



Employment Coaching



Employment coaching involves a collaborative, goal setting process between a coach and client to help the client get a job and build the skills necessary to achieve their goals (OPRE 2019). Clients typically identify challenges to getting and keeping a job such as child care, transportation, or time management skills, and then develop strategies and set goals to help overcome these challenges. The employment coach encourages and supports clients during this self-directed process. Strategies for overcoming challenges might include referrals to affordable child care, financial assistance for a bus pass, or exercises to help improve self-regulation skills. Examples of goals clients might set include identifying possible job interests, identifying potential employers, or applying to one or more jobs. The Pathways Clearinghouse classified interventions as using an employment coaching approach if the authors of the reviewed research used the term “employment coaching,” or a variation such as “job coaching,” in describing the intervention. Because the Pathways Clearinghouse relies on the author's choice of words, the services actually implemented in these interventions may differ.

The primary case manager working with the client is often the employment coach, but other staff can also act as a coach (for example, someone training clients in a specialized skill). Employment coaching can be delivered individually or in a group. It is often delivered in a social services office but could happen elsewhere, for example, at a coffee shop or place of employment or virtually.¹ Coaching differs from case management and referrals to supportive services in that the client plays an active role in identifying and addressing challenges, and that the coach uses the process of coaching to build the client's skills. Employment coaching is almost always offered as part of a bundle of other services or policies, such as case management or financial sanctions for nonparticipation.

What is employment coaching?

The Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse defines employment coaching as intensive, collaborative assistance with identifying and addressing employment barriers and goals. However, employment coaching can be defined in different ways and the Pathways Clearinghouse relied on authors' language and definitions to classify interventions.

What are evidence snapshots?

Evidence snapshots are short briefs on the effectiveness of programs that use a common approach to service provision. These briefs draw on interventions that the Pathways Clearinghouse has reviewed. They summarize what we know about programs that use a specific service (such as employment coaching) or a common service-delivery strategy (such as career pathways).

What is the Pathways Clearinghouse?

The Pathways Clearinghouse identifies interventions that aim to improve employment and earnings for populations with low income, especially public benefits recipients. The Pathways Clearinghouse conducts a transparent, comprehensive search for studies of such interventions, rates the quality of those studies to assess the strength of the evidence they provide, and determines the evidence of effectiveness for the studied interventions.

For more information, visit the Pathways Clearinghouse website: <https://pathwaystowork.acf.hhs.gov/>.

What does the evidence say?

The Pathways Clearinghouse identified 18 interventions that used employment coaching. In only one case was employment coaching the primary focus of the intervention, or primary service.² All the other interventions used other primary services in combination with employment coaching. In cases where employment coaching was not the primary service, the results may be driven by other services and not employment coaching. However, the common usage of coaching as a service makes it useful to examine the evidence for these interventions as a group. The 18 interventions were described in 22 studies of high or moderate quality that examined employment, earnings, public benefit receipt, and education and training outcomes.³ Pathways considered earnings, employment, and public benefit receipt findings in both the short term (18 or fewer months) and long term (between 18 months and 5 years). In looking across these studies, we can observe the following, relative to comparison groups that did not receive the intervention services:⁴



Short-term annual earnings increased by \$696 and long-term annual earnings increased by \$639, on average, across the 14 interventions that measured the impact of employment coaching on earnings. Six of the 14 interventions increased clients' earnings in either the short term or the long term.



Short-term and long-term employment increased by an average of 1 percentage point across the 16 interventions that examined these outcomes. Five of the 16 interventions increased employment in the short term, but no individual intervention increased long-term employment.



On average, short-term public benefit receipt did not change, long-term public benefit receipt increased by 1 percentage point, and the amount of public benefits received increased by \$30 in the short term and \$137 in the long term. The studies focused on receipt of benefits from public benefit programs like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Supplemental Security Income, and unemployment insurance. There is no evidence that any individual intervention decreased public benefit receipt or public benefit amounts in the short or long term.



Education and training attainment increased by 13 percentage points across the six studies that measured changes in education. Three interventions with employment coaching increased education and training attainment, meaning the receipt of a degree or credential.



Three interventions with employment coaching improved more than one type of outcome. Two employment coaching interventions had positive impacts on three or more outcomes examined by the Pathways Clearinghouse: [Good Transitions](#) and [Supporting Families Through Work \(SFTW\)](#). Both interventions also provided work-based learning experiences for several months. Additionally, [Broadened Horizons Brighter Futures \(BHBF\)](#), which also provided case management, improved two outcomes.

Employment Coaching as a Primary Service

Vocational Coaching to Enhance Multisystemic Therapy for Emerging Adults (MST-EA) was the only intervention that used employment coaching as a primary service, meaning coaching was the principal focus of the intervention. The MST-EA program provided two one-hour sessions of individualized vocational coaching each week to young adults in areas of employment, education, health, housing, parenting, and financial literacy. The coaches provided vocational support with a focus on each of these specific support areas for three to seven sessions. Clients typically received the intervention over an average of seven to eight months. There was either insufficient or no evidence to assess support for MST-EA for all groups of outcomes considered by the Pathways Clearinghouse.

How does the Pathways Clearinghouse assess if an intervention is effective?

The Pathways Clearinghouse assigned an evidence of effectiveness rating to each intervention in each of four outcome domains: earnings, employment, public benefit receipt, and education and training. Most of the domains are broken into short (18 or fewer months) and long term (between 18 months and five years) because we expect the interventions might have different effects in different time periods.⁵ The education and training domain is not broken into time periods because after you obtain a degree, you cannot lose it in future time periods. The evidence of effectiveness rating describes whether the intervention is likely to produce favorable results in that domain if faithfully replicated with a similar population. If an intervention had no evidence to assess support in any domain, we excluded it from this brief.

There are six ratings:

- ★ **Well-supported** means there are at least two moderate- or high-quality studies with favorable findings.
- ⬆️ **Supported** means there is one moderate- or high-quality study with favorable findings.
- ⚖️ **Mixed support** means there is some evidence that the intervention improves outcomes and some evidence the intervention worsens outcomes
- ⊗ **Not supported** means moderate- or high-quality studies did not find any favorable results.
- ⊘ **Insufficient evidence to assess support** means there are moderate- and high-quality studies but we cannot assign one of the other ratings.
- **No evidence to assess support** means there are no moderate- or high-quality studies.

No intervention with employment coaching received the well-supported rating in the outcome domains of interest to the Pathways Clearinghouse. Nine interventions that use employment coaching received a supported rating in at least one outcome domain. Pathways considers statistical significance to be support for the existence of an effect of an intervention. Pathways considers an effect estimate statistically significant if the *p*-value of a two-sided hypothesis test of whether the effect is equal to zero is less than 0.05. A *p*-value is the probability of observing an effect estimate as large or larger than the one observed, if there were no actual effect.

Evaluations compared the outcomes of study participants in the intervention group to the outcomes of participants in a comparison group who were not offered the intervention but who might have received alternative services. People in the comparison group either had access to (1) other services provided by the organization or available in the community (about 75 percent of the studies examining an intervention including employment coaching) or (2) a less intensive version of services (about 25 percent of the studies).⁶

How does the Pathways Clearinghouse calculate the average impact of an intervention?

For this brief, the Pathways Clearinghouse calculated the average impact for each domain by averaging impacts within moderate and high quality studies, then within interventions, and then across interventions that use employment coaching. The average includes all studies, not just those with a supported rating or statistically significant findings, because these studies still provide useful evidence in considering the overall effectiveness of employment coaching. We show the average and not the median because, for the most part, there are no outliers skewing the average.

What makes an effect large?

The Pathways Clearinghouse classifies an effect as large if its corresponding effect size is more than 0.25 standard deviations. The effect size is the strength of the effect measured in standard units (that is, standard deviations). In 2018, an increase in annual earnings of \$5,229 among people with low incomes would have an effect size of about 0.25.

What interventions use employment coaching?

The Pathways Clearinghouse defines an intervention as a specific bundle of services or policies implemented in a given context. Exhibit 1 alphabetically lists and describes the eighteen interventions that use employment coaching,

including information about the populations served by the intervention, the setting where the intervention was provided, and when the evaluation was conducted. It also contains the effectiveness rating for each domain.

Exhibit 1. Interventions that use employment coaching and their effectiveness by domain

Intervention description	Primary service*	Populations and employment barriers	Settings	Year evaluation began	Increase earnings	Increase employment	Decrease public benefit receipt**	Increase education and training
★ well-supported ⬆ supported ⚖ mixed support ✖ not supported ⚪ insufficient evidence ○ no evidence								
<u>Broadened Horizons, Brighter Futures (BHBF)</u> Sought to improve economic self-sufficiency among youth who were receiving Social Security Administration disability benefits. BHBF provided person-centered planning, employment and education services, case management, financial work incentives, work-based experience, and job development. Coaches checked in with participants frequently in the first few weeks after they secured employment.	Case management	People with disabilities, young adults (ages 16 to 24)	Urban only	2008	⬆	⬆	⚖	⚖
<u>Building Nebraska Families (BNF)</u> Provided customized support through home visitation to rural TANF recipients to improve job readiness, life skills, and family management practices, and to assist in the transition to economic independence. Educators provided informal coaching on a range of personal and work topics, including resolving legal issues, applying for financial aid, and managing stress.	Soft skills training	Cash assistance recipients, parents	Rural only	2002	⚖	⬆	⚖	○
<u>Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) Prisoner Reentry Program</u> Provided people who were formerly incarcerated with a preemployment class, temporary paid jobs with New York City agencies, job coaching, job development, a parenting class, and post-placement services to reduce recidivism and improve labor market prospects. Participants met with job coaches weekly to discuss their job performance and to prepare for future interviews.	Transitional jobs	People who were formerly incarcerated	Urban only	2004	⚖	⚖	○	○

Intervention description	Primary service*	Populations and employment barriers	Settings	Year evaluation began	Increase earnings	Increase employment	Decrease public benefit receipt**	Increase education and training
★ well-supported ↑ supported ⊖ mixed support ✖ not supported ⊕ insufficient evidence ○ no evidence								
Enhanced Job Club (EJC) Provided classroom activities and targeted job search activities to help unemployed recipients of TANF retain and advance future employment. Participants received up to five weeks of group and individual employment coaching.	Work-readiness activities	Unemployed, parents, single parents, cash assistance recipients	Urban only	2004	⊕	⊕	⊕	○
Good Transitions Provided noncustodial parents who had low income with subsidized employment combined with case management and training to help them connect to stable employment. On-site job coaches provided feedback and support for one month. Lighter touch job coaching lasted another three months.	Subsidized employment	Noncustodial parents	Urban only	2012	↑	↑	⊕	↑
Madison Strategies Group WorkAdvance Program Aimed to meet the needs of less-skilled workers and local employers by providing training and employment services in fields with high local demand. Preemployment coaching consisted of one-on-one meetings and weekly group meetings.	Occupational or sectoral training	People with low incomes	Urban only	2011	⊕	⊕	⊕	○
Minnesota Tier 2 Aimed to increase workforce participation for long-term TANF recipients who were still not working after participating in Tier 1, the existing welfare-to-work program. Case managers provided up to six weeks of employment coaching support.	Work and work-based learning	Unemployed, parents, single parents, cash assistance recipients, long-term cash assistance recipients	Urban only	2002	⊕	⊕	⊕	○
Per Scholas Sectoral Employment Program Provided a computer technician training program, internships, soft-skills training, and supportive services to participants who had low incomes to help them obtain computer certification and find jobs in the information technology sector. Support included individualized career coaching.	Occupational or sectoral training	People with low incomes; high school diploma or GED	Urban only	2003	↑	✖	⊕	○

Intervention description	Primary service*	Populations and employment barriers	Settings	Year evaluation began	Increase earnings	Increase employment	Decrease public benefit receipt**	Increase education and training
★ well-supported ⬆ supported ⚪ mixed support ✖ not supported ⚪ insufficient evidence ○ no evidence								
<p><u>Progress Towards Retention, Opportunities, Growth, Enhancement and Self-Sufficiency (PROGRESS)</u></p> <p>Aimed to help recent TANF recipients maintain their employment and advance in their careers. PROGRESS provided intensive team-based case management designed to help TANF recipients successfully navigate the challenges of employment and access education, training, and supportive services. Career development specialists helped participants develop a career development plan and provided individualized career counseling with a focus on meeting career goals.</p>	Case management	Employed, parents, single parents	Urban only	2002	⚪	⚪	⚪	○
<p><u>Self-Sufficiency Project-Plus (SSP-Plus)</u></p> <p>Sought to encourage employment among Canadian Income Assistance recipients by offering a generous earnings subsidy and job search and employment services. Job coaching was available to participants while they looked for a job and after they started working.</p>	Financial incentives	Parents, single parents, cash assistance recipients	Tested in multiple settings	1994	○	○	⚪	○
<p><u>St. Nick's Alliance WorkAdvance Program</u></p> <p>Aimed to meet the needs of less-skilled workers and local employers by providing training and employment services in fields with high local demand. Preemployment coaching consisted of one-on-one sessions, and coaches followed up with participants two to three times per week during the job search process.</p>	Occupational or sectoral training	People with low incomes	Urban only	2011	⚪	⬆	⚪	○

Intervention description	Primary service*	Populations and employment barriers	Settings	Year evaluation began	Increase earnings	Increase employment	Decrease public benefit receipt**	Increase education and training
★ well-supported ⬆ supported ⚪ mixed support ✖ not supported ⚪ insufficient evidence ○ no evidence								
<p><u>Success Through Employment Preparation (STEP)</u> (as compared to Transitional Jobs Program at the Transitional Work Corporation (TWC))</p> <p>Supported TANF recipients in securing jobs through intensive case management, assessments to determine barriers to employment, activities tailored to overcoming their barriers, and employment coaching and job development. This evaluation directly compared STEP to a separate intervention, TWC, in order to better understand which of the two interventions might be more effective; the distinctive feature of STEP when compared to TWC is the intensive case management approach.*** Participants worked with job coaches to find permanent employment.</p>	Case management	Cash assistance recipients, Specific employment barriers	Urban only	2004	⚪	⚪	⚪	○
<p><u>Supporting Families Through Work (SFTW)</u></p> <p>Provided noncustodial parents with low incomes with support to find transitional jobs; SFTW's goal was to improve employment outcomes and clients' ability to pay child support. Case managers also served as job coaches and helped match participants to transitional jobs based on their skills and interests.</p>	Transitional jobs	Parents	Urban only	2011	⬆	⬆	⚪	⬆
<p><u>Towards Employment WorkAdvance Program</u></p> <p>Aimed to meet the needs of less-skilled workers and local employers by providing training and employment services in fields with high local demand. Coaches met with participants in groups and one-on-one up to three times per week during the job search process.</p>	Occupational or sectoral training	People with low incomes	Urban only	2011	⚪	⚪	⚪	⬆
<p><u>Transition WORKS</u></p> <p>Aimed to empower youth receiving disability benefits from the Social Security Administration and maximize their economic self-sufficiency through a series of self-determination workshops, education and employment services, case management, financial incentives, work-based experience, and job development. After completing the self-determination workshops, participants had access to job coaching for up to 18 months.</p>	Work-readiness activities	People with disabilities, young adults (ages 16 to 24)	Tested in multiple settings	2007	⬆	⚪	⚪	⚪

Intervention description	Primary service*	Populations and employment barriers	Settings	Year evaluation began	Increase earnings	Increase employment	Decrease public benefit receipt**	Increase education and training
★ well-supported ⬆ supported ⚪ mixed support ✖ not supported ⚪ insufficient evidence ○ no evidence								
<u>Transition, Advancement, and Growth (TAAG) Program</u> Provided employment-related retention and advancement services to help workers with low incomes maintain their jobs and move up in the labor market. Job coaching was focused on retention and advancement skills like conflict resolution and how to have conversations about pay raises.	Employment retention services	Employed, parents, single parents	Urban only	2002	⬆	⚪	⚪	○
<u>Vocational Coaches to Enhance Multisystemic Therapy for Emerging Adults (MST-EA)</u> Provided emerging adults with weekly, individualized vocational coaching in addition to the MST-EA to improve their short-term employment outcomes. Over seven to eight months, coaches covered topics like employment, education, health, housing, parenting, and financial literacy.	Employment coaching	People who were formerly incarcerated, people with mental illness, young adults (ages 16 to 24)	Tested in multiple settings	2011	○	⚪	○	○
<u>Workforce Training Academy (WTA) Connect</u> Offered occupational training, academic advising, and employment services to prepare participants for enrollment in the WTA. Coaches helped participants enroll in WTA and identify and address barriers to employment.	Occupational or sectoral training	People with low incomes	Urban only	2012	○	○	○	⚪

Table notes:

* An intervention's primary service is the principal service of the intervention.

** The decrease public benefit receipt ratings in this table are from the Pathways Clearinghouse website and combine outcomes related to both public benefit receipt and public benefit amount. Later in this report, we break out the outcomes by public benefit receipt and public benefit amount. That means the ratings listed in this column may or may not line up with data presented in the text and graphs in this report.

*** STEP measured impacts on earnings, but did not include enough information for us to calculate an effect size. Therefore, STEP is not included in the average calculation or the earnings graphs in this report.

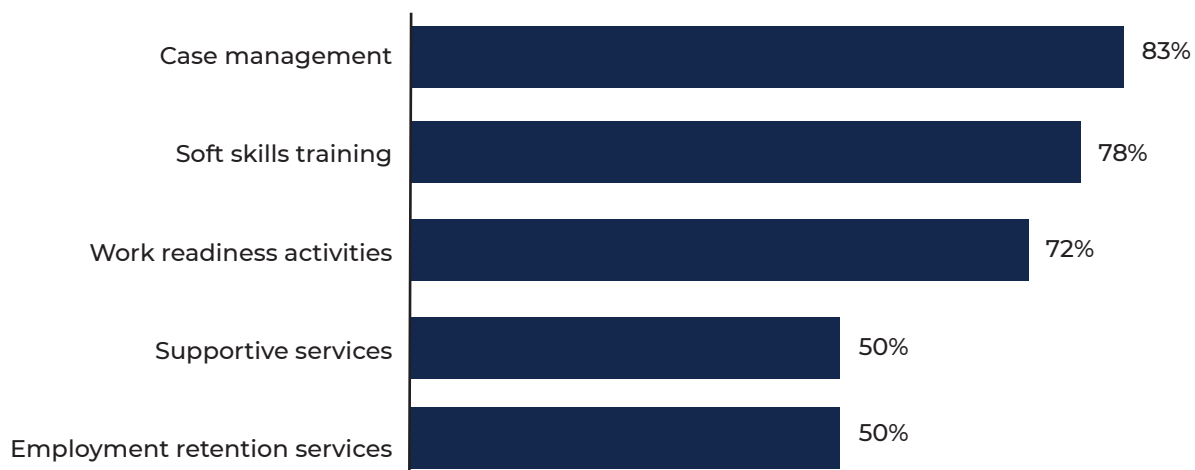
How were the interventions implemented?

Understanding how interventions were implemented is crucial to deciding whether an intervention is likely to have a similar impact in your community. Most of the interventions were provided by nonprofit or public-sector organizations, like TANF or workforce agencies. Only two interventions included mandatory services: (1) the job search activities that were part of the Enhanced Job Club intervention and (2) participation in the Minnesota Tier 2 program. The length of services varied widely from five weeks to three years. Interventions that delivered services for longer tended to provide more intensive services in the beginning and less intensive services later in the program. The populations, settings, and timing of interventions that used employment coaching also varied (Exhibit 1). Employment coaching has been used with many different populations, including parents, individuals who are unemployed and

those who are employed, youth, and cash assistance recipients. Most interventions that use employment coaching have been implemented in urban settings, but some have been tried in other settings. One evaluation began in the 1990s, nine began in the 2000s, and eight began after 2010.⁷ The Pathways Clearinghouse website (<https://pathwaystowork.acf.hhs.gov/>) includes more detail about each intervention.

In the interventions examined, employment coaching was nearly always bundled with other policies or services (see Exhibit 2). Most interventions that use employment coaching also provided case management (83 percent), soft-skills training (78 percent), or work readiness activities (72 percent). Half of the interventions (50 percent) offered supportive services and half (50 percent) offered employment retention services.

Exhibit 2. Other services offered with employment coaching, out of 16 interventions⁸



Percent of employment coaching interventions that provide service

Does employment coaching increase earnings?



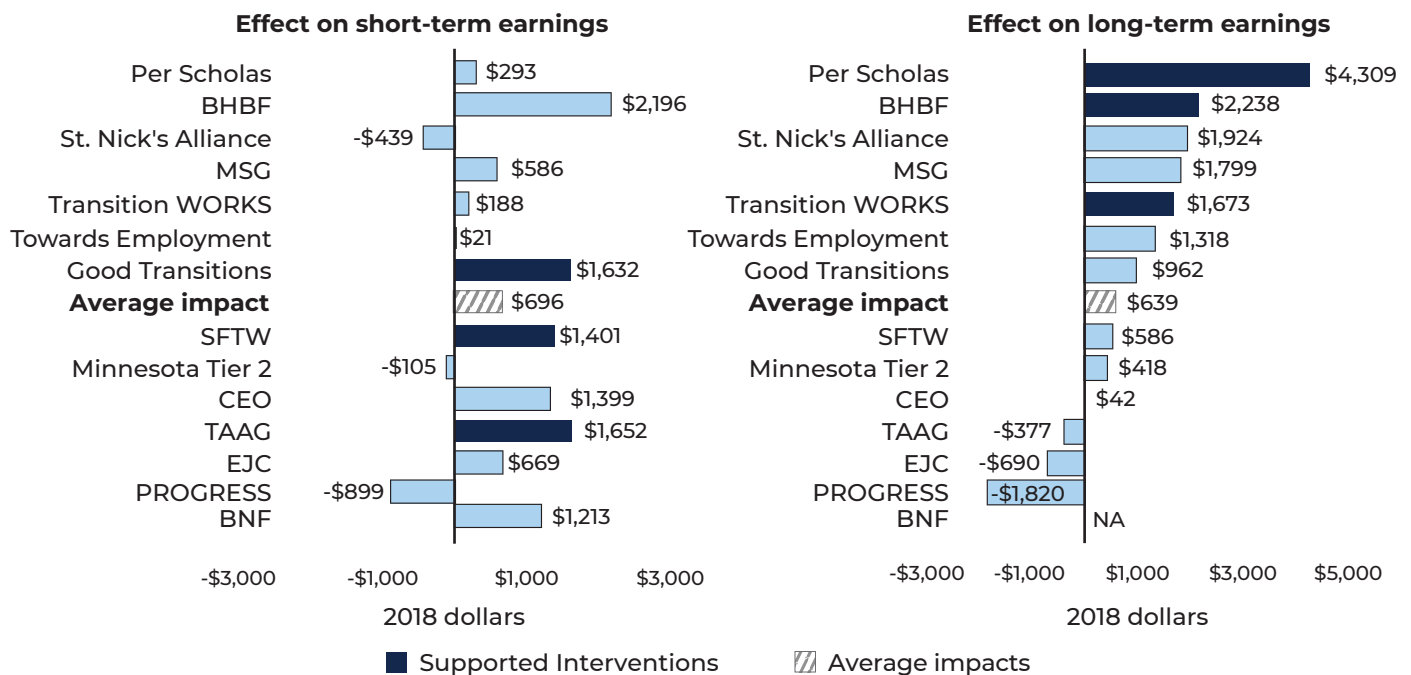
Short-term annual earnings increased by \$696, and long-term annual earnings increased by \$639, on average, across the high and moderate rated research on the 14 interventions that measured an impact on earnings (Exhibit 3), compared with comparison group earnings.

Six of the 14 interventions that used employment coaching improved earnings in the short or long term, compared with comparison group earnings.

Broadened Horizons, Brighter Futures (BHBF); Good Transitions; SFTW; Transition WORKS; the Transition, Advancement, and Growth (TAAG) program; and Per Scholas. However, none of the six interventions increased

earnings in both the short and long terms. TAAG, which provided retention services to employed individuals, and Good Transitions, which offered subsidized jobs to clients, increased short-term annual earnings the most, by \$1,652 and \$1,632, respectively. Per Scholas had the largest impact in the long term, increasing long-term earnings by \$4,309. However, none of the estimated impacts were large as defined by the Pathways Clearinghouse (meaning none of the interventions changed earnings by more than 0.25 standard deviations or an amount equivalent to \$4,854 per year in 2018). Exhibit 3 shows the average impact on earnings for each intervention. Interventions with research that included positive impacts are noted in darker blue.

Exhibit 3. Interventions offering employment coaching, on average, increased short-term earnings and long-term earnings⁹



Interventions are sorted according to the size of the long-term impacts because long-term effects better represent sustained increases in economic self-sufficiency. Supported interventions, meaning interventions with research indicating significant and favorable impacts, are noted in darker blue. NA means an intervention did not measure outcomes at the specified time period. Center for Employment Opportunities = CEO; Broadened Horizons, Brighter Futures = BHBF; Building Nebraska Families = BNF; Enhanced Job Club = EJC; Madison Strategies Group WorkAdvance Program = MSG; Supporting Families Through Work = SFTW; Transition, Advancement, and Growth = TAAG.

Does employment coaching increase employment?



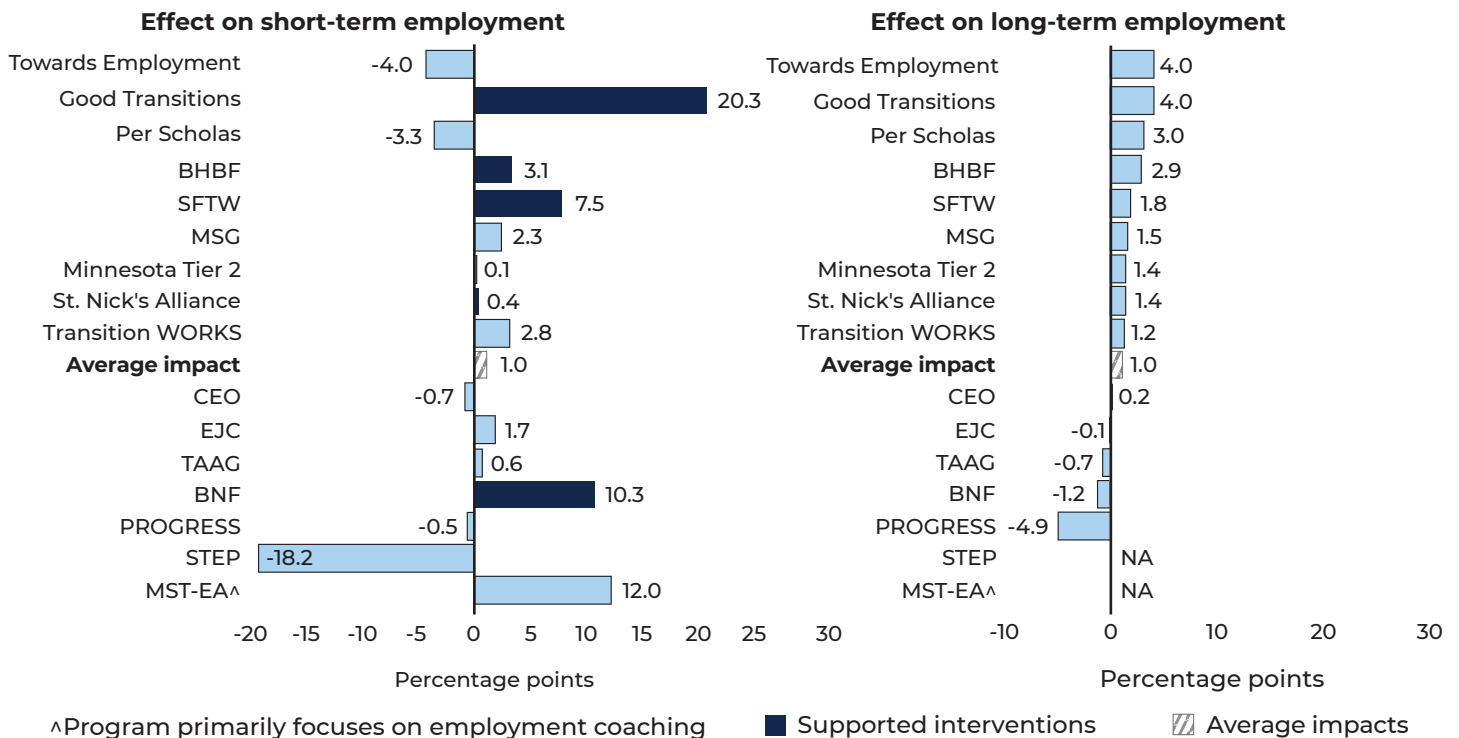
Short-term and long-term employment increased by an average of 1 percentage point across the 16 interventions that examined these outcomes (Exhibit 4), compared with comparison group employment.

Five interventions that use employment coaching increased employment in the short term, compared with comparison group employment. Across studies of 16 interventions that measured short-term employment, BHBF; Building Nebraska Families (BNF); Good Transitions; SFTW; and St. Nick's Alliance improved short-term employment. Good Transitions increased short-term employment by more than 20 percentage points, likely partially because Good Tran-

sitions offered clients a subsidized job for up to four months. SFTW and BNF also had a large and statistically significant impact on short-term employment. The Vocational Coaches to Enhance Multisystemic Therapy for Emerging Adults program, the only program that used employment coaching as a primary service, had a large impact on short-term employment (meaning it had an effect larger than 0.25 standard deviations), but this impact was not statistically significant.

No individual intervention that used employment coaching significantly improved long-term employment, compared with comparison group employment. All impacts estimated on long-term employment were not statistically significant.

Exhibit 4. Interventions offering employment coaching successfully improved short-term employment



Interventions are sorted according to the size of the long-term impacts because long-term effects better represent sustained increases in economic self-sufficiency. Supported interventions, meaning interventions with research indicating significant and favorable impacts, are noted in darker blue. NA means an intervention did not measure outcomes at the specified time period. Center for Employment Opportunities = CEO; Broadened Horizons, Brighter Futures = BHBF; Building Nebraska Families = BNF; Enhanced Job Club = EJC; Madison Strategies Group WorkAdvance Program = MSG; Multisystemic Therapy for Emerging Adults = MST-EA; Supporting Families Through Work = SFTW; Transition, Advancement, and Growth = TAAG.

Does employment coaching decrease public benefit receipt?



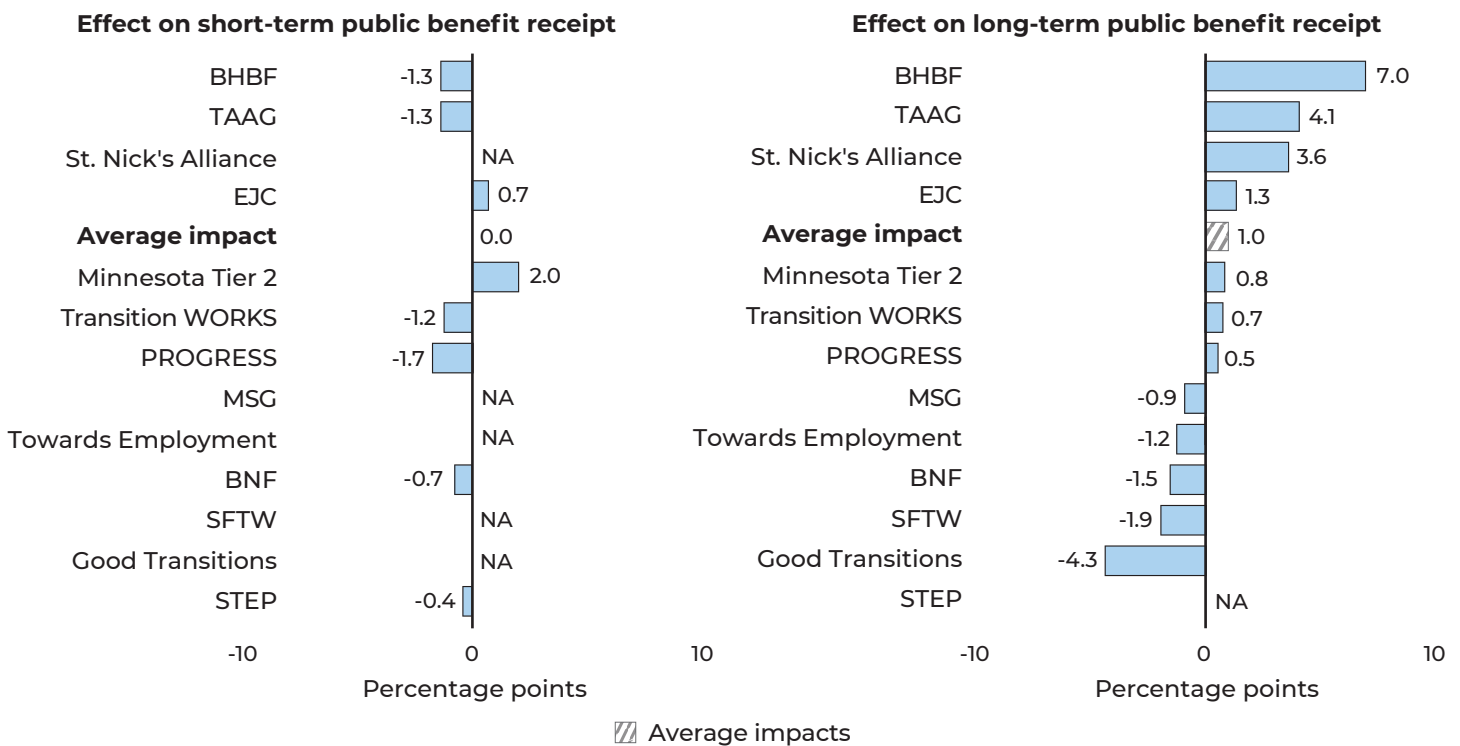
On average, short-term public benefit receipt did not change and long-term public benefit receipt increased by 1 percentage point in intervention relative to comparison groups. The amount of public

benefits received increased by \$30 in the short term and \$137 in the long term in intervention relative to comparison groups. Thirteen interventions estimated impacts on public benefit receipt and seven interventions measured impacts on public benefit amount. Exhibits 5 and 6 show the estimated impact for each intervention on public benefit receipt and amount, respectively.¹⁰

Interventions that use employment coaching did not reduce public benefit receipt, compared with comparison group benefit receipt. Most studies of interventions

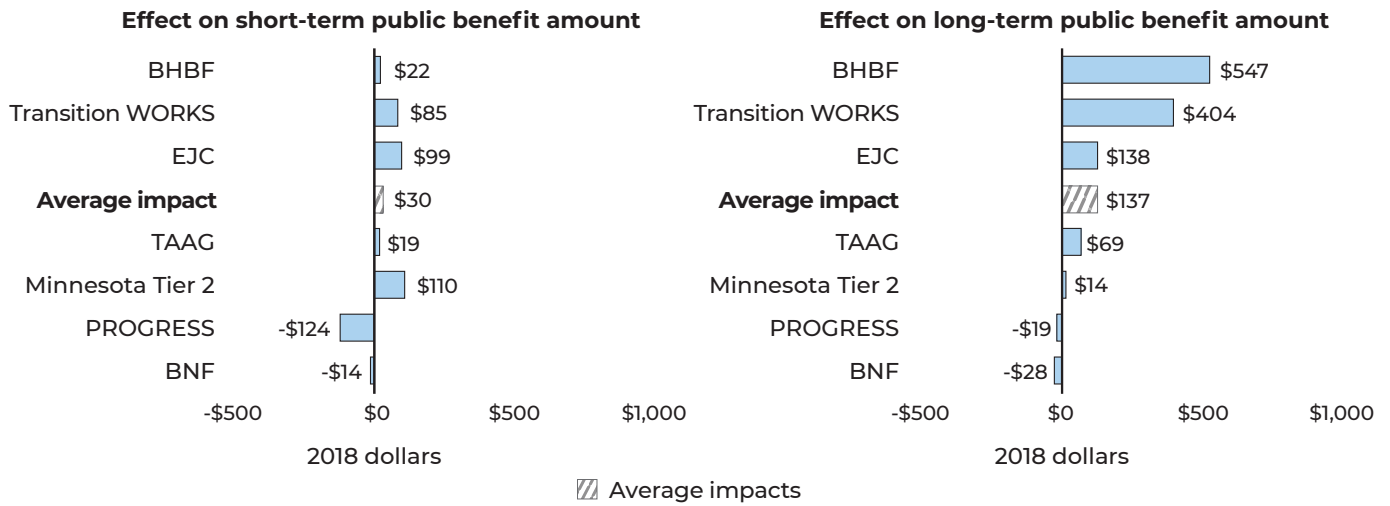
that use employment coaching measured the effect of the intervention on public benefit receipt rates and the amount of public benefits received. The studies focused on receipt of public benefits from public programs like TANF, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Supplemental Security Income, and unemployment insurance. However, no interventions with employment coaching improved outcomes in this domain, meaning there is no evidence that the interventions lowered the rate of public benefit receipt or the amount of public benefits received in the short or long term. Some statistically significant evidence shows that these interventions increased the amount of public benefits received in the long term, possibly because clients were connected to public benefits through the interventions.

Exhibit 5. Interventions offering employment coaching, on average, had little to no impact on short-term or long-term public benefit receipt



Interventions are sorted according to the size of the long-term impacts because long-term effects better represent sustained increases in economic self-sufficiency. Supported interventions, meaning interventions with research indicating significant and favorable impacts, are noted in darker blue. NA means an intervention did not measure outcomes at the specified time period. Broadened Horizons, Brighter Futures = BHBF; Building Nebraska Families = BNF; Enhanced Job Club = EJC; Madison Strategies Group WorkAdvance Program = MSG; Self-Sufficiency Project-Plus = SSP-Plus; Supporting Families Through Work = SFTW; Transition, Advancement, and Growth = TAAG.

Exhibit 6. Interventions offering employment coaching, on average, increased the amount of public benefits received in the short and long term¹¹



Interventions are sorted according to the size of the long-term impacts because long-term effects better represent sustained increases in economic self-sufficiency. Supported interventions, meaning interventions with research indicating significant and favorable impacts, are noted in darker blue. Broadened Horizons, Brighter Futures = BHBF; Building Nebraska Families = BNF; Enhanced Job Club = EJC; Transition, Advancement, and Growth = TAAG.

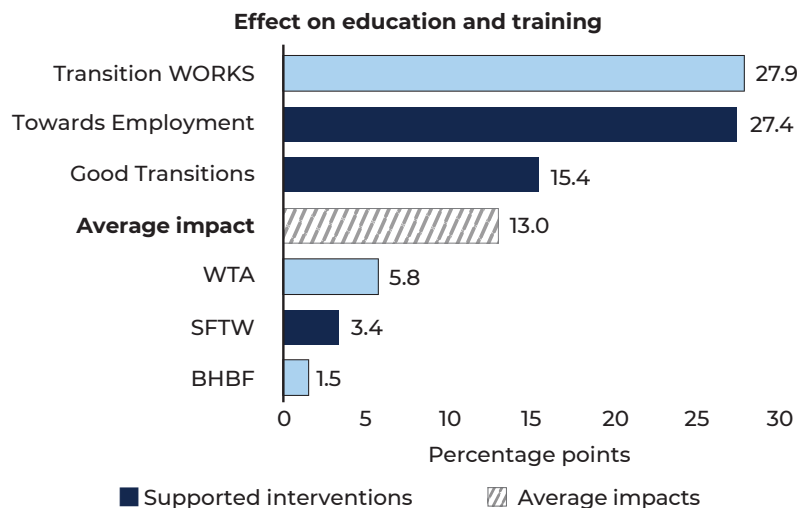
Does employment coaching increase education and training?



Education and training attainment increased by 13 percentage points across the six studies that measured changes in education (Exhibit 7), compared with comparison group education and training attainment. Most studies of the interventions with employment coaching did not assess impacts on education and training, and therefore, we do not know whether most other interventions including employment coaching affected these outcomes.

Three interventions that use employment coaching increased education and training attainment, compared with comparison group education and training attainment. Good Transitions, SFTW, and Towards Employment increased education and training outcomes. The Good Transitions and Towards Employment impacts were large in part because both interventions included occupational training. The SFTW impact was small. WTA, BHBF and Transition WORKS also assessed impacts on education and training, but the findings were not statistically significant.

Exhibit 7. Interventions using employment coaching, on average, increased clients' education or training



Broadened Horizons, Brighter Futures = BHBF; Supporting Families Through Work = SFTW; Workforce Training Academy (WTA) Connect. Supported interventions, meaning interventions with research indicating significant and positive impacts, are noted in darker blue = WTA.

Which are the most effective interventions?

Three employment coaching interventions had a positive impact on two or more outcomes examined by the Pathways Clearinghouse. Of these, two interventions had positive impacts on three outcomes:

- ⬆️ Good Transitions
- ⬆️ SFTW

These interventions had positive impacts on earnings, employment, and education and training (see Exhibit 8). There is not enough evidence in the literature to assess which aspects of these interventions caused the favorable outcomes. However, these two interventions shared certain characteristics. In addition to offering employment coaching, both interventions provided intensive work-based learning experiences for several months. Specifically, Good Transitions placed clients in subsidized jobs for up to 4 months and SFTW offered transitional jobs for up to 6 months. In comparison, many,

but not all, of the less effective interventions provided less intensive services (for example, monthly meetings with a case manager or coach) or provided services for a shorter period of time (for example, 4 weeks).

Good Transitions and SFTW combined employment coaching with case management, soft-skills training, and job development or job placement; however, most of the less effective interventions also provided these services. Both interventions served noncustodial parents. Like nearly all the interventions that used employment coaching, Good Transitions and SFTW were implemented in urban settings.

In addition to Good Transitions and SFTW, BHBF also improved earnings and employment outcomes. BHBF served youth who were receiving Social Security Administration disability benefits and provided a range of person-centered services with a focus on case management.

Exhibit 8. Effects in 2018 dollars for employment coaching interventions that improved outcomes in three domains

Increase earnings

	Good Transitions	Supporting Families Through Work (SFTW)
Short-term	⬆️ ⬆️ \$1,673 per year	⬆️ ⬆️ \$1,464 per year
Long-term	⬆️ ⬆️ \$1,046 per year	⬆️ ⬆️ \$628 per year

Increase employment

	Good Transitions	Supporting Families Through Work (SFTW)
Short-term	⬆️ ⬆️ 20% (in percentage points)	⬆️ ⬆️ 7% (in percentage points)
Long-term	⬆️ ⬆️ 4% (in percentage points)	⬆️ ⬆️ 2% (in percentage points)

Decrease public benefit receipt

	Good Transitions	Supporting Families Through Work (SFTW)
Short-term	○	○
Long-term	⬆️ ⬆️ -\$358 per year	⬆️ ⬆️ -\$165 per year

★ well-supported ⬆️ supported ⬆️ mixed support ✖️ not supported ⬆️ insufficient evidence ○ no evidence

Interventions with the greatest effect sizes

The most effective interventions could also be identified as those with the largest effects. Across all interventions including employment coaching, Per Scholas had the largest effect on earnings, and Good Transitions had the largest effect on employment. Towards Employment had the largest impact on education and training attainment. In the public benefit domain, no intervention had consistent evidence of reducing the receipt or amount of public benefits.

Needs for future research

Although much is known about employment coaching, more research is needed to determine the benefits of this strategy and when it improves outcomes. In particular, only one intervention described in this brief used employment coaching as its primary service, making it challenging to isolate the impacts of employment coaching as an intervention. More evidence on employment coaching as a primary service and on specific intervention components is needed to understand what drives some coaching interventions to be more successful than others. In addition, while many interventions improve outcomes, few improve them sufficiently to be likely to move workers and families out of poverty. Further research is needed on what interventions could achieve this goal. OPRE is currently conducting the Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations to evaluate interventions that apply coaching practices to promote job entry and retention.

Endnotes

- ¹ This systematic review, which included research published or prepared through 2018, did not identify any evaluations of interventions that delivered employment coaching virtually. Because virtual service delivery has taken on increased importance as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, future research might examine the effectiveness of virtual employment coaching.
- ² An intervention’s primary service is the principal service of the intervention. To identify primary services, two trained coders examined each intervention and identified the service (1) that a large proportion of intervention group members received and a large proportion of comparison group members did not and (2) was described by the study authors as most integral to the theory of change tested by the study. The two coders then compared their independent assessments and discussed the study until they achieved consensus.
- ³ A high rating means there is strong evidence that the study findings are solely attributable to the intervention examined. A moderate rating means that readers can be somewhat confident that the study findings are attributable to the intervention, but other factors not accounted for in the study might also have contributed to the findings. Studies that rated low are not included in this brief.
- ⁴ The text describes both the average changes in outcomes across interventions and the interventions that individually show evidence of effectiveness. The averages were calculated using all the impacts estimated, even those that are not statistically significant. Averages are also easily influenced by outliers. This means it is possible that an average effect can be positive even though few individual interventions exhibit evidence of effectiveness on their own.
- ⁵ The Pathways Clearinghouse also cataloged very long-term findings, which were measured more than five years after participants were offered intervention services. Given these are rarely available, they are not examined in this snapshot.
- ⁶ The comparison group varies by study, so here we present the statistics by percentage of studies and not the percentage of interventions.
- ⁷ The Pathways Clearinghouse examined studies published from 1990 to 2018.
- ⁸ Specific definitions of these services can be found in this glossary: <https://pathwaystowork.acf.hhs.gov/glossary>. Services were included if provided to the intervention group but not the comparison group, or if the services were provided more intensively or differently to the intervention group than the comparison group.
- ⁹ Earnings data were reported in various time frames, including quarterly and annually. The Pathways Clearinghouse converted all the earnings estimates to annual estimates.
- ¹⁰ We break out public benefit receipt and public benefit amount for graphing purposes only; the Pathways Clearinghouse considered public benefit amount and receipt together and assigned them a single, combined effectiveness rating.
- ¹¹ The Pathways Clearinghouse adjusted the various estimated impacts to account for inflation and other changes over time. This adjustment accounts for changes in the maximum amount of public benefits available because of the Great Recession and other policy changes.

Goals of the Pathways Clearinghouse

The Pathways Clearinghouse systematically evaluates and summarizes the evidence on the effectiveness of interventions that aim to improve employment outcomes, reduce employment challenges, and support self-sufficiency for populations with low income. It has several goals:

- Conduct a transparent, comprehensive search to identify studies of employment and training interventions designed to improve employment or increase earnings.
- Rate the quality of those studies to assess the strength of the evidence they provide on the different interventions.
- Determine the evidence of effectiveness for those interventions.
- Share the results, as well as other Clearinghouse products, on a user-friendly website to help state and local TANF administrators, policymakers, researchers and the general public make sense of the results and better understand how this evidence might apply to questions and contexts that matter to them.
- Synthesize the overall state of evidence in the field by creating and disseminating a variety of reports, briefs, and other products.

For more information, see <https://pathwaystowork.acf.hhs.gov>.

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References

Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations: Evaluation Design Report, OPRE Report # 2019-65. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

