declined to participate in interviews. The agencies selected all have a history of providing employment and training services to the community for many years; however, the programs and curriculums reviewed for this study have only recently been created in response to CalWORKs criteria and welfare-to-work Department of Labor eligibility requirements. Many of the programs continue to be refined in response to the needs of the welfare population. A brief description of each of the seven agencies follows.

Agency A: Primarily works with refugees and immigrants and offers English language training in concert with their work readiness program. TANF clients enrolled as of May 31, 1999: 238.

Agency B: Historically has only worked with women, but recently expanded services to provide work readiness training to both men and women. TANF clients enrolled as of May 31, 1999: 63.

Agency C: Primarily serves residents of the Mission District and focuses on helping families move up and improve their quality of living. TANF clients enrolled as of May 31, 1999: 45.

Agency D: Provides work readiness training and placement in small business enterprises throughout the city. TANF clients enrolled as of May 31, 1999: 41.

Agency E: Primarily serves members of the Bayview Hunters Point community and focuses on collaborations within the community to provide job training. TANF clients enrolled as of May 31, 1999: 31.



Agency F: Combines vocational training with work readiness training in five occupational fields. TANF clients enrolled as of May 31, 1999: 44.

Agency G: Provides work readiness training in conjunction with vocational training geared for the health care services field. TANF clients enrolled as of May 31, 1999: 63.

### Interview Response Rate

#### Nonprofit agency staff and TANF clients

Introductory letters were mailed to each of the initial five agencies selected for the study in early May 1999. Phone contact was made within two weeks of the mailing. Agencies A, B, C, and D each agreed to participate in the study and interviews were scheduled with each of the program directors for June. Agency E declined from participating in the study due to a projected busy summer schedule and limited staff availability during the summer months.

Interviews were conducted with Agencies A and C as scheduled. Agency B phoned the researcher several days before the interview and cancelled, saying that “the agency did not see the benefit it would receive from participation in the study.” Agency D phoned the researcher the day before the interview and cancelled due to illness. Agency D further rescinded from participating in the study, saying that staff reductions due to summer vacation schedules would not allow time to participate in this research.

Introductory letters to Agencies F and G were mailed in early August 1999. Phone contact was made within one week of the mailing. Agency F agreed to participate in the study; Agency G could not due to busy staff schedules. An interview was

scheduled with an instructor from Agency F; however, on the day of the interview, the instructor was not in the office and made no effort to reschedule the appointment with the researcher. No further communication was received from Agency F even though repeated attempts were made to communicate with the instructor.

In hope of getting some feedback from the declining agencies, another letter was mailed to Agencies B, D, E, and G in early August, asking each program director to fill out a survey related to the agency's work readiness program. Agencies B and E returned the survey.

In addition to interviewing the program director, the researcher interviewed an employment specialist/job developer and an instructor at each of the responding agencies. Once contact was established with the staff, the researcher asked permission to talk with TANF clients who were currently enrolled in, or had graduated from, the program. This was arranged through the instructor or the employment specialist/job developer. The interviews with the TANF clients were either conducted as part of a group interview or individually. Table 1 outlines the number of interview respondents from each agency.

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Table 1  
Interview Respondents

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Respondents	Agency A	Agency C
<u>Staff:</u>		
Program director	1	1
Employment specialist/job developer	1	1

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Note: Table continued on next page.

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Table 1 (continued)  
Interview Respondents

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Respondents	Agency A	Agency C
Instructor	1	1
<u>TANF clients:</u>		
Group interview	3	
Individual interview	1	2

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Department of Human Services, Employment Specialists

An introductory letter was mailed to the CalWORKs program director in April 1999, seeking permission to talk with her staff. In response, the program director indicated that her department was already participating in a number of studies and was extremely pressed for time. Neither an acceptance nor denial to participate was mentioned. Subsequent phone calls and emails throughout the months of May and June went unanswered. A second letter was mailed in July and a response was returned within a few days. The program manager suggested that the researcher attend a Providers Showcase meeting and solicit volunteers for the research. The Providers Showcase meetings occur three times a month and are forums for community-based agencies to present their programs to DHS employment specialists. The researcher made a five minute presentation at both the August 12 and August 18 meetings. A total of 60 employment specialists attended one or both of the two meetings and each received a handout explaining the scope of the research. Two employment specialists volunteered to participate in the project and were interviewed in September.

## Research Findings

### Program Components

#### Question 1: Components of job readiness programs offered by nonprofit organizations

Data for question one were obtained from agency written materials, interviews with staff, and returned surveys. Information on the work readiness program curriculum, program model, and support services components are presented.

As indicated earlier in the literature review section, curriculum offerings shown to be important were grouped into four areas: job seeking skills, computer skills, workplace skills, and life management skills. Agency curriculum components grouped in these four categories are presented in Table 2.

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Table 2  
Nonprofit Job Readiness Program Curriculum Components

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Agency	A	B	C	D	E	G
<hr/>						
Curriculum offerings:						
<u>Job seeking skills</u>						
Employment documents	x	x	x	x	x	—
Resume writing / cover letters	x	x	x	x	x	x
Interviewing skills	x	x	x	x	x	x
Library use	x	x	x	—	x	—
Personal grooming	x	x	x	x	x	x

---

Note: Table continued on next page.

Table 2 (continued)  
Nonprofit Job Readiness Program Curriculum Components

Agency	A	B	C	D	E	G
<u>Computer skills</u>						
Internet basics		x	x	x	x	—
Excel		x	x	x		x
Word		x	x	x		x
Power Point		x		—		x
Access		x		—		—
<u>Workplace skills</u>						
Basic English / grammar	x	x	x	x	x	—
Basic math		x	x	—		—
Business writing	x	x	x	x	x	—
Employer expectations	x	x	x	x	x	x
Basic office procedures / communication	x	x	x	x	x	x
Workplace protocol & culture	x	x	x	x	x	x
<u>Life management skills</u>						
Money management	x	x	x	x	x	—
Stress management & conflict resolution	x	x	x	—	x	—
Parenting		x		x		—

Note: Table continued on next page.

Table 2 (continued)  
Nonprofit Job Readiness Program Curriculum Components

Agency	A	B	C	D	E	G
Support networks	x	x	x	x		—
Self-esteem building	x	x	x	x	x	x
Team management		x	x	x	x	x
Multiculturalism / self pride	x	x		—	x	—
Time management		x	x	x	x	x
<u>Additional</u>						
Guest speakers	x	x	x	x	x	x
Field trips	x	x		x	x	—

Note: Complete data were not available for Agencies D and G.

All of the agencies provide instruction on many of the sub-topics in the four areas as would be expected. Only Agency A did not provide any instruction on computer development skills. This is because the majority of Agency A's clients are limited-English speaking and their program emphasizes developing the English language competencies needed to gain employment in industries that do not require computer knowledge.

At first glance, it may appear that the curriculums are the same across all the agencies. When asked what were the most distinguishing features of her agency's curriculum, one program director replied:

I don't think there's anything. I feel that the issues covered in our

work readiness program are universal. I don't think we've hit on some niche. I've worked with a lot of the other agencies, and I feel that everybody is really putting together a solid kind of curriculum.

While it is true that curriculum topics are similar, what is different is the amount of instruction participants receive on each of the topics. Table 3 provides information on the program length and hours of instruction received.

Table 3  
Nonprofit Job Readiness Program Statistics

Agency	A <sup>a</sup>	B	C	D	E	F <sup>b</sup>
Length of program (weeks)	12	3	2	5	1	16 – 20
Number of hours/week	26	40	26	30	32	5
Times/days offered	daily 9 - 1 or 1 - 5	daily 9 - 5	daily 10 - 12	daily 9 - 4	M - Th 8:30 - 2:30; F, 12 - 2	daily 9 - 4
Total program hours	312	120	96	150	32	100

Note: <sup>a</sup>Agency A combines work readiness with vocational ESL instruction. <sup>b</sup>Agency F combines work readiness with a job training program. The work readiness component comprises 1 hour a day over the 20 week period, thus totaling 100 hours.

Work readiness programs range in length from 1 to 12 weeks. Agency F combines work readiness instruction with job training instruction in a course that runs 16 to 20 weeks. Depending on the program they select or are referred to, participants can receive between 32 and 312 hours of work readiness training. A component of job search activities is usually included in the work readiness training, and participants are expected to spend several hours per week actively looking for work.

Further program-specific information is provided in Table 4. Four of the seven agencies utilize an open entry/open enrollment model so that participants can start the program at any time. The other agencies' programs are cyclical and participants must wait until the next cycle of the program is offered to begin. It is possible that some participants may miss having an opportunity to join an agency's work readiness program, if, at the time of meeting with their DHS case worker, the agency has already begun its cycle. Several of the agency programs simulate a real-world work environment, requiring participants to attend classes from 9 a.m. to 4 or 5 p.m. as one would in a typical office job. Others have shorter classroom time, ranging from two to four hours, but expect participants to spend remaining hours working individually with their counselor or independently in job search activities. Class sizes average 15 people, with the class composition largely comprised of female clients.

Table 4  
Nonprofit Job Readiness Program Model Components

Agency	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Cyclical or open enrollment	open	cyclical	open	cyclical	open	open	cyclical
Length of program (weeks)	12	3	2	5	1	16 - 20	6
Offerings per year	4x	12x	20x	—	50x	—	—
Number of hours/week	26	40	26	30	32	5	—
Times/days offered:	daily 9 - 1 or 1 - 5	daily 9 - 5	daily 10 - 12	daily 9 - 4	M - Th 8:30 - 2:30; F, 12 - 2	daily 9 - 4	—

Note: Table continued on next page.



Table 4 (continued)  
Nonprofit Job Readiness Program Model Components

Agency	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Scheduled or self-study	both	scheduled	both	scheduled	both	both	scheduled
Individualized services?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Average class size	15	15 - 20	15	20	5 - 9	—	5
Class composition (co-ed or female only)	co-ed	co-ed	co-ed	co-ed	co-ed	co-ed	female
Participant gender ratio (percentage F / M )	90/10	90/10	80/20	75/25	90/10	—	100/0
Program targeted to specific industry?	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y
If yes, which ones?				small businesses		various	medical
Program targeted to specific geographic constituency?	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N
If yes, which ones?	Chinatown, Tenderloin		Mission		Hunter's Point		
Total program hours	312	120	96	150	32	100	—

Note: Complete data were not available for Agencies D, F, and G.

Having adequate support services is another component of ensuring client readiness for the workforce. The types of support services offered at four of the agencies are shown in Table 5. Transportation and childcare services are not usually offered because stipends for both are provided through the DHS. Counseling for substance abuse or domestic violence and housing and medical care may be provided either on-site in collaboration with or by referral to other community-based organizations. Other

support services that may be offered to clients in their preparation for a new job include clothing or cosmetic makeovers.

Table 5  
Nonprofit Job Readiness Program Support Services Components

Agency	A	B	C	E
Clothing vouchers	x	x	x	x
Cosmetic and hair makeovers	x			
Emergency funding/loan program		x	x	
Childcare		x		
Transportation		x		x
Counseling	x	x	x	
Housing/medical care referrals	x	x	x	

### Interview Results

#### Question 2: Perceptions of program administrators and staff concerning program factors related to the ability of TANF clients to successfully complete their programs

Interviews conducted with six staff at two nonprofit organizations were transcribed and coded for themes. Questions asked of each of the respondents related to their program's curriculum, program model/structure, staff characteristics, and additional support services. Themes and patterns commonly identified in their responses are presented and respondent characteristics are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6**  
**Characteristics of Staff Respondents**

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6
Approximate age	early-30s	late-20s	mid-40s	late-20s	late-20s	late-20s
Gender	M	F	F	F	F	F
Ethnicity	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian	Hispanic	Caucasian
Job title	program coordinator	instructor	employment specialist	employment manager	employment specialist	instructor
Agency tenure (months)	30	9	12	18	8	4
Field experience (years)	4	3	1	3	5	2

Curriculum. An emphasis on self-esteem and motivational techniques was mentioned as being an integral part of each organization's work readiness program. Respondents were aware that many TANF clients lack confidence and display low levels of self-esteem and thus are in need of additional encouragement throughout the program and workshops. One respondent commented on why this was important:

Even being a housewife, they have skills, and they don't know what it means—not only to write it down, but to feel it. Writing it is important, but that's not the main point. People need to feel and believe in themselves; then you have them write it down. Until you convince the person, you can write down whatever you want to, but it doesn't bring any good. They need to believe that they can do it.

Both agencies brought in guest speakers as part of their curriculum offerings. Lectures on workers' rights, health and nutrition, and regulations and benefits under CalWORKs were provided by members of other community organizations. One staff

member at Agency A, which primarily works with limited-English-speaking immigrants, discussed why it was important to cover topics such as tuberculosis in their work readiness program: “A lot of them [participants], when they come here they get tested for TB and the spot on their arm is this big. No one ever told them at the clinic what to expect.” Both agencies also sponsored employer presentations and conducted field trips to the public library where staff could show participants the job resource center.

Instructors at both programs said that it is important to have flexibility in designing the curriculum. Instructors were able to tailor classroom topics and the materials used to meet the needs of the participants. The instructors were new to the agency and had had no prior contact with other agency instructors to learn what curriculum materials could be useful or successful in working with TANF clients. In fact, one instructor was enhancing her curriculum by finding materials on the Internet. This may be a negative rather than a positive indicator.

Program model/structure. Staff members from two agencies said that offering their programs on an open entry/open enrollment basis constituted a benefit to clients—first, because clients didn’t have to wait to begin the program, and second, because this type of model seemed good for those clients who had been in previous work readiness programs, but for some reason had not completed them or did not get a job. One of the staff at Agency C commented why the structured, cyclical model doesn’t work for the majority of their clients:

Our program is very flexible. It’s got an open entry so we definitely get clients who are looking for that, maybe those who have been through other programs which have been the bulk of our clients coming through. Sitting in a structured

classroom environment, hearing the same thing, how to do a resume, how to do interviewing *again*, without figuring out too much about why they're not getting jobs and taking ownership about it, it doesn't work.

For Agency A, the open entry model served a third purpose. Because their program is geared towards limited-English-speaking clients (which is characteristic of a majority of the CalWORKs clients referred to work-readiness programs to date) and because they offer one of the longer programs (12 weeks), they needed to be able to receive clients into the program on a rolling basis. The program coordinator commented:

Our program is 12 weeks and it is open entry/open exit which is another strength.

It's a series of 12 weekly units that repeat four times a year. Clients can come in any week, they're fine. Week 10, week 11, week 12, week 1, it doesn't matter.

The word "flexible" was used by all six respondents in describing their programs. A flexible approach allowed for shorter classroom lessons, averaging two to four hours, and more time for individualized training with the employment specialist or job developer at the agency. The employment specialists at each agency work with clients to devise a job search plan, help with counseling and referrals, and provide assistance with any other personal or employment needs. Clients were expected to spend 5 to 10 hours a week working individually, usually in active job-search activities. Additionally, clients were expected to report to their employment specialists, either verbally or in written form, where they had filled out applications, the name of the company and the person they had spoken with, and the positions they had applied for. While in theory it is important for clients to be allotted time to conduct job searches, it seemed difficult for the

employment specialists to ascertain how many hours the clients were devoting to such activities. One respondent commented:

If I know they're coming to their appointments and I know they're actively looking for work, then by that, I know they're doing some hours. Maybe they're not doing exactly 26 hours each week, but they're doing something close to it. But if they're not, if they're missing their appointments or not showing up, I report it to their DHS employment specialist.

Another said, "Some of them do 2 hours, for some of them it's 12."

The staff at Agency A commented that the 12 week length of their program was an important feature of their services because it gave participants time to develop their English and entry-level employment skills as well as to build their self-confidence to enter the workforce. Many of their clients have not worked and have been on aid for a long period of time. One staff member provided this insight:

A lot of my students have been on welfare for 20 years or more, and it's frightening for them to all of a sudden, because of welfare reforms, have someone tell them that in two weeks you'll be done with training and you're going to have to go out and get a job. I do think a lot of the students are content with what they get here and they feel like they're ready to try.

Staff characteristics. Frequently mentioned characteristics found to be helpful in aiding clients through programs were staff multilingualism and diversity—thus staff reflected the population they served. Agency A provides services to a predominantly Asian and Eastern European client base, and Agency C serves a largely Spanish-speaking population. While classroom instruction was always provided in English, native-

language based counseling was available through agency counselors or employment specialists. Native languages are most useful for clarification or for personal purposes.

As one respondent explained:

When students have to sign documents, or when they're explaining details that are not training but so much like daily operations, that can be done with an individual counselor that can be language specific. Like if you have to sign a release of information form, I think it's much more important to have full, clear understanding of what you're signing than to do it in a mode where perhaps the message would be hindered by your English proficiency. Directions a lot of times are given in English, and then the counselor will give it to them in their native language. With employment issues, it's English; with emotional issues, a lot of times it turns into native language.

Most of the respondents emphasized the importance of staff having the ability to develop relationships and bonds with clients. Respondents said many clients come to a program with negative attitudes toward the staff, displaying anger as though they felt that the staff were there to take away their welfare benefits. It takes time to change the negative attitudes of clients and to get them to understand that the staff at these agencies are there to help them to learn, to develop skills, and to find work so that the clients can begin the road to independence and self-sufficiency.

Respondents also described staff as dedicated, caring, and patient, and said staff displayed goodwill, compassion, and mutual respect for the clients. This respondent summed up what many had said:

With the teachers, goodwill and compassion are very important. I see the teachers as our ambassadors to the students. The students need someone coming here to encourage support, build self-esteem, telling them they're doing things right. That's the student/teacher relationship. The employment counselors, theirs is a tough job because they have to handle nonparticipating issues and stuff like that. They need to be good motivators and need to be able to do it tactfully.

Another responded:

The students and teachers have a relationship with mutual respect and understanding and caring and it's really very nice. And that's the way I think they learn best, by having someone there that will encourage them. No one is ever wrong.

Teamwork among staff and between staff and participants was also cited as important, as well as the need for clients to have a continuing relationship with one agency person, whether that be the counselor, employment specialist, or instructor. Doing so allows for bonds to develop and for staff to really get to know their clients. As one instructor said, "After three months, I know the name of their kids, what jobs they want, what part of town they live in, if they can drive, if they want to get a driver's license."

Additional support services. In the area of support services, agency staff were prepared to provide referral information on substance abuse, housing, and medical care needs. It was important for staff to know where to refer clients and to be able to help clients maneuver through "the system." One respondent said, "I feel like there's a lot out



there for people as long as they are aware of it. Our job is to know about these services and to work with them [clients] to cut through the red tape.”

Five of the six respondents said that counseling on domestic violence was important and was provided on-site. At Agency A, instructors and counselors had attended an intensive domestic violence workshop. At Agency C, domestic violence counselors from another agency sharing their facility were available for any client. Agency A staff said that a lot of clients do not admit to being victims of domestic violence, preferring not to bring it up for cultural or personal reasons. However, staff workers know the problem exists, and therefore have arranged to have guest speakers come to the class to talk about it. One respondent provided this insight about domestic violence problems:

If you ask our Asian students, they’ll say no. But I attended a workshop on domestic violence training and one of the speakers said it was a total myth that there’s no domestic violence in the Asian community. And she’s been doing this for 20 years. The students won’t talk about it, they won’t admit it, but when we brought in a guest speaker, they were just totally attentive and asked questions. It was nice.

There were a variety of other support services also tailored to meet the needs of clients. Job developers at Agency A escorted clients and sat with them in job interviews and attended job fairs with them. Agency A also provided citizenship and immigration services for clients. Agency C instituted an emergency funding/loan program which clients could utilize once. Clients could use the loan for any purpose and were expected to repay it back to the agency. Agencies A and C had clothing vouchers available for

shops such as Goodwill or Mervyns. Some clients received free hair and cosmetic makeovers at A Minor Miracle, although this service was not utilized frequently.

The DHS provided subsidies and vouchers for childcare and transportation. Agencies expected clients to have childcare in place before coming to their program; however, agencies did make allowances for children to attend class with their mothers. As one respondent commented, “I would rather have the client come to class with their children than not come at all.”

Question 3: Perceptions of TANF clients on the program factors that enabled them to successfully complete a work readiness program

Interviews were conducted with six TANF clients who were attending work readiness programs at two agencies. Two of the respondents had previously been to a work readiness program offered by Agency D. Characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 7. Interviews with the TANF recipients were transcribed and coded for themes related to the four program areas mentioned earlier in this chapter. Themes and patterns they commonly identified are presented. The responses of those who attended Agency C’s program, had previous work experience, and had attended other programs generated different themes than those of respondents who attended Agency A’s program and who had little or no work experience, had limited-English speaking abilities, and had not previously been to any other program. Also, the clients from Agency A appeared shy and offered very short responses to questions posed. This was probably attributable to their limited language skills.

Table 7  
Characteristics of TANF Respondents

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6
Approximate age	mid-30s	late-20s	early-40s	mid-40s	early-40s	late-30s
Ethnicity	African American	African American	Asian	Asian	Asian	Asian
Years on aid	9	5	19	9	8	9
Number of children	5	2	1	1	2	4
Previous work experience	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N
Agency program attended	C	C	A	A	A	A
Been to other program	Y	Y	N	N	N	N

Curriculum. The client respondents from Agency A identified practice interviewing, reading want ads, filling out applications, and learning basic employment vocabulary as important curriculum topics. Many clients reported that the repetition of lessons, such as filling out many job applications, had been useful practice. Also, the use of different learning techniques, such as visual aids and interactive games/activities, were mentioned by three of the four respondents. One remembered that the teacher had brought in job-specific objects from the restaurant industry such as silverware, plates, vegetables, and knives. The students had to “role play” different positions such as kitchen helper and bus boy. Some responses to the question about what they liked about the curriculum were:

“How to read and write for job, review vocabulary of job, really helpful.”

“How to look at the newspaper or sign and understand what the meaning is of some words.”

“Interviewing is good. Never done before. Good for my future, looking for a job.”

Respondents from Agency C pointed out different curriculum components which were important to them. Since they had previously been to a work readiness program, they felt they had a fairly good understanding of interviewing techniques, workplace behavior, and resume preparation, although they understood they could benefit from further workshops. What was valuable to them were the employer-related activities in which they had participated, especially the activities offered by their previous program with Agency D. One activity was a “scavenger hunt” in which participants paired up in teams and were expected to go out and collect job-related data from different organizations. One respondent commented:

They [Agency D] was [sic] affiliated with a lot of other companies. They had us go on a scavenger hunt and that was fun. We had an answer sheet and we had to go to any job office and ask them about their experience in the job, how do they like it and so forth, and they had to sign a piece of paper. And we were in teams. The team who comes up with the biggest number, gets a prize. We had to go to lawyers’ [offices]. We went up to one of the high rises on the nineteenth floor and they were nice. They told us about their experiences.

Another activity client respondents cited as important was a field trip to an actual employer’s office where they learned about the company and positions available.

Another respondent said:

Management Solutions, a corporation – we went to their office like we was going [sic] to a real job. That tripped me out. They kept our resume and applications on file and one girl got called in. That was good.

Two respondents mentioned that having employers come on-site to conduct presentations was also beneficial. Hearing from the employer directly about what positions were available and what they looked for in an applicant made lasting impressions on these clients. They felt they got a better understanding about what was available to them by hearing it directly from the employer representative.

Program model/structure. All of the respondents were enrolled in programs that utilized an open entry/flexible model. The respondents at Agency A indicated this was a good approach since it allowed them time to care for their children and take them to and from school while participating in individualized job search activities. Attending classes for several hours a day allowed one respondent to take classes at another school in the mornings. Respondents at Agency A were also appreciative of the fact they had three months to participate in the program with another three months of job-search related workshops to follow. This length of time allowed them to practice and to develop their English skills which they knew would be critical to their success in getting a job. Three of the respondents said their biggest fear was that the agency would not find them a job. Common responses expressing this concern were:

“I saw that a lot of people didn’t get a job. It’s hard for me because of writing skills. In my country I was a farmer. I don’t write. It is very hard for me to write.”

“For me, I feel bad, no one call me back. I don’t think they’ll find a job for us.”

Client respondents from Agency C expressed opinions different from those of Agency A. One respondent, who had been through both a structured program and a flexible program, did not express a preference for one form or the other. The other respondent, however, felt that a structured approach was better for her. When asked if she liked the flexible approach, she replied:

No, I told her [the instructor] that I wanted to know when we were going to have a regular schedule, like from 9 to 3. At the other agency program I had a schedule. I'm up early anyway every morning for the kids. I have a routine. If I don't have something to do, I get bored and start thinking of too many things. If I only go [to class] one or two days a week, I get thrown off. I don't like strict discipline, but it will help me stay in line. I need more firmer organized projects and to develop a routine schedule every day of the week. Otherwise, I get thrown off track. At the other program, I stuck to it and it worked. When I started working, my attendance was pretty excellent.

For these two respondents, fear of finding a job was not an issue. Both had worked before, but had trouble keeping their jobs. They looked to the agency for help in establishing connections with employers, improving their skill set, and maintaining their jobs.

Staff characteristics. Four of the six respondents generally felt positively about the staff. Usually, their relationships were more strongly tied to the instructors because the instructors were the people with whom they spent most of their time. "Nice" and "helpful" were common words heard from the respondents to describe the staff. Two

respondents also indicated that the staff made them feel good. One respondent commented on her relationship with her instructor; “Me and her [instructor] got to like each other a lot. She was helpful. There were times I had personal problems and I talked to her about it.”

Two of the respondents who had been through Agency D’s program spoke very highly of the staff, commenting that they felt the staff provided moral support and were rooting for them to find and retain work.

Two of the participants at Agency A had mixed feelings about their instructor. While they felt their instructor was helpful and would provide additional attention if they needed it, they also felt that the instructor got frustrated with them when they didn’t understand and sometimes felt that the instructor didn’t care about them.

Finally, one of the respondents who dropped out of an earlier program cited her relationship with her instructor as her reason for not continuing. She said:

The way she talked to us, she talked to us like we were children, like we didn’t know any better at times. And I’m the type of person that’s going to let you know, I’m not the type to hold things in or keep things in my mind. I had approached her a couple of times to tell her she needed to watch what you say, cause you can’t just talk to anybody like that. A lot of people felt the same way about her. There was a problem.

Additional support services. None of the respondents felt that the support services provided by the agency were important factors in deciding which program to attend. The only services used by any of the respondents were the emergency loan program offered at Agency C, and the clothing vouchers provided by Agencies A and C.

No one made use of any counseling or referral services. One respondent already had a long-standing relationship with another agency for personal and family counseling services. Most viewed the agency as a place to go for employment training and as a place to receive information, advice, and referrals about jobs, not as a place to receive personal support services.

Question 4: DHS staff perceptions of program success factors related to the ability of a TANF client to successfully complete a work readiness program

Interviews conducted with two employment specialists at the Department of Human Services were transcribed and coded for themes related to the four program areas mentioned earlier in the chapter. The most commonly identified themes and patterns are presented here. Characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 8.

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Table 8  
Characteristics of Employment Specialist Respondents

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	Respondent 1	Respondent 2
Approximate age	mid-20s	mid-40s
Gender	F	F
Ethnicity	Asian	Hispanic
Agency tenure (years)	2 ½	7
Client caseload	60	60
Percentage single female head of household clients	95	75

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Curriculum. The respondents indicated that they had visited many of the agencies offering work readiness programs. Neither of the respondents would refer a client to an agency program unless the respondent had previously been to an orientation workshop at the agency. No specific curriculum components were mentioned as being especially important. However, a key factor in their referral decision-making process was whether a curriculum employed interactive exercises and motivational techniques. One respondent commented:

I won't recommend a client to a program if I feel the classroom workshops are boring. The best programs are those that use interactive exercises and learning techniques and lots of motivational techniques. Two of the programs I like best use something like five interactive exercises a day. Group exercises are important. The participants need to be engaged.

Agencies using such techniques in their programs mentioned by the respondents were Agencies B and D. One respondent specifically named Agency E's program as one she would not recommend to her clients. She said of her informational visit to Agency E:

I had a bad experience with the agency. I sat in one of the workshops and thought it was really boring. Everyone was just sitting there while the instructor talked at the front of the room. I felt the quality of the staff was poor and left feeling uncomfortable sending any of my clients to this program. Six months later and I haven't heard from any of the others [employment specialists] that things have improved.

Program model/structure. Both the open entry/flexible and the cyclical/structured program models were cited as being appropriate for clients. The respondents felt that because of the wide range of needs their clients exhibited, both program models were suitable to certain types of clients. However, although conceding the viability of either approach, one respondent only referred her clients to programs at Agencies B and D which both utilize the structured model, requiring participants to attend classes daily from 9 a.m. to 4 or 5 p.m. as one would in a typical work environment. The other respondent commented that although a flexible approach can be good, it still was important to have some type of structure in place. She commented:

I feel each person is different and they all have different issues and we have to work with them in a different way. But they do need the structure, because what happens is we send them to places, and they go and are bored. They quit. And they come back and tell us—I don't like it there because we just go there and sit. So, even if we were strict, or even if we need to be a little flexible, structure is very important and the agency program needs to have that set up.

Agency A was also cited as the de facto program for clients with limited English language skills, especially for persons from Asian communities. No other agency in San Francisco was providing such services targeted to this population. The program model used was not as important as the fact that their clients could spend three months developing their employment-related English language skills. Both respondents indicated they were happy with the results from this program. Many clients had successfully completed the program and had found jobs.

Staff characteristics. Staff characteristics were mentioned as being one of the most important factors when deciding to which program to refer clients. The respondents visited with agency instructors and case managers and said it was important to develop good relationships with staff. The employment specialists said that staff should be empathetic, good listeners, and non-patronizing to the clients. They should be knowledgeable of CalWORKs rules and regulations and do their part by filling out monthly progress reports on time and keeping employment specialists apprised of any developments with the clients. One respondent commented:

I can get a good feel about staff by going on-site to see the program and the environment. I can also tell how my relationship will be with staff by their ability to fill out the progress reports. I look to see how efficient they are, how they deal with issues, how they manage time and schedule time with the clients. Even if I know the agency has a good placement rate, if I get a bad vibe from the staff, I won't send my clients there.

The respondents also said they found out about agency staff "good to work with" via word of mouth from other employment specialists. There are almost 100 employment specialists working in the DHS CalWORKs Department. If several have established a good rapport with an agency, their closest colleagues are sure to find out about this quickly. The same holds true in the opposite case. As one respondent said, "Oh, there will be a buzz around the office if anyone's had a bad experience with a staff [from an agency]. That information travels fast."

Additional support services. None of the respondents felt that the support services provided by the agency were important factors in determining which program to

recommend to their TANF clients. Mainly, this is because the DHS provides support services such as transportation vouchers and childcare vouchers. Each TANF recipient is entitled to receive these services. The department is also able to provide vouchers for miscellaneous items such as clothing, books, or uniforms. This is not an entitlement service, but is determined on a case-by-case basis and is limited to \$450 per person. One respondent said:

The fact that a community-based organization provides additional services like counseling does not factor into my referral decision. The agencies know we can pay for most of the services. We have the funds. So even if they do it for other people, it doesn't matter.

Both respondents named the same mental health agency as the one they would refer clients to if they needed such services. The work readiness agencies they worked with also used the same mental health agency and respondents cited this as beneficial. The fact that the agency staff and the employment specialists had established good relationships with the same external agency made it easier to work with TANF clients and monitor their counseling progress, they said.

Question 5: Why do some TANF clients benefit from certain nonprofit job readiness programs and not others?

The following discussion is drawn from data obtained from all three respondent constituencies.

Virtually everyone agreed that not all TANF clients will be successful in completing a work readiness program and finding work the first time around. Reasons for this vary. Clients may need further work readiness skills training in addition to the

training they received from the first program; or they may have other barriers to overcome, such as mental health issues, which were previously undiagnosed; or they may need to work out childcare issues. The employment specialists stressed that the initial TANF client assessment is very important. In the initial assessment meeting with an employment specialist, the CalWORKs program is explained to the participant, reading and math levels are tested, the client's employment history is reviewed, and any personal needs such as housing, medical, mental health or childcare are discussed. Hopefully, the first referral program the employment specialist recommends will be appropriate for the client.

Problems specific to certain agencies can diminish the chances that a TANF client will successfully complete a program. Poor relationships between agency staff and TANF clients were cited as the main reason why two of the TANF respondents interviewed did not maintain their connection with the agencies to which they had been referred. Staff who are unsympathetic or disrespectful send a negative message to clients. One TANF client, commenting on why she liked a particular program, said, "I feel like I have been respected and I have been heard. They listen to me and hear my opinion. They try to boost you up and not make you feel down." This rapport between agency staff and TANF clients was also mentioned as an important success factor by the employment specialists interviewed. If they do not feel that an agency's staff are qualified to work with clients or are sensitive to the needs of the recipients, then they will not send their clients to that agency.

Also, as mentioned earlier, sometimes the program model does not work for clients. Some clients do better with a strict program structure, with attendance modeled

on a work environment. For others, the flexibility in work readiness training attendance allows them to accommodate other matters such as childcare or further educational training.

Several agency staff respondents and both of the employment specialist respondents agreed that one of the most important determinants of success is the inner drive a participant exhibits. A client must want to work, want to develop skills, and want to receive help from the agency and the employment specialists. One staff respondent described the attitude that enables a client to complete a work readiness program:

I would say that someone who knows what they want to do, they're here to do the work readiness training, and they're focused on it. They want to finish the program, they want to get a job, they want to get something out of the program. Because, if you come in with the attitude that I'm here because I have to be here, you're not going to get anything out of it. And that happens a lot. And it's a waste of time for us and for them.

Finally, many respondents said that collaboration between all parties—the agency staff, the employment specialists, and the TANF clients—is an important factor in aiding a client through a program. One of the employment specialists summed it up nicely by saying:

I feel that they [clients] can have many challenges. But if we have something together for them, we coach them, we keep them informed, we tell them what this [CalWORKs] is all about, and the community-based organizations provide a good program and keep us informed, then we can help a participant get off welfare. The CalWORKs program is good. I see changes in the participants. They're

taking responsibility for themselves and we are all helping them as much as we can. The ones that are not ready, they may never be ready. But with new people, we can really make a difference soon. We can teach them that this is not a way of living, and that there is more to life than being on welfare.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### Review of the Problem

Nonprofit organizations are an integral part of the social and economic fabric of our society and have been providing and caring for the less fortunate members of our country for centuries. As a result of the new welfare reform legislation introduced in 1996, more collaborative efforts in the area of welfare-to-work training programs are developing between public welfare agencies, nonprofit community-based organizations, and the private business sector.

Assessing a person as job-ready is the first step in transitioning a TANF client off of welfare and into the workforce. The new five-year limit on lifetime eligibility for welfare assistance imposed by the new legislation makes it all the more important for welfare clients to select, or be referred to, the job-readiness program best suited to their needs. All parties involved in the process should understand which work readiness program factors account for the greatest program completion success rates for participants. Positive factors identified in the existing body of literature on welfare-to-work strategies for job readiness programs can be divided into four categories: the program model/structure, the specific curriculum offerings, the philosophy of agency staff, and the additional support services provided by the agency.

As of July 1999, San Francisco's CalWORKs program had been in effect for one year. More than 6,700 individuals were receiving CalWORKs cash benefits and more than 5,000 adults had signed an Employment Plan with the DHS and were engaged in some form of employment or training-related activity. A little more than 700 TANF clients had been enrolled in one of the community-based organizations' work readiness



programs—a far cry from the 6000 or so who were originally anticipated to need such training. The referrals did not materialize at the 600-per-month pace that was originally expected for a number of reasons. The level of current employment among the CalWORKs recipients was much higher than had been anticipated, and clients needed more hard skills training than had been expected. More than half the adults enrolled in CalWORKs were currently employed, but did not earn enough income to be able to dispense with aid. This low volume in participant referrals impacted many of the community-based organizations' programs. Several agencies restructured their curricula and redefined their program models. Agencies struggled to find participants and found themselves spending enormous amounts of time, energy, and resources fulfilling a recruitment void.

Program success rates, as defined by the PIC, are measured in terms of job placement and retention rates. Retention numbers for 60, 90, and 180 days are recorded, as well as total numbers of active and terminated participants. It is difficult to measure from these data whether program outcomes have been successful. Many participants have not yet been finished with the programs and working long enough to fulfill the retention benchmarks. Also, termination data implies negative reasons for termination. Positive reasons for program termination are not captured. Many of the CBOs have requested that additional data be taken into consideration in evaluating subcontractor performance. Suggestions for additional data include recording how many individuals were referred to a subcontractor, how many failed to show up, and how many were refused by the subcontractor. This additional layer of evaluation may be useful because the CBOs are not responsible for recruiting and assessing their participants. The PIC

has taken these requests under advisement. In addition, in April 1999, the PIC requested a qualitative evaluation from all subcontracting agencies. Agencies were expected to provide a narrative on program goals, outcomes, and expectations and to cite some of the positive outcomes that resulted in nonplacement activities. In reviewing and assessing which work readiness program factors are best related to the success of program participants, this research project did not consider quantitative outcomes because there is some controversy among parties about which types of data best measure the success of welfare-to-work programs. Instead, program success data was assessed by evaluating respondent perceptions of the job readiness programs.

### Discussion of the Findings

The purpose of this research was to try and uncover the program factors that are related to success for single TANF women participating in work readiness programs. In talking with the three constituencies—recipients (TANF clients), providers (staff at nonprofit agencies offering work readiness programs), and funders (DHS employment specialists)—the following factors were cited by most respondents as reasons why TANF clients were likely to be successful in completing work readiness programs and subsequently finding employment.

#### TANF Participants Develop Confidence and a Sense of Self-Worth

Self-esteem building activities and motivational techniques for clients were cited by nonprofit agency staff as being very important components of their work readiness programs. The TANF respondents and employment specialists also felt these were very important features of the programs. It was important for staff to convey positive

messages that instilled high levels of motivation in participants, boosting their self-confidence to succeed in these programs and in work. Many clients have a life-long history of low self-esteem and self-worth. This barrier is important to overcome if TANF clients are to move into the workforce and sustain employment over a long period of time, especially in today's service-oriented job market where entry-level candidates need to be self-motivated and possess strong interpersonal skills. Influencing positive attitudinal and behavioral patterns among welfare clients can have enormous impact, often changing a client's negative perception of themselves.

#### Agency Connects Clients with Employers

Activities that involved employers seemed to be very important to TANF clients. Programs that encouraged employers to conduct presentations, sit in during workshops, and conduct mock interviews were meaningful to program participants. Employer participation can have a positive impact on participants by providing them with the opportunity to meet first hand with prospective employers, to gather valuable information about an employer's company, and to gain a better understanding of what they can expect as they venture out into a sometimes exhausting interview process.

#### Good Relationships Among TANF Clients, Employment Specialists, and Agency Staff

Positive relationships with staff were mentioned as being one of the most important factors employment specialists consider when referring clients to programs. TANF respondents concurred. Even several months after leaving a program, one respondent spoke highly of staff, saying that the staff continued to make themselves available to the client if she "needed someone to talk to." The agency also tried to maintain relationships with graduates of the program by holding picnics and other events

for former and present clients. Such events connect past graduates with new ones and can provide a forum in which participants can share lessons learned and success stories, and exchange information about employment opportunities and other areas of common concern. The positive comments TANF respondents make about agency staff months after attending their programs seems to indicate that staff developed good relationships with their clients.

#### Agencies and DHS Provide TANF Clients Structured Goals

TANF respondents and agency respondents emphasized program flexibility as an important factor for success, helpful in accommodating varying participant needs. Flexibility does not mean lack of structure. Several TANF respondents specified their desire for structure and routine in agency programs. Two highly praised programs most often mentioned by the employment specialists and TANF respondents were those that utilized a cyclical program model requiring strict attendance. Instructors and several TANF clients mentioned that establishing goals and daily tasks were important. Environments supportive of a teamwork approach to tasks were also recommended. Additionally, many respondents felt it was important to establish high levels of structure and support in job search activities.

#### TANF Participants Overcome Language Barriers

Almost 40 percent of CalWORKs participants speak a primary language other than English. The majority of non-English speakers are Cantonese, Vietnamese, Russian, and Spanish speakers. Only one agency (Agency A) was cited as offering an appropriate vocational ESL work readiness program for this targeted population. Lack of English skills had been a frequent excuse for not getting a job among these participants.

Agency A offers one of the longest work-readiness training programs (three months). This program duration was cited as a positive factor by all constituents and is especially beneficial for immigrant clients who are able to receive vocational English training over a longer period of time, while also adapting to and learning about American workplace culture and laws, such as workplace rights.

### Conclusion

A consensus appears to have emerged from reviews of program literature and interviews with various welfare constituencies that taking into account early inefficiencies, the CalWORKs program has operated as planned during the first year of implementation. All of the parties interviewed for this study felt that the new work-first approach mandated by the federal PRWORA and California CalWORKs legislation was a workable method for transitioning people off of aid and helping them achieve self-sufficiency. The TANF clients interviewed for this research were not opposed to working. What they wanted and needed were support systems and the tools to make this transition possible.

As perceived by agency staff, TANF participants, and DHS employment specialists, several of the programs are doing well in terms of providing good work-readiness training and subsequently finding jobs for program participants. However, some of the programs are not perceived as doing well. Employment specialists said they would not want their clients to attend more than half of the nine community organizations offering such programs. To achieve better economies of scale, perhaps the number of subcontracting agencies offering work readiness and job training services should be

reduced. It seems implausible that all nine agencies could, or will, achieve high program success rates. This sentiment was expressed by the employment specialists interviewed for this research. Their opinion was that those agencies that are doing well should be studied further and possibly expanded.

Staff at the two agencies reviewed for this research were relatively new to the agency and some staff were new to working with the welfare population. Employment specialists voicing negative assessments of particular agencies often cited poor staff quality and poor teaching techniques as the reasons for their dissatisfaction with the agency. This could be attributable to the agency staff having minimal experience.

There is also an overlap between kinds of activities included in work readiness services and those included in job retention services. What has come to light in the past year is that more than half of CalWORKs participants are working, yet they are not earning enough to end their dependency on aid. The County of San Francisco has decided that for the upcoming year, the focus on training (and subsequent funding) will be on those organizations serving underemployed clients who are still on aid—the working poor. These people continue to need advanced work readiness skills training. As they participate in the workforce, they need to keep learning skills to deal with the workplace environment, they need help learning how to identify and develop a career ladder, and they need continued development of their life management skills.

During the first year of implementation, the most job-ready clients have been placed in jobs. However, the preliminary data gathered by the PIC indicates that these people are probably not earning enough to raise their economic status above the poverty

level. The greater challenge will be finding employment for the less qualified job candidates and improving economic conditions for all of the working poor.

### Recommendations for Action and Future Research

The following suggestions are posed as possible future actions and/or research in the area of welfare-to-work training programs offered by nonprofit agencies. Most of the recommendations concern building further relationships between the constituencies and continuing evaluations of programs not only in San Francisco but in other geographic areas as well.

There is a need for better inter-agency communication for line staff. The line staff, such as the instructors at the agencies reviewed, were working independently and generally were not aware of what was occurring at other agencies and had not had any opportunity to meet with other agency instructors. Since most of the curriculum components are similar across agencies, it behooves the staff who are teaching these curricula to learn from other instructors. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, especially if other programs are already achieving high program success rates. The Committee of Contracting Agencies (CCA) formed last year. It is an association of more than 40 nonprofit organizations subcontracting for the Private Industry Council, including organizations providing services to other government programs in addition to CalWORKs. Meetings are usually attended by administrators of the nonprofit agencies, but not by line staff, and it appears the agenda usually focuses on policy issues and not program issues. Perhaps a subcommittee of the CCA could be formed for line staff with the objective of focusing on program issues.

There appears to be a need for better training of staff at nonprofit agencies offering work readiness and job training programs. A few agencies reviewed for this research were credited for having good programs and quality staff; several were not. The implementation of the CalWORKs program has resulted in the hiring of new employees at nonprofit agencies, many of whom may lack experience and knowledge in working with the welfare population and/or the employment development market. A new organization, the Welfare-to-Work Trainers Academy in Alameda, California, has emerged to provide such training to nonprofit organizations. Their objective is to teach client-centered adult development techniques to social service employees so that clients may accelerate their learning and overcome barriers to successful job readiness and job retention. Only a handful of organizations have taken advantage of the workshops offered by the Welfare-to-Work Trainers Academy; more should probably do so.

The numbers of subcontracting agencies offering work readiness and job training programs should be reduced. Better economies of scale can be realized by focusing on those programs achieving high praise and high success rates. At the time this research was conducted, nine agencies were available as candidates for the study; as of September, there were more than 20 agencies with CalWORKs subcontracts. This seems to be too many; not all can, or will, be well run programs and it seems implausible that all will achieve high placement outcomes. There only needs to be a handful of organizations offering good programs. Some should focus on training for particular industries, some should be targeted to limited English speaking participants, and some should utilize a flexible program model while others should utilize a structured program model. Additionally, programs need to be created to meet the needs of the working poor.



Programs offered in the evenings or on weekends would accommodate those people who are working but not earning enough to leave welfare.

There is room for the improvement in communication between agency staff and DHS employment specialists and need for better centralized data collection. The DHS CalWORKs department has created a binder which contains a one-page overview of each of the CBO programs. However, it did not appear that employment specialists utilize this information very much because the data were often not up-to-date. These program specification sheets were usually copies of fliers or written materials provided by the agency. The DHS is in the process of developing an interactive database with which the CBOs can readily update their program information, and employment specialists can enter comments on programs which can immediately be disseminated to the 100 plus person department. Also, client feedback about programs needs to be centralized. Some of the agencies did not solicit participant feedback on their programs and staff. There was no formal evaluative process to determine how participants felt about the agency programs. The DHS has developed a prototype survey instrument and is currently pilot-testing the client satisfaction instrument. It is hoped that this will pave the way for a new “customer-oriented approach” in creating and delivering training services.

Everyone would be better served by development of a forum in which agency staff could share experiences and develop industry “best practices.” In the original welfare-to-work plan, the Private Industry Council was planning to develop a CalWORKs Providers Network which would promote collaborative planning, cross training, and development of common tools and best practices among those providers

citywide who were implementing welfare-to-work programs. However, after the first year of legislative changes, the Network has yet to be formed.

Finally, broadening the geographic area and enlarging the scale on which welfare-to-work programs are evaluated might serve to confirm or disconfirm the findings of this study. Findings may differ from the findings in this research in those counties with less liberal politics and policies than San Francisco. It is possible that an abundance of social service agencies providing support services such as counseling and housing referrals may not exist in small communities. Research data may reveal that support services offered by nonprofit agencies running work readiness programs in small communities are indeed crucial in determining whether a TANF client would complete the program.

Additionally, the agencies reviewed in this research should be re-evaluated after the second and third years of implementation to see if programs are achieving better success, as would be expected after first-year startup kinks and inefficiencies have been worked out of their programs.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Introductory Letter to Contact Person**

**KATHY GUIDI**  
3629 23<sup>rd</sup> Street  
San Francisco, CA 94110  
Email: kathyg@mcm.com, Ph: 415-647-5900

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May [ ], 1999

[contact person]  
[title]  
[agency name]  
[address]  
[address]

Dear [contact person],

Please allow me to introduce myself. I am a second year graduate student studying nonprofit administration at the University of San Francisco and am currently working on my masters thesis. My thesis project involves studying the program factors related to success for single TANF women participating in work readiness programs. My research design uses a qualitative, cross-sectional approach based on observation and in-depth interviews. I plan to interview all the parties involved in aiding a TANF woman through a job readiness program: the providers of the programs (nonprofit organizations), the funders of the programs (DHS), and the clients of the programs (TANF recipients).

Amanda Feinstein of the DHS recommended that I contact your organization. As the recipient of a CalWORKs work readiness contract, your organization is a potential candidate for inclusion in my study. As part of my research, I would like to interview several staff members involved with [agency name] work readiness program as well as several TANF clients in the program. Each interview should not take more than one hour's time and any reference to the organization or any individual's name will be omitted in the completed thesis to protect the party's identification and privacy. A completed copy of my research will be made available to each agency that participates in my study.

Assessing a person as job ready is the first step in transitioning a TANF woman off of welfare and into the workforce. I believe that because of the new five year limitation in which a TANF recipient can receive aid, it is all the more important for a woman to select, or be referred to, the job readiness program best suited to her needs. From my review of the current body of literature on welfare-to-work strategies for job readiness programs, positive factors that may be related to the successful completion of a work readiness program can be categorized into four areas: the program model/structure, the specific curriculum offerings of the program, the philosophy/attitudes of the agency and staff, and the additional support services provided by the agency.

Leaving welfare is a process, not an event. The data collected from this project can serve as the basis for developing an understanding of the important program factors which allow TANF clients to successfully participate in a nonprofit organization's work readiness program as perceived by those parties involved in the process.

I hope [agency name] will be interested in participating in this study. I shall contact you on [date] to talk to you further about my project.

Sincerely,

Kathy Guidi

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Confirmation Letter and Consent Form to Contact Person**



**KATHY GUIDI**  
3629 23<sup>rd</sup> Street  
San Francisco, CA 94110  
Email: kathyg@mcm.com, Ph: 415-647-5900

---

June [ ], 1999

[contact person]  
[title]  
[agency name]  
[address]  
[address]

Dear [contact person],

It was a pleasure to talk with you last Friday.

This letter serves to confirm our appointment for [date], at [time]. I will come to your office to conduct an interview with you which should last no more than one hour's time. The focus of the interview will be on your experiences with the [agency name] job readiness program.

I have enclosed a consent form for your signature. I will need to have your signed agreement to participate in my study at the time of the interview.

I look forward to meeting with you on [date].

Sincerely,

Kathy Guidi

Encl.

## CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

A. Introduction. The principal investigator in this study is Kathy Guidi, graduate student at The University of San Francisco, pursuing a master's degree in Nonprofit Administration. She is collecting data to ascertain the programmatic factors related to success for single TANF women in job readiness programs offered by nonprofit organizations. The data will be used for research purposes only. This agency has been selected to participate in this study because it offers a job readiness program and is one of several CalWORKs contracting agencies to the DHS/PIC.

B. Procedures. If the agency agrees to participate in this study, the following will occur: The researcher will contact several staff members of the agency as deemed appropriate by the agency program director. The researcher will describe the nature of the research project and will provide an overview of the types of questions to be asked during the interview. A mutual time will be arranged for the researcher to meet with the interviewee at the interviewee's place of employment. The interview should not last more than one hour's time.

C. Risks and/or Discomforts. The respondent will be free to decline to answer any question(s) he or she does not wish to answer or to stop participating at any time. All references to the agency's or respondent's name will be omitted in the completed thesis to protect their identification and privacy. The researcher plans to tape record the interviews which may be of concern to the respondent. Once transcribed, the audio tapes will be destroyed. All data will be stored in a personal filing cabinet in a confidential place in the researcher's home. Only the researcher will have access to the data.

D. Benefits. All the parties involved in aiding a TANF woman through a job readiness program stand to benefit from this research. Each agency will receive a copy of the results of this study. The data collected may help each of the constituencies understand which programmatic requirements are needed for TANF clients to successfully participate in a work readiness program. Also, since there is a substantial lack of empirical research on program specific offerings by nonprofit organizations in the field of welfare-to-work services, the data collected will add to the body of literature in this growing field.

E. Costs. I understand that there are no costs to me as a result of acceptance to participate in this study.

F. Reimbursements. I understand that I will not be reimbursed for participation in the survey.

G. Questions. If I have any questions about this research project, I may contact Kathy Guidi at 415-647-5900. If further questions arise about this study, I may contact the IRBPHS at the University of San Francisco, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS office by calling 415-422-6091 and leaving a voice message, by e-mailing [IRBPHS@usfca.edu](mailto:IRBPHS@usfca.edu), or by writing to the IRBPHS, Department of Psychology, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton St., San Francisco, CA, 94117-1080.

H. Participation in Research is Voluntary. I am free to decline to participate in this study.

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Interview Guide A – TANF Recipients**

Interview Guide A for Work Readiness Program clients.

1. How many of you, if any, have gone through another agency's work readiness program before coming to \_\_\_\_\_ [name of agency]?
2. What in particular, if anything at all, did you like about the program's curriculum?  
*[Probe for: computer training, money management, interviews, resumes, etc]*

Was there anything you did not like about the curriculum?

3. What, if anything at all, did you like about the program structure/model?  
*[Probe for: class size, single-sex classroom, attendance requirements, offered continuum of services, length of time]*

Was there anything you did not like about the program structure?

4. What additional support services, if any at all, did you find aided you in your ability to attend this program? *[Probe for: support services – childcare, transportation, counseling, referrals]*
5. What, if anything at all, did you like about the agency's staff ?  
*[Probe for: adjectives describing staff: friendly, motivational, uncaring, helpful, knowledgeable, resourceful, strict, dedicated]*

Was there anything you did not like about the staff?

6. Is there any one thing that you feel is a key factor in enabling you to complete this program at this agency?
7. Are there any areas of this program that you did not like?
8. Was anything NOT available to you that might have made it easier to complete this program?
9. Is there anything else I should have asked you about your experience in this program?

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Interview Guide B – Nonprofit Staff**

## Interview Guide B for Nonprofit Agency program director/line staff.

### [Background]:

1. What is your role at this agency in relation to working with TANF clients?
2. How long have you been working here?
3. How long have you been working in this field?

### [Questions]:

1. What are the strengths of your program? *[probe for: curriculum, services, staff, program structure. Depending on response, ask questions 2-5].*
2. Are there some areas that need development/improvement?
3. Let's talk about your curriculum. What do you feel are the distinguishing features of the program's curriculum?
4. Describe to me your program structure.
5. Based on your experience, what do you feel are the important ancillary/support services the agency provides that enable a TANF client to successfully complete your program?
6. What distinguishing characteristics of your staff would you say enable TANF clients to successfully complete your program?
7. Is there anything else I should have asked you about your program?

## APPENDIX E

### Interview Guide C – Employment Specialists



### Interview Guide C for DHS Employment Specialists.

1. How long have you been employed at the DHS?
2. How long have you been working as an employment specialist?
3. Please describe to me how you determine which work readiness program you recommend to TANF clients.
4. Based on your experience, are there certain program features you consider important to a TANF client's ability to succeed in a program, and if so, which ones?
5. Do you look for certain distinguishing curriculum features when recommending a nonprofit work readiness program to a TANF client? If so, which ones?
6. Does the fact that a nonprofit offering a work readiness program also offers ancillary services factor into your determination of which program you recommend to a TANF client? If so, which services do you consider most important?
7. Are there any characteristics of a nonprofit organization's staff which factor into your recommendation to a TANF client?
8. What do you look for in your TANF clients in order to determine to which program you will send them to?
9. Is there anything else I should have asked you?

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Employment Specialists Presentation Handout**

KATHY GUIDI  
3629 23<sup>rd</sup> Street  
San Francisco, CA 94110  
Email: kathyg@mcm.com, Ph: 415-647-5900

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*Understanding the Role of the Employment Specialist in  
Welfare-to-Work*

Several respondents are needed to participate in a short, confidential interview on work readiness.

I am pursuing my masters degree in Nonprofit Administration at the University of San Francisco. I have worked with TANF clients in a variety of capacities and have chosen, as part of my thesis project, to study the effects of welfare reform on TANF clients who have participated in work readiness programs. This project entails talking with staff at nonprofit agencies offering work readiness programs; single, female TANF recipients who have completed work readiness programs; and several Employment Specialists. My objective is to compare the perceptions of these three parties as it relates to their thoughts on which program factors allow for the greatest completion rates for program participants.

In my study of the welfare to work program, it is clear that a most important role is played by the Employment Specialist. Given the new five year limitation in which a person can receive aid, it is all the more important for clients to select, or be referred to, the job readiness and retention program best suited to their needs. As the first point of contact for new TANF recipients, obtaining your experience in working with TANF clients is vital to my study!

I need several people to talk briefly with me about the referral process. Participation in this study is strictly confidential and anonymous. I am interested in learning about the referral process itself, the agencies you prefer to work with and why, and getting your insight into the aspects of the program which are important for success. The interview consists of six questions and should take no longer than one-half hour.

Results of the study will be made to members of the PIC, DHS, community based organizations and the San Francisco Urban Institute. This is an opportunity to share your ideas and experiences!

If interested, please contact me by August 25, 1999.