

Youth who are “disconnected” from school and the workforce face profound challenges in the increasingly skills-based U.S. labor market. These youth are more likely to face future academic difficulties and have mental health and substance abuse issues. Youth who have been disconnected for more than three years might also have lower long-term earnings and find it harder to get and keep a job (Hair et al. 2009).

The **Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR)** systematically reviewed research published from 1992 through 2014 on programs to improve the education and labor market outcomes of youth ages 14 to 24 who were neither in school nor in the labor force, or who were at risk of being in that situation. This synthesis summarizes the findings from studies with high or moderate causal evidence of improving youth outcomes, typically randomized controlled trials (see box for further details on CLEAR’s process).

The review found three relevant programs for out-of-school youth that improved their education or training outcomes (Table 1). One such program was **Job Corps**; a randomized controlled trial found that youth in the treatment group, which could access **Job Corps** services, were 23 percentage points more likely to receive a vocational, technical, or trade certificate than youth in the control group, which could not access **Job Corps** services.

Five programs improved youth’s earnings. For example, youth who had been randomly allowed access to **Year Up** earned \$19,555 per year three years after the program, whereas those who could not access Year Up earned \$14,922 per year. In addition, five programs improved employment, including the **National Guard Youth ChalleNGe program (ChalleNGe)**; youth randomly assigned to participate in **ChalleNGe** were 7 percentage points more likely to be employed after three years than those who were not allowed to participate.

Table 1. Programs that improve outcomes for disconnected youth

Program	Education or Training	Earnings	Employment
Center for Employment Training	✓		✓
Job Corps	✓	✓	✓
National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program	✓	✓	✓
Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Adult and Dislocated Worker programs ¹		✓	
Year Up		✓	✓
Youth Corps ²		✓	✓

¹ The CLEAR review of this study focused on the results for participants ages 22 to 26. Positive impacts on earnings for the WIA Dislocated Worker program were found for female participants only.

² Youth Corps was previously called the Conservation and Youth Corps.

Successful programs often involved a substantial time commitment from participating youth.

Several of the successful programs required an intense, often full-time, commitment from participants. In total, **ChalleNGe** had 17 months of programming. For the first 22 weeks of the program, **ChalleNGe** participants lived in barracks-style housing (sometimes on a military base) in a disciplined environment. Similarly, participants in **Job Corps** received eight months of services, on average, and were required to live on-site. **The Center for Employment Training (CET)** provided occupational and basic skills training in a full-time, worklike setting, to accustom participants to a work schedule. **Year Up** also was an intensive, full-time program, with six months of training followed by a six-month internship in the information technology or financial operations fields. Participants in **Youth Corps** committed to completing at least 300 hours of community service. (In the earlier Conservation and Youth Corps program, participants completed an average of 435 hours of community service.)

Many successful programs involved a job placement component or job search assistance.

ChalleNGe and **Year Up** directly placed youth in jobs or internships when possible. **Job Corps** offered individualized counseling and job placement assistance to youth. Through **WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs**, all out-of-school youth could receive job search assistance services and access local labor market information.

Positive impacts tended to be realized in the short term and fade over time.

Youth Corps impacts persisted only during the period of active program involvement. **Year Up** had significant impacts on earnings for three years, but the impacts did not extend to the fourth year. Similarly, there were no significant impacts on employment or earnings of **Job Corps** participants after more than four years.

More information is needed on the replicability of some programs.

Many of the evaluations examined, such as the evaluations of **Job Corps** and **WIA**, were large, including thousands of individuals in multiple states. However, evaluations of other programs that showed promise, such as **Year Up**, were smaller. More information is needed to determine whether the successes of these programs can translate to their implementation in more and different contexts. For example, **CET** demonstrated impacts at its original location in San Jose, California. However, when the program was studied at 12 replication sites, no impacts were found.

References

- Hair, E., Moore, K., Ling, T., McPhee-Baker, C., & Brown, B. (2009). Youth who are “disconnected” and those who then reconnect: Assessing the influence of family, programs, peers and communities (Child Trends Research Brief #2009-37). Retrieved from <http://www.childtrends.org/?publications=youth-who-are-disconnected-and-those-who-then-reconnect-assessing-the-influence-of-family-programs-peers-and-communities-3>.
- CET.** Miller, C., Bos, J., Porter, K., Tseng, F., & Abe, Y. (2005). The challenge of repeating success in a changing world: Final report on the Center for Employment Training replication sites. New York: MDRC.
- ChalleNGe.** Millenky, M., Bloom, D., Muller-Ravett, S., & Broadus, J. (2011). Staying on course: Three-year results of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Evaluation. New York: MDRC.
- Job Corps.** Schochet, P. Z., McConnell, S., & Burghardt, J. (2003). National Job Corps Study: Findings using administrative earnings records data. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research.
- WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs.** Heinrich, C., Mueser, P., Troske, K., & Benus, J. (2008). Workforce Investment Act non-experimental net impact evaluation final report. Columbia, MD: IMPAQ International, LLC.
- Year Up.** Roder, A., & Elliott, M. (2014). Sustained gains: Year Up’s continued impacts on young adults’ earnings. New York: Economic Mobility Corporation.
- Youth Corps.** Price, C., Williams, J., Simpson, L., Jastrzab, J., & Markovitz, C. (2011). National evaluation of Youth Corps: Findings at follow-up. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, Inc.

CLEAR's PROCESS

CLEAR worked with content experts to develop a review protocol defining the parameters for studies to be reviewed. Using the protocol as a guide, CLEAR searched the literature for studies published from 1992 through 2014. CLEAR identified and reviewed 24 causal studies of nine programs to improve the education and labor market outcomes of youth ages 14 to 24 who were neither in school nor in the labor force, or who were at risk of being in that situation. The review did not include studies looking at special subgroups of youth, including youth with disabilities, young parents, or youth with criminal justice involvement, as those will be covered under future topic areas.

Using standards developed by statistical and policy experts, CLEAR reviewers assessed the quality of causal evidence presented in each study, summarized in a causal evidence rating of high, moderate, or low. For more information on CLEAR's procedures and causal evidence ratings, see the "About CLEAR" section of <http://clear.dol.gov>.

CLEAR causal evidence ratings of 24 studies in the Opportunities for Youth topic area

High: 13

Moderate: 6

Low: 5

Total: 24

The studies with high or moderate causal evidence ratings were further examined to determine whether they had been conducted since 2003—to have high current relevance—and found evidence of favorable impacts on participants' education, training, employment, and/or earnings outcomes. The 2003 time frame was established to ensure that the interventions were tested in a context similar and relevant to current conditions. Studies of two programs—JOBSTART and the Job Training Partnership Act of 1982 programs—were eliminated on this criterion. The remaining studies, some of which evaluated the same program, found positive impacts of six programs (see Table 1).

For all research reviewed in this topic area, CLEAR produced profiles that more fully describe the program, the study, and the estimated impacts. When possible, CLEAR also reviewed and produced profiles for implementation studies associated with the causal studies that found positive impacts. To access these profiles, see the Opportunities for Youth topic area on the CLEAR website at <http://clear.dol.gov/topic-area/opportunities-for-youth>.

Absence of conflict of interest: Some studies in this topic area were conducted by staff from Mathematica Policy Research, which administers CLEAR. Therefore, reviews of those studies were conducted by an independent consultant trained in applying CLEAR causal evidence guidelines.