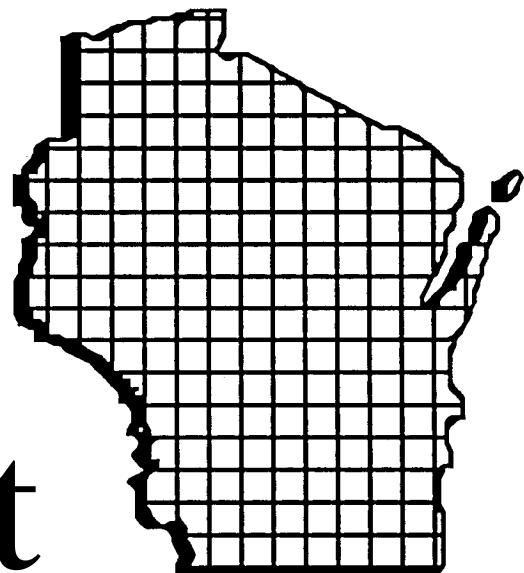


Wisconsin

Policy
Research
Institute

Report



October 2003

Volume 16, Number 7

**Wisconsin
Works**

*Only Work
Should Pay*

REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT:

When Governor Tommy Thompson introduced the idea of Wisconsin Works in 1994 he described the focus of this new program as: "for those who can work, only work should pay." In 1999, when W-2 had become law, again the proposal was spelled out in detail with the emphasis on work being the only alternative to a cash welfare system. Almost five years later there are some serious questions about how W-2 now performs.

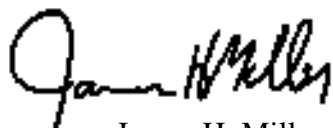
We asked Dr. David Dodenhoff, one of the leading experts on welfare in the United States, to examine the current state of W-2, especially in Milwaukee County. Dr. Dodenhoff has a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan with academic expertise in welfare reform. He has worked for the governor of Arizona as deputy director of the Office for Excellence in Government. He is currently a consultant on welfare reform for the Hudson Institute and has done several projects in Wisconsin over the past several years.

His research deals with a number of issues. Some of the most significant data comes from his interviews with site supervisors from community service job programs. These supervisors report that many of the W-2 participants in their programs are involved heavily in educational and vocational training rather than just having a regular job. This runs counter to one of the most important original premises of W-2: that community service jobs would help participants gain experience and learn work habits.

Another important finding highlights absentee rates. For a number of participants there is a chronic tardiness that is not necessarily penalized with a reduction in pay. Again this runs counter to what happens in the private sector. This is not necessarily the kind of program that ought to be run if we are interested in teaching former welfare recipients the importance of work and personal responsibility.

This report also exposes another serious problem facing the state. It is clear that, either through incompetence or ideology, bureaucrats at the state level have seriously eroded the work ideals of welfare reform. Simply put, the current W-2 program does not demand "work first, work only" as the appropriate model. More and more we are seeing old entitlement ideas erode Wisconsin's most important reform of the last decade.

What is necessary now is to have the legislature and the governor clearly define what they want to accomplish in W-2. Is work to be the single most important aspect of the program? If not, we will return to the old days of entitlement — where participants were allowed to do anything the bureaucrats thought was a good idea.



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WISCONSIN WORKS

ONLY WORK SHOULD PAY

DAVID DODENHOFF, PH.D.

	PAGE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	2
NON-WORK OPTIONS AVAILABLE UNDER W-2	2
HOW MANY W-2 PARTICIPANTS ARE ACTUALLY WORKING	3
WHAT TAKES PLACE IN A COMMUNITY SERVICE JOB?	6
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	11
NOTES	15
APPENDIX	17

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson introduced the Wisconsin Works (W-2) proposal in November of 1994, he described the foundation of the new program as follows: “For those who can work, only work should pay.” Work experience, rather than education and training, was thought to be an intrinsic good, and the only program activity that was fair to non-welfare families. If they could be paid only for working, the same should hold true for W-2 participants.

Subsequent years, however, have seen a major erosion in the “only work should pay” principle. Administrative data from the program indicate that participants being paid solely for work are a minority — about one-quarter of the W-2 population. And though a majority of W-2 participants are engaged in some sort of work activity, most are also engaged in education and training.

A similar reality holds within the community service job (CSJ) tier of the W-2 program. CSJs were originally intended to be full-time positions in which W-2 participants could work off their W-2 grant and learn the habits of day-to-day employment. As W-2 has evolved, however, CSJ positions have come to include education and training activities. A majority of CSJ site supervisors interviewed for this report indicated that rather than being “like a regular job,” the CSJs at their organization were like a regular job combined with other activities — education, vocational training, career planning, and so on. Similarly, about 60 percent of site supervisors interviewed said that the CSJ slots at their organization were oriented not just toward helping W-2 participants gain experience and learn work habits, but also toward boosting their vocational skills. Finally, data in this report and other research indicate that attendance at community service job sites is poor, and that attendance-monitoring is spotty. This means that for many participants, the CSJ experience does not replicate that of a regular, entry-level job; under W-2, chronic tardiness or absence from work is not necessarily met with a reduction in pay.

Based on the foregoing, W-2 appears to be in the midst of a generally unrecognized identity crisis. From its inception, the program has claimed to be oriented toward work and work alone. In practice, however, in the day-to-day activities of W-2 participants and at the hundreds of community service job sites around the state, W-2 participants are mixing work with training, are sometimes engaging exclusively in education and training activities, and are not consistently being held to strict expectations of attendance and performance. All of this is a violation of the spirit in which W-2 was created.

State welfare program administrators need to have an honest discussion about the orientation of the W-2 program. If they believe that work-first, work-only is an inappropriate model, then they ought to explain their position, revise the first principle of W-2, and communicate the policy change to all W-2 agencies. If, on the other hand, they believe that work-first, work-only is an appropriate ideal, as did the creators of W-2, they need to begin dismantling the infrastructure of education and vocational training activities that have become a part of the program.

In either case, the state must insist on closer monitoring and enforcement of W-2 participation requirements. Weak enforcement of participation expectations does a disservice both to W-2 participants in their effort to master the culture of employment, and to working poor Wisconsin families who are held accountable when *they* miss work.

INTRODUCTION

When then Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson introduced the Wisconsin Works (W-2) proposal in November of 1994, he cited this principle first among those that would govern the new program: “For those who can work, only work should pay.”¹ Gerald Whitburn, then Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, cited the “only work should pay” principle as the “central tenet” of W-2.² The Thompson administration’s “1999 Plan” document, in which the W-2 proposal was first spelled out in detail, identified “work as the only alternative” (to cash welfare) and noted:

The new system must provide a means for a willing parent to provide income for his or her family, but it should only provide for this income through work.³

Almost from the moment the W-2 proposal was introduced, however, an erosion in the “only work should pay” principle began. Over time, through a combination of legislative changes and administrative practice, that principle has been decimated. Now, work is clearly *not* the only activity that pays under W-2 (if it ever was). What makes the program stand out from its peers in other states is the high level of client engagement — that is, the very large percentage of program participants who are required to engage in *some* activity as a condition of receiving cash benefits. Very often, however, that activity consists of something other than work.

NON-WORK OPTIONS AVAILABLE UNDER W-2

In the original W-2 proposal, which was leaked to the media and became public in July of 1995, there was little mention of basic education or vocational training. The proposal envisioned four work tiers into which W-2 participants might be placed:

- Unsubsidized employment in the public or private sector;
- A “trial job” with an employer who would receive a partial wage subsidy from the state for a fixed amount of time (six to nine months);
- A “community service job” (CSJ), that is, a completely state-subsidized, time-limited position to help participants practice work skills outside of a regular work setting; and
- “W-2 Xtra,” which was to consist of work activities, education, specialized skills training, and/or substance abuse treatment for individuals with disabilities, temporary health problems, and/or substance abuse issues. (This component was eventually renamed “W-2 Transitions.”)

Only with respect to the W-2 Xtra component, then, were non-work activities to be available. This did not violate the “only work should pay” principle, however, because Xtra participants were assumed to be unable to take on normal, full-time work responsibilities. Accordingly, the W-2 proposal document noted that, “Only in unusual circumstances having to do with clinically evidenced limitations certified by DVR will individuals be admitted to W-2 Xtra, where obtaining income exclusively through work is not expected.” (“DVR” refers to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation within the Department of Workforce Development; emphasis in original).⁴

For individuals in the other three W-2 tiers, the proposal was faithful to the idea that only work should pay. Community service jobs in particular were described as just that — *jobs*, that is, “full time work,” to use the language of the document — and not a mixture of work activities and education/training. In fact, the proposal explicitly stated that “CSJ wages are for actual work, not for participation in education and training.”⁵

When the W-2 proposal was introduced as legislation in October of 1995, community service jobs were still envisioned as work, and only work, with a maximum commitment of 40 hours per week. That language was amended in the legislative process, however, and ultimately signed into law by Governor Thompson in April of 1996. The amended language allowed for the inclusion of education and training as part of a community service job:

[A] Wisconsin works agency may require a participant placed in a community service job program to work not more than 30 hours per week in a community service job. A Wisconsin works agency may require a participant placed in the community service job program to participate in education or training activities for not more than 10 hours per week.⁶

As a matter of policy, however, the Department of Workforce Development, which administers the W-2 program, has increased the available training hours beyond the 10-hour-per-week limit. If, for example, an appropriate train-

ing module is available that requires, say, 25 hours of training per week for four months, a CSJ participant can enroll in that training. The only requirements are that he or she: a) not exceed the 516 hour training limit over the course of a year; and b) be assigned to some actual work activity to accompany the education and training.⁷

HOW MANY W-2 PARTICIPANTS ARE ACTUALLY WORKING?

Introduction

Now that the W-2 program has opened the door to compensation for activities other than work, it is important to determine how much work is actually taking place under W-2, and how much education and training.

States are required to make quarterly reports to the federal government on the administration of their welfare programs. Among the data included in those reports are figures on the number of weekly hours welfare program participants are engaged in various activities — work, job search, education and training, and so on. By looking at these reports, one can determine the extent to which the W-2 program is enforcing the “only work should pay” principle.

Data on work, education, and training under W-2

Table 1 below presents data on work, education, and training activities for all adult W-2 participants not exempt from work requirements. The data in the table cover the second quarter of 2002 through the first quarter of 2003.

TABLE 1 WORK, EDUCATION, AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES FOR ALL ADULT, NON-EXEMPT W-2 PARTICIPANTS, BY QUARTER, 2ND QUARTER 2002 THROUGH 1ST QUARTER 2003

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	Percent of participants engaged in some activity	Percent of participants engaged solely in work activities	Percent of participants engaged solely in job search activities	Percent of participants not engaged in any activity	Percent of participants engaged in some activity, but none involving "work"	Percent of participants engaged in some education and training activity	Percent of participants engaged in some work activity
Q2 2002 (n=24453)	85.5	23.1	2.8	14.5	17.9	57.9	67.6
Q3 2002 (n=25919)	84.8	24.2	3.3	15.2	17.7	55.2	67.1
Q4 2002 (n=27050)	87.5	22.4	9.4	12.5	22.1	55.2	65.3
Q1 2003 (n=26191)	82.9	27.3	13.6	17.1	19.1	51.3	63.8

Data source: extracts from federal TANF reports, provided by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development⁸

Column A indicates the high levels of participation in W-2 program activities: work, job search, and education and training. At around 85 percent, these are among the highest participation rates in the country.

Column B, however, indicates that only about one-quarter of W-2 participants are engaged solely in work activities.⁹ Thus, although the principle that “only work should pay” was to have been the heart of W-2, roughly three-quarters of W-2 participants are *not* engaged exclusively in work.

Column C provides data on a potential response to the results in Column B. Perhaps more individuals are not working under W-2 because they are still searching for a job. According to Column C, however, this is true for only a small proportion of W-2 participants — no more than about 14 percent, and in some quarters, far less.¹⁰

Columns D and E allow one to determine how many W-2 participants are engaging in no work activities at all, either because they simply are not participating in any program activities, or because they are participating in activ-

ities that do not include work. Taken together, Columns D and E capture about one-third of W-2 participants in the past year; these are individuals doing no work in exchange for their benefits.

Column F describes the main alternative to work available in the W-2 program — education and training. The column indicates that more than half of W-2 participants have been engaged in education and training activities during the most recent four quarters for which data are available.

Column G notes, however, that even higher proportions — around two-thirds — have been engaged in work.

The results in Table 1 are eye-opening, but they are potentially misleading in a few respects. First, and most important, the data on which Table 1 is based do not allow one to separate W-2 participants in the “Transitions” tier of the program from those assigned to other tiers. In the time period covered by Table 1, individuals in W-2 Transitions constituted about one-quarter of the total W-2 caseload. These are cases, moreover, for which the expectation of work is understandably relaxed. Perhaps, therefore, the results in Table 1 are more in line with the “only work should pay” principle than they seem at first blush.

This is undoubtedly true to some extent. But let us assume, for purpose of argument, that the W-2 Transitions placements in Table 1 are engaged exclusively in education and training activities and are performing no work at all. If this were true, Column B would still indicate that only one-third of non-Transitions placements were engaged solely in work.¹¹ And Column F would indicate that between one-quarter and one-third of individuals not in Transitions were engaged in some education and training activities.¹² Clearly, even with the inclusion of W-2 Transitions placements, Table 1 indicates that W-2 is not living up to the “only work should pay” principle.¹³

Table 1 also probably overstates the amount of work taking place under W-2. The evidence for this comes from a study released by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) earlier this year.¹⁴ MDRC found that W-2 agencies differ in how they code and record the activities of W-2 clients. In practice, some individuals coded as being assigned to the community service job tier of W-2 — ostensibly, a work assignment — actually are engaged in orientation activities or education and training, but not work.¹⁵

Because my data were insufficiently detailed to identify individuals in this situation, I coded all community service job participants as engaged in work. The MDRC study, however, clearly indicates that doing so overstates the number of individuals who are actually working.

By how much? MDRC found that one-quarter of individuals classified as participating in a CSJ were not assigned to a CSJ worksite.¹⁶ This means that they were: a) engaged in orientation, education, and/or training rather than work; b) already working in a regular employment situation, but still (erroneously) classified as being in a CSJ; or c) excused from participating in work for health reasons. Unfortunately, the study does not indicate the proportions falling into each of these three groups.

MDRC uncovered a similar phenomenon with respect to a slightly different work classification, known as work experience. Work experience is supposed to involve on-site, voluntary work with an employer — not education or vocational training. MDRC found, however, that 27 percent of W-2 participants who were recorded as participating in a work experience slot were also engaged in vocational training activities as part of their work experience activities.¹⁷ In other words, even though they were assigned to a W-2 component that was supposed to consist solely of actual work, they were also participating in education and training.

Again, because of the limited level of detail in my data, if an individual was coded as being engaged in work experience but not education and training activities, I recorded that individual as being involved solely in work. Based on the MDRC findings, however, as many as 27 percent of these cases also appear to have been engaged in vocational education activities, and not just work. As noted above, therefore, Table 1 almost certainly overstates the amount of work taking place under W-2 and understates the amount of education, training, and other activities.

Another potential issue with Table 1 is that some individuals captured there undoubtedly have just enrolled in the W-2 program and have not yet been assigned to work activities. Furthermore, some individuals who are recorded as not engaged in work activities in Table 1 are under sanction — that is, they are expected to work, are not participating in work, and so are having their benefit checks docked. These individuals are not, therefore, being paid for not working.

One way of dealing with these two issues is to look only at the subset of individuals who have some participation hours. These are individuals who are far enough along in the program to have begun formal participation, and who in fact are engaged in activities. By looking at these individuals, we eliminate any distortions in Table 1 based on the inclusion of new W-2 participants and those refusing to participate.

Table 2 presents data on W-2 participants who are currently engaged in program activities:

TABLE 2 WORK, EDUCATION, AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES FOR ADULT, NON-EXEMPT W-2 PARTICIPANTS ENGAGED IN SOME ACTIVITY, BY QUARTER, 2ND QUARTER 2002 THROUGH 1ST QUARTER 2003

	A	B	C	D	E
	Percent of active participants engaged solely in work activities	Percent of active participants engaged solely in job search activities	Percent of active participants not engaged in any work activity	Percent of active participants engaged in some education and training activity	Percent of active participants engaged in some work activity
Q2 2002 (n=20232)	27.0	3.2	21.0	67.8	79.0
Q3 2002 (n=21980)	28.6	3.9	20.9	65.2	79.1
Q4 2002 (n=23660)	25.7	10.7	25.3	63.1	74.7
Q1 2003 (n=21715)	32.9	16.4	23.0	61.8	77.0

Data source: extracts from federal TANF reports, provided by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

Column A indicates that even among active participants, only between one-quarter and one-third are engaged solely in work. The other two-thirds to three quarters are being paid for activities that may include work, but that definitely include activities *other than* work.

Column B again addresses a potential objection discussed above — perhaps few individuals are engaged solely in work because many of them are still looking for work. As Column B indicates, however, this is true of no more than 16 percent of the caseload at the maximum, and as few as three percent.

Column C indicates the number of individuals engaged in program activities who are not engaged in any work hours. Over the four quarters covered in the table, this has ranged from about 20 percent to just over one-quarter. These are individuals being paid under W-2 despite participating in no work. They are the clearest exceptions to the “only work should pay” principle.

Column D shows that among active W-2 participants, between three-fifths and two-thirds are participating in some sort of education and training activities. Thus, large majorities of W-2 clients are actively engaged in activities designed to build their “human capital,” despite the program’s ostensible “work only” focus.

Finally, Column E shows the proportion of W-2 clients engaged in some sort of work activity. The percentages here are impressive, ranging from three-quarters all the way up to around 80 percent.

Conclusion

So, what can one conclude from the foregoing data and analysis?

First, W-2 has achieved very high levels of participant engagement in program activities.

Second, the “only work should pay” principle has not been upheld in practice under W-2. Program clients being paid solely for work activities are a minority — about one-quarter of the total W-2 population, and a somewhat higher proportion among the sub-population of W-2 clients actively participating in the program. In other words, large majorities of W-2 participants are being paid for participating in non-work activities.

Third, the W-2 program has pursued a mixed labor force attachment/human capital approach — that is, for many clients it mixes work with activities intended to enhance human capital. Thus, majorities of the total W-2 population, and large majorities of the actively engaged W-2 sub-population, are participating in some sort of education and training activities. At the same time, there are also large majorities of both the total population and engaged sub-population actively participating in some form of work.

In sum, work pays for most W-2 clients, but it is clearly not the only activity that pays. In fact, a majority of W-2 participants are being paid to engage in education, training, and other activities. Furthermore, a substantial minority of W-2 clients are being paid while engaged in no work at all.

WHAT TAKES PLACE IN A COMMUNITY SERVICE JOB?

Introduction and methodology

Community service jobs (CSJs) are critically important to the W-2 program because of the large number of CSJ placements. When we speak of individuals “working” under W-2, we are generally speaking about individuals assigned to community service job slots. In the year 2002, for example, approximately 60 percent of all adult, non-exempt W-2 clients were assigned to at least one community service job position. Thus, the extent to which CSJs replicate the real-world employment experience determines, in large part, the extent to which the W-2 program is faithful to the “only work should pay” principle.

The Wisconsin Works manual describes the community service job tier this way.

The Community Service Job (CSJ) employment position is for individuals who are determined not ready for immediate regular employment, particularly where attempts to place a participant in an unsubsidized or Trial Job have not succeeded. CSJs are intended to provide participants with an opportunity to practice work habits and skills that are necessary to succeed in any regular job environment, including punctuality, reliability, work social skills, and the application of a sustained and productive effort. CSJ work training providers are expected to offer real work training opportunities with appropriate supervision within an environment which generally replicates that of regular employment, realizing that job coaching and mentoring may be needed to help the participant succeed.¹⁸

So, to what extent do CSJs create an environment that “generally replicates that of regular employment?” To begin to shed some light on this question, I conducted a series of interviews and site visits with community service job site supervisors and managers in four counties in Wisconsin — Milwaukee, Dane, Kenosha, and Rock.¹⁹ The sites I visited and the individuals I interviewed were chosen on the basis of a “snowball sample” rather than a random, scientific one.

I began with Milwaukee County. There, I contacted a representative at each of the four W-2 agencies, described my research project, and asked for introductions to CSJ site supervisors that might be willing to speak with me by phone. Once I reached a site supervisor and completed an interview, I asked for referrals to additional supervisors within the same organization and at different organizations within Milwaukee. In a handful of cases, I also sought to schedule site visits.

I relied on professional contacts in Wisconsin to arrange interviews in Dane, Kenosha, and Rock Counties. Specifically, I requested that colleagues working on welfare issues in government or the private sector put me in touch with individuals who could facilitate additional CSJ site supervisor interviews. Again, once on the phone with site supervisors, I asked for referrals to additional supervisors within their organization and in other local organizations.

In total, I conducted a formal or informal interview with 41 site supervisors affiliated with 35 different work sites. I conducted ten of these interviews in person, on-site at Milwaukee County CSJ sites. I conducted the remainder by phone.

Of the 41 interviews, 37 were formal in nature, meaning that I conducted them according to a standardized format, using a core of common questions for each interview. (The interview instrument is attached as an Appendix. I asked additional questions in some interviews.) Of these 37 formal interviews:

- twenty were conducted with individuals in Milwaukee County,
- seven were conducted with individuals in Kenosha County,
- six were conducted with individuals in Dane County, and
- four were conducted with individuals in Rock County.

The 37 interview respondents were drawn from 35 work sites. (Two sites provided two respondents each; the rest provided one.) Among these 35 sites, 27 were non-profits and eight were government. About two-thirds of the

sites had had fewer than 100 CSJ referrals since the inception of the W-2 program. The other one-third had had more — sometimes numbering in the thousands.

The sites in my sample tended to be small in terms of the number of W-2 CSJ workers they were employing at the time of the interview. About two-thirds had five or fewer CSJ workers, including seven sites that had none at all. (Most of these were expecting more soon.) Only one site had more than 100 CSJ workers.

I also conducted visits to six separate work sites in Milwaukee County. Collectively, these six sites were employing a total of about 120 W-2 participants at the time of my visits. Not every site took referrals from all four Milwaukee W-2 agencies, but each of the four agencies referred clients to at least one of the sites I visited.

These site visits generally did not involve any formal data-gathering outside of the supervisor interviews I conducted while I was on-site. Instead, I simply toured the site, observed the work going on, and talked to supervisors and W-2 participants in an effort to get a feel for the nature of the work and the work environment there.

Job site activities – interview and site visit results

One of the first questions I covered in the interviews was the nature of activities W-2 participants are engaged in at the work sites. Table 3 gives descriptions of the work activities from seven different sites of varying sizes.

TABLE 3 SAMPLE WORK ACTIVITIES ENGAGED IN BY W-2 CSJ PARTICIPANTS

Type of organization	Work site activities
Child care center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · clean-up following child activities, meals · restocking classroom and custodial supplies · supervising, playing with children
State government agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · front desk/reception · data entry · filing of client records · preparation of large-scale mailings
Food pantry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · greeting customers · stocking, sorting, and washing donated food · pick-up and storage of donated food
Senior center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · room set-up for center activities, programs, and meals · clean-up following center activities, programs, and meals · preparation and distribution of hand-outs for center activities and programs
Medical clinic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · retrieving and re-filing patient files · putting mail and other loose materials into patient files · purging outdated information from patient files
Private disability services provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · cold food preparation for cafeteria · preparation of bag lunches · filling vending machines
Hospital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · instrument sterilization · patient escort · medical transcription · delivering materials from one part of hospital to another

Data source: author interviews with CSJ site supervisors.

In general, the work activities being done by W-2 clients at these and other sites appear to be “real,” rather than make-work. That is, with the exception of one site I visited in Milwaukee,

CSJ participants appear to be engaged in work that is necessary to the functioning of the organization where they have been placed, and that would have to be done by paid staff or volunteers if W-2 workers were not available.

As noted above, however, CSJ slots do not consist solely of work. In the course of my interviews, site supervisors told me that in addition to (and occasionally instead of) work activities of the sort listed in Table 3, W-2 participants were also engaged in training and education activities. These included:

- job interview skills training;
- forklift certification;
- custodial training;
- child care certification;
- employability/life skills/soft skills training;
- career planning;
- computer training;
- GED/adult basic education; and
- typing skills training.

In almost every case, the purpose of this training was not to facilitate the participant's work at the CSJ job site, but to make him or her a more attractive candidate for a regular job with a different employer.

To get a sense of how extensive the combination of work and these other, more educational activities was, I asked site supervisors the following question:

I'm going to read you three statements, and I want you to tell me which one you think is most accurate:

- a) *the W-2 work slots at my organization are very much like a regular job;*
- b) *the W-2 work slots at my organization are like a regular job combined with other activities; or*
- c) *the W-2 work slots at my organization are a little like a regular job, but they mostly involve other activities.*

Just under half of the 35 respondents to this question (17 respondents, or 49%) gave the first response, indicating that the W-2 work slots at their organization were very much like a regular job.²⁰ The other 18 respondents, however — a bare majority — said that the work slots in their organization were like a regular job combined with other activities (answers b and c). Four of these 18 said that “other activities,” rather than work, were predominant.²¹ This reinforces the more quantitative findings above, that despite an emphasis on work, W-2 has also retained a strong human capital orientation.²²

I asked an additional, somewhat different question to get at the nature of job site activities. That question read as follows:

Would you say that your program for W-2 workers is more oriented toward helping them learn soft skills like punctuality, reliability, and work communication, or is it more oriented toward helping them learn specific skills associated with a particular job?

In sites that emphasized real work, rather than education, training, and skills enhancement, I expected respondents to say that their sites were generally devoted to soft skills development. In sites that emphasized vocational skills development rather than work, I expected respondents to say that they focused on specific skills associated with a particular job. Of course, respondents were also free to say neither, or both.

There were 34 respondents on this question. Thirteen, or just under 40 percent, said that their CSJ program was generally oriented toward helping W-2 participants develop soft skills. Four respondents, or just over 10 percent, said that their efforts were devoted to cultivating specific job skills. The remaining 17 respondents said that they spent time on both soft skills and vocational skills. Taking all responses together, then, 21 out of 35, or more than 60 percent, said that they emphasized vocational skills to some extent.

Work environment – interview and site visit results

Beyond the nature of job site activities, the work environment also has an important bearing on the extent to which a CSJ assignment replicates work. A work setting in which W-2 participants are treated like regular employees, and are expected to act like them, will not only support the “only work should pay” ethic, it will also help prepare participants for real, entry-level work.

Obviously, it is difficult to assess work environment in a telephone interview. To get a first-hand feel for the nature of the work experience at a CSJ, I visited six work sites in Milwaukee, involving six very different kinds of organizations (a hospital, a food pantry, a non-profit provider of services for the disabled, a child care agency, a motor vehicle office, and a provider of employment/training services).

In all of these sites but one, an outsider would be unable to distinguish W-2 participants from regular employees and volunteers. That is, W-2 workers were fully integrated into the worksite and, therefore, subject to the same work environment as other staff. In the sixth site, W-2 CSJ participants were grouped together in a separate room doing assembly work at a number of tables. Thus, they were not integrated into the day-to-day life of the larger organization. Even so, the work environment was professional, if relaxed.

To address the subject of work environment in the supervisor interviews, I began by asking respondents whether CSJ participants had fixed schedules, whether they had to clock in and out, and whether they had to fill out a timesheet. These are elements of normal work and ought, therefore, to be elements of CSJ work assignments.

Without exception, respondents indicated that CSJ participants did in fact have fixed schedules and were required to clock in and out and keep a timesheet. Because I received this same response in each of the first 10 or so interviews, I eventually dropped this question. (I did ask it, however, during several of my site visits. I received the same answers there, confirming that fixed schedules, time clocks, and time sheets are probably standard at CSJ sites.)

I asked two additional questions that provided some insight on the question of work environment. The first of these read as follows:

I want you to imagine I'm a W-2 participant working at your organization, and I've never had any real work experience outside of the work I'm doing for you. If I asked you, "What are the main differences between the work experience and environment here, in this organization, and what a regular, entry-level job would be like?" — what would you tell me?

All 37 respondents answered this question, giving a total of 43 responses. (Some respondents gave more than one answer.) The interview responses are given in Table 4, in order of frequency:

TABLE 4 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WORK EXPERIENCE/ENVIRONMENT AT CSJ WORK SITES AND REGULAR, ENTRY-LEVEL JOB

Response	Number/Percentage of Individuals Giving Response
No difference – experience/environment are same	12 (32%)
Greater "margin for error"/leeway/slack for participants	10 (27%)
Time spent on learning/skill development/mentoring	5 (14%)
Variety of work assignments	5 (14%)
Other	11 (30%)

Total number of responses = 43

Data source: author interviews with CSJ site supervisors.

The most common response to this question was that there was no difference between the CSJ work environment and the environment in a regular, entry-level job. This is probably the desired standard for a CSJ site.

The next most common response, given by 10 of the 37 respondents, was that W-2 participants generally were held to less strict standards than a regular employee would be in terms of attendance, punctuality, personal behavior, work ethic, recurring mistakes on the job, and so on.

An additional five respondents each mentioned that CSJ slots tended to involve more learning, training, and participation in mentor/protégé relationships than a regular job would; and that CSJ workers were allowed to try out a

variety of work assignments to see which ones they liked best. In a regular job, an entry-level worker might have to perform the same tasks day after day.

The remaining responses were given by fewer than five respondents each. These included:

- legal/union rules limiting the responsibilities that W-2 clients were allowed to take on, and
- participant choice/discretion in selecting work projects they thought they would like.

Other responses were not germane to our interests here. (For example, one respondent said that in a regular job the pay and benefits would be better.)

The final question in the interviews also shed some light on work environment issues. That question read as follows:

What is the biggest challenge your organization faces in running a successful W-2 work program?

All 37 respondents answered this question, giving a total of 50 responses. (Some respondents gave more than one answer.) The interview responses are given in Table 5, in order of frequency:

TABLE 5 BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL W-2 WORK PROGRAM

Response	Number/Percentage of Individuals Giving Response
Attendance/punctuality issues	13 (35%)
Participant lack of soft skills (poor attitude, work ethic, communication skills, etc.)	12 (32%)
Nothing/no challenges	6 (16%)
Other	19 (51%)
Total number of responses = 50	

Data source: author interviews with CSJ site supervisors.

Table 5 indicates that the biggest challenge respondents faced in running a successful CSJ program was participant attendance and punctuality. Specifically, site supervisors said that it was common for participants never to report for work; to show up for a day or two and then never show up again; to show up for a few days at a time, disappear for a few days, and then reappear without a phone call or explanation; and to show up late for work without calling in advance to notify their supervisor.

The second most common response in Table 5 had to do with participants' lack of soft skills. Respondents said that they faced challenges with W-2 participants lacking the motivation or desire to work; displaying an insubordinate attitude in the workplace; lacking familiarity with professional appearance and behavior; and not knowing how to communicate constructively with co-workers and supervisors.

An additional six respondents indicated that they faced no significant challenges in running a successful CSJ program. These respondents talked about the positive experience they had had working with W-2 participants.

The remaining respondents in Table 5 answered the question in a variety of ways, though no response was given by more than five individuals. Some of the responses included:

- participant self-esteem problems;
- difficulties in helping CSJ participants find real, entry-level work;
- difficulties in getting clients the resources they need to deal with barriers to work; and
- participant lack of life skills.

The responses in Table 5 do not on their face tell us much about the work environment at CSJ sites. How job sites and W-2 agencies *deal* with these challenges, on the other hand, does tell us something important. CSJ sites and

W-2 agencies that do not take action to address attendance problems and unprofessional behavior are not replicating for participants the real experience of work.

We saw in Table 4 that some job sites do give a wider berth to W-2 workers than those workers could expect in a normal, entry-level job. There are undoubtedly times when this is the best course of action, depending on the individual, the work setting, and the behavior at issue. Attendance is one area, however, in which it seems appropriate to set and enforce strict expectations. Individuals who fail to show for their CSJ assignments at all, who show for a day or two and then stop attending, or who are chronically late should be sanctioned swiftly and surely (unless they can show good cause). If W-2 workers cannot manage attendance issues, all other aspects of their job performance are moot.

Unfortunately, the MDRC community service job study referenced above has found that W-2 agency attendance-monitoring is poor. For purposes of its study, MDRC wanted to contact and interview a random sample of 200 CSJ participants. The company's researchers pulled their sample, and W-2 agencies provided information on work site assignments/locations for each of the 200 sample members. After being able to find only *one* of the first 80 participants at the CSJ site where he/she was supposed to be working, MDRC gave up on its sampling strategy.²³ W-2 agencies simply were not keeping accurate records on the location and activities of CSJ participants.

The MDRC report identifies a number of reasons that W-2 agencies have struggled with attendance-monitoring in Milwaukee County. Many of these are understandable, particularly in the initial years of a new program, when much of the research for the MDRC report was completed. Understandable or not, though, a major consequence of poor attendance monitoring at CSJ sites is that for an unknown but apparently sizeable number of participants, CSJ slots are not like work in one important respect: failure to show up without good cause does not have swift and certain consequences. The work environment at these work sites, therefore, does not replicate that in a regular job.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion leads to a few important conclusions about the nature of community service job assignments.

First, to the extent that CSJ workers are engaged in work, that work appears to be “real,” rather than make-work. W-2 participants are adding real value to the organizations in which they have been placed.

Second, community service jobs frequently consist of more than just work. Many of them appear to integrate work experience with education, vocational training, and other activities. In these cases, the message at the CSJ job sites appears not to be, “come get some work experience so that you can get a job,” but rather, “come get some work experience and upgrade your skills so that you can get a GOOD job.”

Third, the work environments by and large appear to be professional, in most cases reflecting what a regular entry-level work environment would be like. There is some indication, however, that job site supervisors bend their normal work rules to accommodate W-2 participants.

Finally, poor attendance is a pervasive problem in CSJ assignments. This problem is compounded by sometimes spotty attendance monitoring by W-2 agencies. To the extent that W-2 clients who do not show for work are still being paid, W-2 agencies are not doing a good job of replicating the experience of real, entry-level work.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

W-2 is in the midst of a generally unrecognized identity crisis. On the one hand, the state continues to maintain that “for those who can work, only work should pay.” On the other hand, it pays W-2 participants for activities other than work, and sometimes for no activities at all. About 15 percent of W-2 participants fall into the latter category – they are not engaged in work, job search, or education and training. Only one-quarter of W-2 participants are engaged solely in work activities. More than half are engaged in some sort of education and training component. More than 10 percent are engaged *solely* in education and training activities.

If W-2 participation ever was synonymous with work, it no longer is.

Community service jobs, the most common placement in the W-2 program, offer another example of this identity crisis. In one breath, the state describes the CSJ as a “real work training opportunity,” meaning a chance to practice and develop the skills associated with day-to-day employment.²⁴ In the next breath, the state says that a CSJ may also include “work experience training,” which must meet the following criteria:

- Training is similar to that given in a vocational school,
- Training is for the benefit of the trainees,
- Trainees do not displace regular employees,
- Employers derive no immediate advantage from trainees’ activities,
- Trainees are not entitled to a job after training is completed, and
- Employers and trainees understand that the trainee is not paid a wage.²⁵

In other words, despite its name, a community service job need not be a *job*. Instead, it may consist of vocational training, or may combine vocational training with work. In fact, the Wisconsin Works Participation Agreement signed by new entrants to the program commits CSJ participants to this proposition: “I will receive a monthly grant in return for up to 30 hours per week in work and training activities and up to 10 hours per week in education and training activities.”²⁶ Note that the split is not between work on the one hand and education/training on the other, but between “work and training activities” and “education and training activities.” Training and education obviously figure prominently here.

The MDRC study I have referred to frequently in this report corroborates the idea that CSJ slots may function more like training than work:

Fifty worksite supervisors were interviewed as part of this survey effort. Most of them believed that the CSJ program’s goals were to develop occupational skills and to make participants more employable or help them become independent and self-sufficient by finding permanent positions that provide job security and benefits. These worksite supervisors’ beliefs most closely resemble the idea that CSJ work experience is for broader skill-building rather than for just gaining work experience or “working off” the W-2 benefit check.²⁷

This finding, along with the data and discussion above, clearly indicate that W-2 has become less a work program than a work/education/training program.

But is that the kind of program W-2 is *supposed* to be?

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development gives different answers to this question, depending on the audience. In its on-line “Resource Guide to Welfare Reform,” the department enumerates the philosophy and goals of W-2. Right at the top of the list, one finds the original first principle of W-2: “For those who can work, only work should pay.”²⁸ Furthermore, there is no mention whatever of education and training — only “employment services.” The same is true of the manual used by W-2 agency staff, which also places the “only work should pay” principle front and center, and makes no mention of education and training.²⁹

The department used much different language, however, in its Request for Proposals from organizations interested in serving as a W-2 agency in 2004/2005:

The goal of Wisconsin Works (W-2) is to provide necessary and appropriate services to prepare individuals to work, and to obtain and maintain viable, self-sustaining employment, which will promote economic growth. W-2 is one of several work-based programs designed to ensure that everyone in Wisconsin shares in our economic opportunities.

W-2 accomplishes this goal by providing needed services in a comprehensive fashion, including such services as job readiness motivation, job retention and advancement skill training as well as childcare. W-2 employment and training services are available to any eligible Wisconsin resident unable to sustain employment or advance in the job market. W-2 services are not limited to recipients of cash assistance.

The RFP also presents a revised set of “philosophical principles” for W-2. The “only work should pay” principle has been replaced with this language: “Substantially all citizens want to be able to support their families, want to be economically self sufficient, and want to be employable members of the workforce.” There is no mention of work as the sole and exclusive paying activity available to W-2 participants. Instead, the document states that:

Each W-2 agency shall explain the full spectrum of employment, education, and training and supportive services available to assist individuals and families to transition into the workforce.³⁰

Thus, DWD appears to have downgraded the importance of work under W-2 and given a much more prominent place to education and training activities.

This may reflect the reality of how W-2 is being administered, but it is clearly not where the program started, nor is it where W-2's founding principles suggested it would end up. Accordingly, it may be time to rework the "only work should pay" principle. An updated, more accurate version might read as follows: "For those capable of participating in work, education, and training activities, only those activities should pay." (Of course, the state would then have to uphold this principle by sanctioning all individuals with unexcused attendance problems, something that appears not to be happening now.)

The issues here are more than just semantic ones, however. They affect more than just the wording of philosophical principles in W-2 manuals, brochures, and contracting documents.

There were at least two good reasons for establishing the primacy of work under W-2 in the first place. The first had to do with another W-2 principle, also listed in the W-2 manual: "W-2's fairness will be gauged by comparison with low-income families who work for a living." Low-income families who work for a living do just that — they work. They generally cannot split their time between work and vocational training on the taxpayers' tab. They certainly cannot avoid work altogether and enhance their skills on someone else's dime. Is it fair to them that W-2 participants should be able to do these things while working families cannot? W-2's designers didn't think so, and with good reason.

The second reason for insisting on the primacy of work was the belief that actual work experience, rather than education and training, was the best preparation for employment. According to the original W-2 proposal document:

[E]xperience shows that individuals without a work history are usually in a stronger employment position after one or two years of work (at any wage) than after a comparable period of work preparation through education and training.³¹

This claim opens a messy can of worms — one containing arguments over whether a "labor force attachment" approach to employment is more productive for welfare recipients than a "human capital" model. Under the former approach, welfare clients are encouraged to move into a job — any job will do — as quickly as possible. Under the latter, they are allowed to undertake education and training in the hopes of securing a better entry-level job than they might otherwise.

The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation has evaluated these two approaches and found the labor force attachment model to be generally superior in terms of cost-effectiveness, and just as effective as the human capital approach in terms of employment and earnings outcomes.³² A welfare program like W-2, however, with its community service job component, does not fit neatly under either the "labor force attachment" or "human capital" model. Instead of being directed to the first available job, or to a full-time education/training opportunity, many W-2 participants are assigned to a part-time, "practice" work position *and* to education/vocational training.

As noted, this approach is a deviation from the one that was envisioned when W-2 was conceived. What's more, as we have just seen, it lies outside of the two major welfare-to-work traditions, and so has not been researched extensively. It may, in fact, be a sensible approach philosophically, or in terms of actual employment and earnings results, or both. The burden is clearly on the state, however, to make the case that it is.

Recommendations

First, and most important, state welfare program administrators need to have an honest discussion about the orientation of the W-2 program. If they believe that work-first, work-only is an inappropriate model, then they ought to revise the first principle of W-2 and communicate the policy change to all W-2 agencies.

If they do so, however, they should be prepared to explain: a) how a mixed work/training approach still honors the program's ostensible commitment to fairness for working families who are not on welfare; and b) the empirical evidence that a mixed work/training approach is superior to a work-first, work-only approach.

If, on the other hand, they believe that work-first, work-only is an appropriate program ideal, they need to begin working with W-2 agencies to eliminate the education and vocational training components of W-2.

A reasonable compromise might be to acknowledge that education and training are legitimate, important parts of W-2, but insist that all non-exempt, adult W-2 participants engage in at least some form of genuine work in addi-

tion to any education and training they are receiving. Every client would have to log a minimum weekly number of work hours, whatever other activities he or she might be engaged in.³³ Again, this kind of compromise would have to be defended on both empirical grounds — how do we know this is an effective approach? — and philosophical ones — can we justify paying participants to engage in activities other than work? Is that fair to working Wisconsin families?

Second, the state needs to ensure consistency in the coding of W-2 participant activities. “Work experience” and “community service job,” for example, must mean the same thing from one agency to the next and one case worker to the next. Achieving consistency in coding of such activities will give program administrators and Wisconsin taxpayers a realistic idea of what W-2 participants are actually *doing* on a day-to-day basis. This, in turn, will improve program accountability and help administrators learn about the best mix of activities for W-2 participants.

As an obvious starting point, the state could define “work experience” as traditional work activities and *only* work activities — not vocational training, not adult education, not job search. Thus, work experience would consist solely of work done in exchange for one’s W-2 grant, work designed to help acclimate the W-2 participant to the workplace.

With that definition in place, a “community service job” could be defined as consisting solely of work experience, or a combination of work experience and education/training. Activities such as mental/physical health treatment or drug rehabilitation could not be counted as part of a community service job placement. Furthermore, any placement that did not involve work experience could not be considered a CSJ.

Third, regardless of where the state comes down on the appropriate mix of work and training, W-2 administrators must take steps immediately to ensure that client participation is actively monitored and that unexcused failure to participate is met with swift and certain sanctions. By failing to enforce attendance requirements at CSJ sites, the state is dishonoring the effort of working Wisconsin families, who are paid only if they work, and is doing a disservice to W-2 clients, who will more quickly learn the norms of work life if the state enforces them.

Finally, as part of its effort to ensure that participation requirements at CSJ job sites are upheld, the state may wish to clamp down on “site-hopping.” Site-hopping occurs when W-2 clients attend one CSJ site for a few days or a week, decide they do not like it, request a transfer to another site, decide they do not like that site either, and so on.

Both the research for this report and the MDRC study found site-hopping to be a common problem.³⁴ Just as with poor attendance, site-hopping diminishes the value of the CSJ in helping acclimate W-2 participants to work. Site-hopping also serves as a source of frustration for job site supervisors, who invest time, effort, and energy into orienting CSJ participants to their work site and responsibilities, only to find many of them gone a few days later.

W-2 administrators may wish to establish a strict limit on the number of job site changes available to CSJ participants, or even better, create a “minimum stay” requirement of, say, one month at any site to which a participant is assigned. Individuals failing to meet that requirement without good cause would then have their checks reduced. This would help reinforce the message that there are consequences for inconsistent commitment to an employer in the real world.

NOTES

1. Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, "Governor Thompson Unveils End to Welfare," undated news release, available on-line at <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/dwd/newsreleases/1998/2396_536.htm>
2. Amy Rinard, "Thompson Unveils Welfare Replacement," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 3, 1994.
3. Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, "The 1999 Plan: Wisconsin Works," undated manuscript, p.2. The document was leaked to Wisconsin media in July of 1995.
4. Department of Workforce Development, "1999 Plan," p.12.
5. *Ibid.*, p.52.
6. State of Wisconsin, "1995 Wisconsin Act 289," published May 9, 1996, p.24.
7. As will be seen below, however, the state appears not to be enforcing this second requirement uniformly.
8. The quarterly summary data are aggregated from monthly data supplied by the Department of Workforce Development. The monthly data contain participation information for every adult and minor parent participating in W-2 in that month. (Data on minor parents were not included in Tables 1 and 2, however.) If an individual participated in W-2 for three consecutive months in a quarter, his or her participation hours/activities would be listed three times in that quarter – once for the first month, once for the second, and once for the third. Within any given quarter, therefore, it is possible for an individual to appear in the data as many as three times.
9. For purposes of Tables 1 and 2, "work activities" include unsubsidized and subsidized employment, work experience, on-the-job training, community service programs, and providing child care services. "Education and training activities" include vocational education, job skills training directly related to employment, education directly related to employment, and school attendance.
10. Federal statute limits job search activities to a maximum of six weeks per year. This has an obvious dampening effect on the proportion of the W-2 caseload that can be engaged in job search at any one time.
11. According to Column B, roughly 25 percent of the caseload is in work-only status. That 25 percent would constitute one-third of non-Transitions placements, which are 75 percent of the caseload ($25/75 = 1/3$).
12. To see this, deduct 25 percent from the figures in Column F to account for W-2 Transitions placements, and then divide the remainder by 75 percent, which represents all non-Transitions placements.
13. I will present more qualitative evidence of this below in the discussion of the community service jobs component of W-2.
14. Andrea Robles, Fred Doolittle, Susan Gooden, *Community Service Jobs in Wisconsin Works: The Milwaukee County Experience*, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, June 2003.
15. *Ibid.*, p.22.
16. *Ibid.*, p.52.
17. *Ibid.*, p.50.
18. State of Wisconsin, Department of Workforce Development, W-2 Manual Release 02-02, Section 7.4.1, available on-line at: <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/dws/manuals/w-2_manual/tables_of_contents/00TOC.htm>
19. For purposes of this paper, a site supervisor is someone with direct supervisory responsibility over W-2 workers. A site manager is someone with direct supervisory responsibility over site supervisors. A site manager may also have supervisory responsibility over W-2 workers. The majority of my interviews for this report were with site supervisors. Everyone interviewed for this project, whether a supervisor or a manager, was intimately familiar with W-2 job site policies, practices, and experiences.
20. In the interviews, I generally used the phrase "work slots" instead of "community service jobs." Some respondents were not familiar with the latter term and were unclear as to its meaning.
21. In addition to education/training-oriented components, "other activities" may include physical/mental health treatment, drug rehabilitation, and orientation/enrollment/assessment activities.
22. Calculations based on the source data for Tables 1 and 2 indicate that among W-2 participants assigned to either a community service job or work experience slot, 58 percent were also assigned to education and training activities.
23. *Ibid.*, pp.39,40.
24. This phrase is excerpted from Department of Workforce Development, W-2 Manual Release 02-02, Section 7.4.1, available on-line at: <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/dws/manuals/w-2_manual/chapter_7/7.4.0.htm>
25. *Ibid.*, Section 7.4.0.

26. The participation agreement is reproduced in Susan Good, Fred Doolittle, and Ben Glispie, *Matching Applicants with Services: Initial Assessments in the Milwaukee County W-2 Program*, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, November 2001, p.25.
27. Robles, Doolittle, and Gooden, *Community Service Jobs in Wisconsin Works*, p.29.
28. See <<http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/dws/w2/resourceguide/default.htm>>
29. See <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/dws/manuals/w-2_manual/chapter_1/1.1.0.htm>
30. See State of Wisconsin, Department of Workforce Development, "Request for Proposals (RFP) to Administer W-2 and Related Programs for 2004-2005," available on-line at: <<http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/dws/w2/rfp/default.htm>> For the specific language cited in the text, see: <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/dws/w2/rfs/pdf/rfs_part1.pdf>
31. Department of Workforce Development, "The 1999 Plan: Wisconsin Works," p.2.
32. See Gayle Hamilton, Stephen Freedman, Lisa Gennetian, Charles Michalopoulos, Johanna Walter, Diana Adams-Ciardullo, Anna Gassman-Pines, Sharon McGroder, Martha Zaslow, Jennifer Brooks, and Surjeet Ahluwalia, *How Effective Are Different Welfare-to-Work Approaches? Five-Year Adult and Child Impacts for Eleven Programs*, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation and Child Trends, Inc., for the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, and Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, United States Department of Education, Office of the Deputy Secretary, Planning and Evaluation Service, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, December 2001.
33. Such a requirement is actually part of W-2 policy currently, but apparently is not being enforced. See Department of Workforce Development, W-2 Manual Release 02-02, Section 8.2.1, available on-line at: <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/dws/manuals/w-2_manual/chapter_8/8.2.0.htm#8.2.1>
34. MDRC's sample of CSJ participants found that 46 percent had changed work sites at least once between November of 1999 and January of 2000.

APPENDIX – CSJ SITE SUPERVISOR INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

1. Would you describe the organization you work for as for-profit, not-for-profit, or government?
2. What kind of business is your organization in? What kinds of goods/services do you provide?
3. Do you directly supervise W-2 workers referred from (*insert name of W-2 agency, or multiple W-2 agencies, here*)?
4. In total, how many W-2 workers would you say have been referred to your organization since W-2 began?
5. How many W-2 workers are assigned to your organization right now?
6. Can you describe for me in general terms the kinds of activities W-2 workers participate in at your site?
7. Would you say that your program for W-2 workers is more oriented toward helping them learn soft skills like punctuality, reliability, and work communication, or is it more oriented toward helping them learn specific skills associated with a particular job?
8. For W-2 workers that have shown up for work consistently for, say, two or three months, or for workers who have mastered certain skills, do you provide any kind of certificate or credential that these individuals can show to a prospective employer?
9. I want you to imagine I'm a W-2 participant working at your organization, and I've never had any real work experience outside of the work I'm doing for you. If I asked you, "What are the main differences between the work experience and environment here, in this organization, and what a regular, entry-level job would be like?", what would you tell me?
10. Can you tell me roughly what proportion of your W-2 workers have ended up moving from a CSJ position with your organization directly into a regular employment situation?
11. I'm going to read you three statements, and I want you to tell me which one you think is most accurate:
 - a. the W-2 work slots at my organization are very much like a regular job;
 - b. the W-2 work slots at my organization are like a regular job combined with other activities; or
 - c. the W-2 work slots at my organization are a little like a regular job, but they mostly involve other activities.
12. What is the biggest challenge your organization faces in running a successful W-2 work program?

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The **Wisconsin Policy Research Institute** is a not-for-profit institute established to study public-policy issues affecting the state of Wisconsin.

Under the new federalism, government policy increasingly is made at the state and local levels. These public-policy decisions affect the life of every citizen in the state. Our goal is to provide nonpartisan research on key issues affecting Wisconsinites, so that their elected representatives can make informed decisions to improve the quality of life and future of the state.

Our major priority is to increase the accountability of Wisconsin's government. State and local governments must be responsive to the citizenry, both in terms of the programs they devise and the tax money they spend. Accountability should apply in every area to which the state devotes the public's funds.

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We believe that the views of the citizens of Wisconsin should guide the decisions of government officials. To help accomplish this, we also conduct regular public-opinion polls that are designed to inform public officials about how the citizenry views major statewide issues. These polls are disseminated through the media and are made available to the general public and the legislative and executive branches of state government. It is essential that elected officials remember that all of the programs they create and all of the money they spend comes from the citizens of Wisconsin and is made available through their taxes. Public policy should reflect the real needs and concerns of all of the citizens of the state and not those of specific special-interest groups.