

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Job Corps plays a central role in federal efforts to provide employment assistance to disadvantaged youths ages 16 to 24. The program's goal is to help these individuals become "more responsible, employable, and productive citizens" by providing them with comprehensive services that include basic education, vocational skills training, counseling, and residential support. Each year, Job Corps serves more than 60,000 new enrollees at a cost of more than \$1 billion. The National Job Corps Study is expected to provide Congress and program managers with the information they need to assess how well Job Corps is attaining its goal.

This report is one of a series presenting findings from the study. It builds directly on the results of the process analysis study that described the basic Job Corps program model and identified variations in the way the basic model is implemented. It also supplements the descriptive findings of student programmatic experiences presented in the 30-month impact report. Specifically, in this report, we examine the outreach, admissions (OA) and center characteristics and practices that appear to promote positive programmatic experiences for Job Corps applicants, and for the students that enroll in the program. The programmatic experiences of interest are measured using agency records and include the likelihood of enrollment in Job Corps and, conditional on enrollment, whether the student attains a GED, completes vocational training and program length of stay. A secondary purpose of the report is to develop preliminary statistical models of various aspects of program participation that could be used in subsequent analyses of the effects of programmatic experiences on students' post-program labor market outcomes.

The results summarized below are based entirely on data for youth who were randomly selected for the program group and who were eligible to enroll in Job Corps. Because all of the comparisons are among program group members only, it is important to emphasize that the findings below do not represent program impacts, but merely reflect the differences in programmatic experiences of youth who were exposed to various OA or center practices. In addition, it is important for the reader to keep in mind that the results do not represent causal relationships. That is, the analysis addresses the effects of particular OA or center practices for contractors or centers that *chose* to adopt specific practices. However, the results cannot be used to address how a specific practice would work in other OA agencies or centers that chose to adopt other practices. Nevertheless, the analysis provides important suggestive findings about the success of particular program practices if they were to be adopted on a broader scale.

In the report, we illustrate the results of the statistical models of programmatic experiences for different typologies of OA agencies and centers. For example, to illustrate the results for OA agency characteristics and practices, we calculate the predicted probability of arrival and the probabilities of other programmatic experiences conditional on arrival, for a representative OA agency (evaluated at the characteristics of the representative center and applicant) and compare them with the predicted probabilities derived from other typologies of OA characteristics. The representative cases are not

based on the mean or median characteristics or practices and, as such, do not have a strictly statistical interpretation. Rather, the representative case reflects a set of specific characteristics and practices that when taken together yield a predicted value of the likelihood of the programmatic experience that is approximately equal to the actual value observed in the data. The cases considered are broadly representative of the OA agencies and centers that operate the Job Corps program. Because programmatic experiences and impacts appear to differ by age, we present results separately for three applicant age groups: 16-17, 18-19, and 20-24.

## OUTREACH AND ADMISSIONS TYPOLOGIES

Outreach and admissions services are provided by three main types of contractors: (1) State Employment Security (ES) Agencies and other state and local agencies; (2) private organizations affiliated with a Job Corps center; and (3) private organizations not affiliated with a center. For the most part, we find that the type of OA contractor does not significantly affect the programmatic experiences of the students recruited, although students recruited by private organizations affiliated with Job Corps centers appear to be slightly more likely to enroll in the program than students recruited by other agencies. Other important findings include:

- ***The outreach and screening practices of OA counselors play a very significant role in an applicant's programmatic experiences.*** For all age groups, OA counselors who use aggressive screening practices achieve higher arrival rates among their eligible applicants. For the two youngest groups, counselors who follow passive outreach practices and effectively put the burden on the applicant to follow-through and enroll in Job Corps recruited students who were likely to remain in the program longer.
- ***OA counselor knowledge and experience level play a key role in an applicant's programmatic experiences.*** Uniformly across all age groups, applicants served by well-informed and experienced OA counselors are much more likely to have better programmatic experiences than applicants served by less experienced and less knowledgeable counselors.

## CENTER TYPOLOGIES

The process analysis study identified several variations in the ways in which centers implement the Job Corps program model that could be related to applicants' programmatic experiences. We find that whether the center has an OA contract and the extent to which staff match students in race/gender composition do not seem to be related to student programmatic experiences. In addition, we thought that since Job Corps is a performance-driven system that we might find that students who attend higher ranking centers (using OMS performance ranking as the measure) would have more positive program experiences. We did not find this to be the case. Other results presented in Chapter IV confirm the general nature of the findings obtained from the process analysis, including:

- ***Center operator type, size and location play an important role in students' programmatic experiences.*** For all age groups, students that attend small CCC centers

(that are primarily located in rural areas) are more likely to complete their vocational trade and more likely to stay on center for longer periods of time compared to students that attend other types of centers. This is consistent with the process analysis findings indicating that CCC centers are more focused on vocational training than other centers.

- ***The particular vocational areas a center offers and the range of vocations offered do not affect a student's programmatic experiences.*** For all age groups, there are very small or no differences in predicted programmatic experiences depending on the comprehensiveness of the range of vocations offered by a center. However, it is important to note that this result refers strictly to the set of trades that were offered at the time of the study, and does not necessarily hold for new vocational training program offerings.
- ***Students that attend centers with strong vocational and academic programs have much more positive programmatic experiences than students that attend centers with relatively weak programs.*** In the process report, we found many differences across centers in the strength of their vocational programs, from the amount of OEP provided to students, to policies for assigning students to trades and switching among trades, as well as in the extent to which centers supplement the basic academic curriculum with other programs. For all age groups we consistently find that applicants to centers with strong vocational and academic programs have more positive programmatic experiences, and especially GED attainment and vocational completion than students served by other centers.
- ***Limited residential living facilities are associated with shorter lengths of stay, but exceptionally good facilities do not appear to promote longer lengths of stay.*** In the process report, we found that the quality of center residential facilities and recreation opportunities vary considerably. Here we find that limited residential facilities are associated with low student retention, but that extensive facilities do not seem to promote retention.

## IMPLICATIONS

These results have potentially important implications for the Job Corps program. They indicate the importance of ensuring that up-to-date materials/information about centers and videos depicting life on center are available and used by OA counselors. They also emphasize the importance of providing training to OA counselors concerning screening and outreach strategies, as well as developing recruitment/retention strategies to reduce the high turnover of OA counselors.

The results concerning center practices emphasize the importance of strong vocational and academic programs, as well as the potential problems associated with limited residential living facilities.