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ABSTRACT

During 1996, a total of 806 New Jersey single parents and displaced homemakers participated in 21 programs that were funded with Perkins Act set-aside funds and designed to provide participants with the educational services and occupational training needed to obtain high-wage, high-skill and nontraditional occupational education training. The program's clients received career counseling (85%), personal career assessment (67%), went through a basic skills assessment (61%), and received financial assistance for transportation (28%), tuition (27%), books (25%), child care (19%), and/or uniforms (7%). Clients also attended onsite career and life survival skills training and received basic skills and/or General Educational Development instruction. Of those individuals enrolled in occupational education, 440 were placed in two-year degree programs, certificate programs, or on-the-job training and 51% of enrollees were in areas nontraditional for their gender. According to the program participants, their biggest obstacles were lack of job skills, need for assistance with tuition and transportation, and child care issues. Of those participants responding to a 1995 follow-up survey, 56% rated the quality of their program as very good or good, and only 9% rated their program as poor/very poor. It was therefore concluded that New Jersey's programs for single parents/displaced homemakers are providing participants with high quality opportunities. (MN)

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**PROGRAMS PROVIDE NEEDED SERVICES
TO NEW JERSEY SINGLE PARENTS
EQUITY BULLETIN NO. 2**

**CAREER EQUITY ASSISTANCE CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION
MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY**

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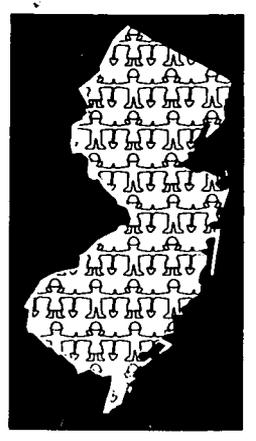
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RESEARCH BULLETIN

NEW JERSEY CAREER EQUITY ASSISTANCE CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Spring, 1996

Life Skills Center, Montclair State University

Equity Bulletin No. 2

PROGRAMS PROVIDE NEEDED SERVICES TO NEW JERSEY SINGLE PARENTS

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In New Jersey, programs for single parents, single pregnant women and displaced homemakers funded through the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act, P.L. 101-392 sex equity set aside, have provided services fundamental for improving the economic self sufficiency of families. The goal of these programs is to place single parents in high wage, high skill and nontraditional occupational education training. The Perkins Act set aside funds for New Jersey are administered by the Department of Education, Division of Student Services, Office of Bilingual Education and Equity Issues.

Demographics

During the Program Year 1996, single parents and displaced homemakers participated in an array of programs funded through the Perkins Act. A single parent is an individual who is unmarried or legally separated from a spouse; and has a minor child or children for which that parent has either sole custody or joint custody; or is pregnant.

A displaced homemaker is an individual who is an adult; and has worked as an adult primarily without remuneration to care for the home and family, and for that reason has diminished marketable skills; has been dependent on public assistance or the income of a relative but is no longer supported by that income; is a parent whose youngest child has become ineligible to receive assistance under the program for Aid to Families with Dependent Children under Part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act within two years of the parent's application for assistance under this Act; is unemployed or underemployed and is experiencing difficulty in obtaining any employment or suitable employment, as appropriate; or is also a criminal offender.

A total of 21 programs served 806 individuals. Specifically, 16 programs were designed for single parent homemakers and single pregnant women while 5 focused on displaced homemakers. Each of these 21 programs provided educational services and occupational training to their clients.

In the programs for single parents, single pregnant women and displaced homemakers, *the 806 clients*:

- were *female* (95%),
- were *Black* (47%), *Caucasian* (36%) or *Hispanic* (15%),
- had *less than a high school education* (23%),
- averaged *31 years of age* and
- earned *less than \$5,000* a year (52%).

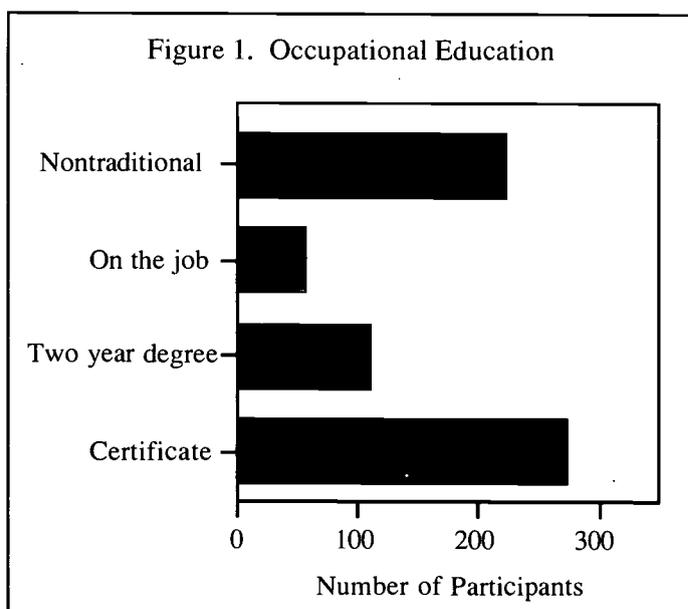
Services

The Program Year 1996 brought a wide diversity of educational services and occupational training opportunities to the many single parent, displaced homemaker program participants. Most of the clients (85%) received *career counseling* while two thirds (67%) of the participants obtained *personal career assessment*. Sixty one percent of clients went through a *basic skills assessment*. Over one half (57%) of the clients received *personal counseling* as well as *group counseling*. Many clients also received financial assistance for *transportation* (28%), *tuition* (27%), *books* (25%), *child care* (19%) and *uniforms* (7%).

A variety of on site workshops were provided by the various programs. Those that were attended by a large percentage of clients include *nontraditional career exploration* (95%), *life survival skills* (53%), *assertiveness training* (47%), *sexual harassment* (47%), *career interest* (46%) and *job readiness* (41%). Educational services include *basic skills* (24%) and *GED training* (14%).

Occupational Education

Four hundred and forty of those recruited were placed in *two year degree programs* (27%), *certificate programs* (62%) or *on the job training* (11%). The occupational education was in high wage, high skill and nontraditional areas which pay a starting wage of at least \$10.00 per hour. Fifty one percent of those enrolled in occupational education were in areas nontraditional for their gender (see figure 1).

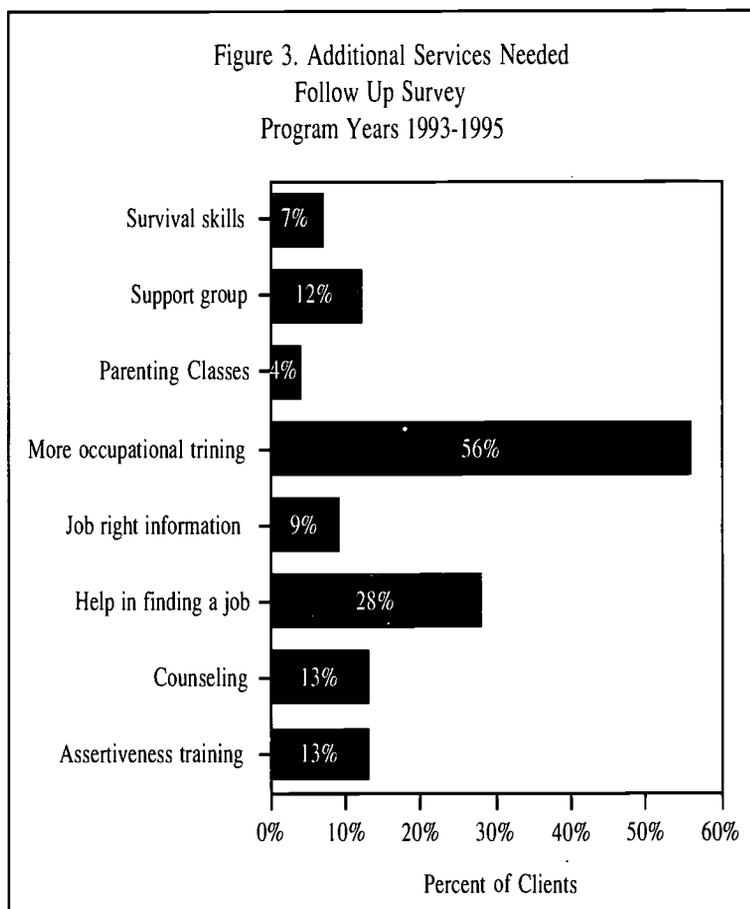
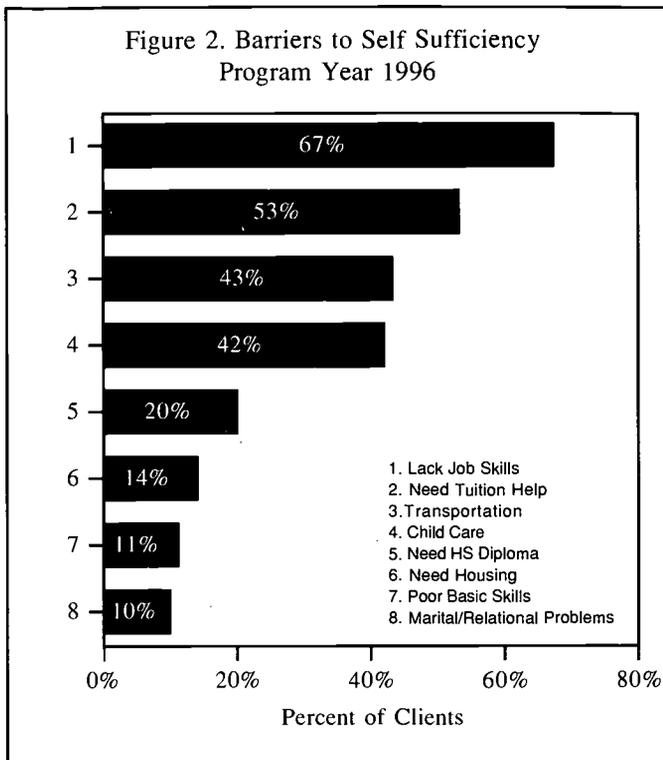


Barriers

Prior to program participation, clients were asked to indicate barriers to economic self sufficiency. Program participants focused mainly on five obstacles. **Lack of job skills**, (67%) was chosen most by clients. The other barriers specified by a large percentage of clients included the need for **assistance with tuition** (53%), **transportation** (43%), **child care issues** (42%) (see figure 2).

Follow up Survey

At the end of 1995, as part of its evaluation of the success of services provided by Perkins Act projects, the Career Equity Assistance Center for Research and Evaluation conducted a follow up survey of participants in New Jersey single parent, displaced homemaker and



single pregnant women’s programs between program years 1993 and 1995. The survey and a stamped return envelope were mailed to those recipients of equity services. One hundred and forty four female participants completed and returned the survey. **Respondents of the survey overwhelmingly indicated that the quality of the program they attend was very good (25%) or good (31%).** Only 9% rated the program as either poor or very poor.

When asked in the follow up survey what additional services they needed in order to improve their occupational situation, the largest percentage of respondents (56%) indicated that they needed more occupational training. Other services listed by a large percentage of the survey participants included help in finding a job, more counseling, assertiveness training and the assistance of a support group (see figure 3).

Recommendations

Programs for single parents and displaced homemakers are providing New Jersey single parents with quality opportunities. The clients represent the single parents of New Jersey who have been unable to achieve economic self sufficiency. The programs sponsored have been overwhelmingly successful in increasing the participation of single parents in high wage, high skill and nontraditional areas. The system and funding of programs which provide education, training and work force readiness for single parents, displaced homemakers and single pregnant women is currently in revision. As New Jersey prepares to create a new plan for the delivery and funding of programs, the following recommendations are essential to *continue* the increase of single parents, displaced homemakers and single pregnant women in high wage, high skill and nontraditional areas:

- **Nontraditional career exploration workshops prior to placement in training and jobs**
- **Placement in only those training programs and jobs which pay at least \$10.00 per hour plus benefits**
- **Retention services, including but not limited to, child care, transportation and books**
- **Specialized mathematics, computer skills and mechanical skills courses given prior to or simultaneously with occupational education**
- **Work focused externships using the school-to-work model**
- **Gender-fair career assessment and counseling**
- **Survival skills with a proven background of increasing self esteem and reducing gender bias and**
- **Data collection to assess program effectiveness.**

At a time when New Jersey's educational system is emphasizing the importance of gender equity by its inclusion in the *Strategic Plan for System Improvement of Education in New Jersey*, the continuation and expansion of the sex equity set aside programs is of particular importance.

Programs that serve single parents, displaced homemakers and single pregnant women in New Jersey should be continued and expanded. While many women have been provided with needed services, a large number of single parent women with low incomes and low levels of education remain. Existing programs funded under the Perkins Act have proven that they can successfully deliver these needed services.

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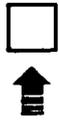
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