

### Citation

Bloom, H., Orr, L., Bell, S., Cave, G., Doolittle, F., Lin, W., & Bos, J. (1997). The benefits and costs of JTPA Title II-A programs: Key findings from the National Job Training Partnership Act study. *Journal of Human Resources*, 32(3), 549–576.<sup>1</sup>

### Highlights

- The study's objective was to determine the impact of the offer to enroll in Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) Title II-A programs on labor market earnings, educational and training participation and attainment, and welfare receipt compared with a control group that that was not allowed to enroll in JTPA services.
- About 6,000 out-of-school youth across 16 service delivery areas (SDAs) in the United States were randomly assigned to the treatment group (which was offered JTPA Title II-A services) or the control group (which could not participate in JTPA Title II services for 18 months). Although not the focus of this review, the study also randomly assigned more than 14,000 adults to treatment and control groups. Random assignment occurred from 1987 to 1989. The study team administered surveys to treatment and control group members 18 and 30 months after random assignment to collect information on earnings and educational attainment.
- The study found that, for female youth, JTPA had a statistically significant, positive impact on attainment of a general educational development (GED) or high school diploma after 30 months; however, this did not hold for male youth. In addition, JTPA did not have a statistically significant impact on earnings for either female or male youth who had never been arrested.
- The quality of the causal evidence presented in this study is high for the employment outcomes for female and male youth who had not been arrested. This means we are confident that estimated impacts are solely attributable to JTPA, and not other factors. The education outcomes for all groups, and the employment outcomes for male youth who had been arrested, have moderate evidence. This means we have some confidence that the estimated effects would be attributable to JTPA, but other factors might also have contributed.

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#### <sup>1</sup> Additional related studies consulted:

Orr, Larry L., Bloom, Howard S., Bell, Stephen H., Doolittle, Fred, Lin, Winston, & Cave, George. (1996). Does training for the disadvantaged work? Evidence from the National JTPA Study. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.

Bloom, Howard S., Orr, Larry L., Cave, George, Bell, Stephen H., & Doolittle, Fred. (1993). The National JTPA Study: Title II-A Impacts on Earnings and Employment at 18 Months. Bethesda, MD: Abt Associates Inc.

## Features of the Job Training Partnership Act Title II-A Programs

The JTPA of 1982 Title II-A programs provided employment and training services to individuals through 649 SDAs in the United States. Services were provided on site or through other local providers. The Workforce Investment Act superseded the JTPA in 1998.

Although each site could maintain its own eligibility criteria, all applicants were required to have barriers to their ability to work. Many applicants were unemployed. Program staff screened applicants and recommended one of three types of services: (1) classroom training in occupational skills; (2) a blend of on-the-job training and/or job-search assistance; and (3) other services (including basic education services, such as high school or GED preparation and English as a second language courses, and pre-employment services, such as job-readiness training, vocational exploration, and job shadowing).

## Features of the Study

The study was a randomized controlled trial conducted in 16 SDAs in the United States. To estimate the effectiveness of JTPA, the authors randomly assigned about 6,000 youth to the intervention group, which received an offer to participate in JTPA, or to the control group, which was not permitted to participate in JTPA until 18 months later (the control group). Random assignment began in November 1987 and lasted until September 1989. The study compared the labor market earnings, educational and training participation and attainment, and welfare receipt of treatment and control group members to estimate impacts; it examined impacts separately by gender for adults and for youths ages 14 through 21 (this review discusses results for youth only).

The authors used data from surveys conducted 18 and 30 months after random assignment, supplemented with state Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records in 12 SDAs. Earnings reported in surveys were used for participants who had full earnings information for the entire 30-month period. State UI wage records were used for participants with fewer than 30 months of survey data (through nonresponse or noninclusion in the 18-month survey).

## Participating Study Sites

- Fort Wayne, Indiana
- Coosa Valley, Georgia
- Corpus Christi, Texas
- Jackson, Mississippi
- Providence, Rhode Island
- Springfield, Missouri
- Jersey City, New Jersey
- Marion, Ohio
- Oakland, California
- Omaha, Nebraska
- Larimer County, Colorado
- Heartland, Florida
- Northwest, Minnesota
- Butte, Montana
- Decatur, Illinois
- Cedar Rapids, Iowa

## Findings

- A larger percentage of female youth in the treatment group earned a GED or high school diploma within 30 months than did those in the control group; the 7.7 percentage point difference was statistically significant.
- JTPA was not associated with a statistically significant difference in attaining a GED or high school diploma within 30 months for male youth.
- For females and male out-of-school youth who had not been arrested, JTPA did not have a statistically significant impact on earnings 30 months after randomization.
- Male youth who had been arrested before enrollment in JTPA in the treatment group experienced statistically significant negative earnings impacts as measured by the 30-month survey; they earned \$4,209 less than those in the control group. However, using state UI wage records, earnings did not differ significantly between the two groups. Because of the discrepancy in results from the two data sources, the authors could not make any strong conclusions about the impact of JTPA on earnings for male youth who had been previously arrested.

## Considerations for Interpreting the Findings

Many of the subgroups and outcomes examined in this report were based on a randomized controlled trial with low attrition, and so the study design for most findings received a high causal evidence rating. However, attrition was above acceptable thresholds for all outcomes examined for the subgroup of male youth who had been previously arrested, as well as for all educational outcomes examined. However, the authors included an extensive set of control variables in these analyses; therefore, the study design for this subgroup received a moderate causal evidence rating.

Not all youth who received an offer to participate in JTPA programs actually participated in them. This could temper the results, which were based on the offer to enroll, and not actually enrolling. Overall, about two-thirds of those eligible to enroll in JTPA did.

## Causal Evidence Rating

The quality of the causal evidence presented in this study is high for the employment outcomes for females and male youth who had not previously been arrested. This means we are confident that estimated impacts are solely attributable to JTPA, and not other factors. The education outcomes for all groups, and the employment outcomes for male youth who had previously been arrested, have moderate causal evidence. This means we have some confidence that the estimated effects would be attributable to JTPA, but other factors might also have contributed.