

Serving Low-Wage Workers at the Dayton Job Center: A Survey of a One-Stop

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This paper describes the results of a late 2003 survey of walk-in customers entering the Job Center, a One-Stop established by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, in Montgomery County (Dayton), Ohio. The Job Center houses nearly 50 different agencies providing a wide array of services, including the county's workforce and welfare offices. This survey — one of the first of its kind — was conducted to inform program development for MDRC's national Work Advancement and Support Center (WASC) demonstration. This project targets low-wage workers and their employers, and is aimed at increasing rates of job retention, job advancement, and receipt of financial work supports (including child care subsidies, food stamps, and government health insurance).¹ Together with the South County Career Center in San Diego, the Dayton Job Center is one of two "learning" sites, selected to develop and refine program services during the demonstration planning period, prior to selecting three to five additional sites.

Key Findings

- Over one-third (35 percent) of the customers entering the Job Center were already employed, a much higher proportion than for many One-Stops across the country. Although most were working full-time (63 percent), they tended to have low-paying jobs with few employer-sponsored benefits.
- Employed customers took advantage of the wide range of services located at the Dayton Jobs Center, including both employment services and financial work supports. In fact, the most commonly cited reasons for visiting the Job Center were to access food stamps and publicly-financed medical insurance for low-income families (Medicaid and the Child Health Insurance Program [CHIP]).
- Relatively few employed customers were receiving all the major work supports available (the child care subsidy, food stamps, and Medicaid/CHIP). Among those² most likely to be eligible (working parents earning less than \$8 per hour), only 13 percent were receiving all of these supports, and just 27 percent received any two supports. However, 69 percent were receiving at least one of them.

Working Customer Characteristics

About one-third of the customers (35 percent) entering the Job Center were employed, and 63 percent of those employed were working full-time. Of those who were working, over 80 percent were supporting children and nearly one-quarter was married. Fifty-eight percent of employed customers had at least one child under the age of five (see Table 1).

Table 2 illustrates that most employees were working in jobs with low wages. Nearly half of working individuals (46 percent) were making under \$8 per hour, and only 17 percent were earning more than \$12 per hour.

Not surprisingly, part-time workers tended to have lower wages than full-time workers (see Table 2) and were often half as likely to have employer-sponsored benefits (see Table 3 and Table 4). About half of workers who earned \$10 or less per hour did not receive benefits from their employer (not shown).

Receipt of Work Supports and Other Services

The survey asked customers about the public benefits that they were receiving to supplement their income and support their work effort — including subsidized child care, food stamps, medical insurance, and partial welfare grants. Employed customers seemed to understand that work supports can be accessed at the Job Center. When asked about why they came in that day, 41 percent said they were coming in for food stamps, 21 percent for Medicaid/CHIP, and 9 percent for child care assistance (see Table 5). In fact, working customers were more likely to be coming to the Job Center to access a major work support than to receive job placement/readiness services and education or training services (61 percent vs. 18 percent).³

In Ohio, a family of three (one adult and two children) with a full-time worker earning less than \$8 per hour is likely to be eligible to receive a child care subsidy, food stamps, and children's health insurance, and yet the vast majority of working parents earning less than \$8 per hour in Dayton (88 percent) were not receiving the full package of these supports, even though 69 percent were receiving at least one of them. The most common supports received by working parents were food stamps and medical insurance (53 and 51 percent, respectively). Nearly one-quarter of these working parents with children under 12 were receiving government-sponsored child care assistance (23.5 percent), and less than ten percent received welfare (see Table 6).

Not surprisingly, overall, part-time workers were more likely than full-time workers to receive any major work support (78 percent vs. 63 percent), reflecting their lower earnings and, therefore, increased likelihood of eligibility for work supports. However, this survey suggests that a considerable number of individuals and families who are eligible for work supports are not receiving them.

¹ The project is being supported by the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Ford, Rockefeller, Casey, Irvine, and Packard Foundations. The survey was administered at the Dayton Job Center between November 5 and December 2, 2003. A total of 783 customers were surveyed (every tenth customer that entered the Job Center); 274 of these were employed.

² The survey provides a very rough approximation of the proportion of low-wage workers who are not receiving the work supports for which they may be eligible. The lower the wage rate, the more likely the worker and his/her family is to be eligible. In this case, we looked specifically at working parents earning \$8 per hour or less, rather than \$10 or less, because it increases the likelihood that the family is eligible. The child care subsidy was not included as a work support for workers with no children or with children aged 12 and older. It is important to note, however, that the survey did not ask for household income or composition, which are two major factors for determining eligibility for most work supports. Also, for this paper, we did not include findings about work supports administered through the tax system: the Earned Income Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit.

³ Another 26 percent came in for "other" reasons that were not specified.

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APPENDIX

Table 1 – Working People

Percent	
Employed	
Part-time	37.1
Full-time	62.9
Have at least one child less than 19 years old	81.0
Age of youngest child	
aged 0-4	57.5
aged 5-11	29.5
aged 12-18	13.0
Married	22.9
Sample size*	274

*Sample size varies across items; maximum sample size reported.

Table 2 – Wages

Percent	Working Full-time	Working Part-time	Total
Wage			
Less than \$8	38.5	60.2	46.4
\$8-\$10	26.6	26.5	26.6
\$10.01-\$12	10.1	9.2	9.7
More than \$12	24.9	4.1	17.2
Sample size*	169	98	267

*Sample size includes working respondents who answered items about hours and wages.

Table 3 – Employer-sponsored Benefits by Wage (by Percent)

	Working Full-time			Working Part-time		
	Under \$8	\$8.01- \$10.00	Over \$10	Under \$8	\$8.01- \$10.00	Over \$10**
Health insurance	31.1	41.2	82.5	21.2	43.5	-
Paid sick leave	21.8	48.6	71.4	6.5	31.6	-
Paid vacation	39.0	65.7	81.0	18.4	50.0	-
Paid holidays	43.3	63.2	76.8	24.0	59.1	-
Sample size*	65	45	59	59	26	-

*Sample size includes all working respondents who answered items about hours and wages.

Within this sample the number of non-missing responses varies by item.

**Sample size too small to provide reliable percentages for this column.

Table 4 – Receiving Employer-sponsored Benefits (by Percent)

	Working Full-time	Working Part-time	Total
Health insurance	52.6	27.8	43.3
Paid sick leave	47.3	13.9	35.5
Paid vacation	61.7	25.9	48.8
Paid holidays	60.3	32.6	50.2
Sample Size*	169	98	267

*Sample size includes all working respondents who answered items about hours. Within this sample the number of non-missing responses varies by item.

Table 5 – Reasons Why Employed Respondents Came to the Job Center

Why did you come to the Job Center today? (Check all that apply)	Percent
For food stamps	40.6
For medical insurance	21.9
For job placement or job readiness services	15.7
For child care	10.2
For education or training services	9.1
For TANF	8.0
For unemployment insurance	0.7
For “other” reason	25.6
Percent who mentioned more than one reason for coming to the Job Center	13.2
Percent who came for work supports vs. job placement/job readiness, education, or training services	
Came for one of the three major work supports (food stamps, medical insurance, child care)	61.4
Came for job placement / job readiness, education, or training services, not above work supports	17.7
Sample size*	274

*Sample size includes all working respondents.

Table 6 – Work Support Receipt (by Percent)

	Under \$8	\$8.01-\$10.00	Over \$10**	Total
Working Full-time				
Food Stamps	43.1	37.8	15.3	32.2
Medicaid/CHIP	36.9	28.9	13.6	26.3
Child care ¹	17.1	33.3	17.9	23.1
Any of the above 3	56.9	62.2	28.8	49.1
Any 1 of the above 3	30.8	37.8	22.0	30.4
Any 2 of the above 3	18.5	20.0	5.1	14.0
The full package ²	8.5	4.7	2.1	5.3
Welfare	3.1	0.0	1.7	1.8
Sample Size*	65	45	59	169
Working Part-time				
Food Stamps	50.8	42.3	-	45.5
Medicaid/CHIP	35.6	34.6	-	35.6
Child care	30.0	35.3	-	29.0
Any of the above 3	64.4	69.2	-	63.4
Any 1 of the above 3	32.2	42.3	-	33.7
Any 2 of the above 3	22.0	23.1	-	21.8
The full package	11.1	4.0	-	8.5
Welfare	8.5	7.7	-	6.9
Sample Size*	59	26	-	98
Working (Total)				
Food Stamps	46.8	39.4	18.1	36.9
Medicaid/CHIP	36.3	31.0	18.1	29.6
Child care	23.5	34.0	18.4	25.3
Any of the above 3	60.5	64.8	31.9	54.0
Any 1 of the above 3	31.5	39.4	20.8	31.4
Any 2 of the above 3	20.2	21.1	8.3	16.8
The full package	9.7	4.4	3.4	6.5
Welfare	5.6	2.8	1.4	3.6
Sample Size*	124	71	72	267

*Sample size includes all working respondents who answered items about hours and wages. Within this sample the number of non-missing responses varies by item.

**Sample size too small to provide reliable percentages for part-time workers in this column.

¹ The proportion of respondents receiving child care is calculated among those with children less than 12 years old, although the actual cutoff for receiving a child care subsidy in Dayton is the day before a child's 13th birthday, unless s/he qualifies as having special needs.

² For respondents with children younger than 12 years old, "the full package" of major work supports includes a child care subsidy, food stamps, and Medicaid/CHIP, while for respondents without children younger than 12 years old "the full package" of major work supports includes food stamps and Medicaid.