

Design of a Project to Evaluate Job Retention Under the Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS)

Many common problems have the potential to subvert a successful employment relationship for a person with a disability, particularly disabilities like mental retardation and mental illness. For example, job skills can slip (e.g., pace, accuracy, and attention to task) or changes might arise in the work environment (e.g., change of supervisors, relocation of the workplace, or teasing by a coworker). In addition, problems may arise outside of a work setting, such as a family crisis or difficulty with transportation, which can affect a person's productivity on the job.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has developed a plan to test whether government-financed job monitoring services can help Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients who are working to resolve problems that might otherwise threaten their employment. Job monitors (JMs) seek to anticipate, identify, and address issues related to job retention by communicating with recipients and, if the recipients permit, with their employers and other stakeholders on a regular basis. Monitors in this demonstration will resolve simple problems themselves and arrange for externally funded services available in the community when a more intensive intervention is required. They will also provide or access advice on SSI and other program related work incentives.

SSA will evaluate the efficacy of this modest intervention in promoting job retention by randomly assigning a subset of existing SSI recipients to either (i) an intervention group that receives job-monitoring services or (ii) a statistically equivalent "control" group that does not. A comparison of outcomes between the two groups will give an unbiased, highly reliable measure of the impact of the JM services.

The job monitoring service will be funded primarily through the Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS). A PASS is a written plan in which an SSI recipient specifies an employment goal and, under current SSI policy, the time limited expenditures necessary to achieve that goal. For demonstration PASSes, retention of the current job will be an acceptable goal and non-time limited expenditures allowed. A PASS allows a recipient to pay for JM services out of earnings and have those earnings excluded from the SSI benefit calculation, with the result that the expenditure does not reduce the recipient's disposable income.

This report presents a detailed plan for the demonstration and its evaluation, as designed under contract to the Urban Institute with the assistance of Westat, Inc. The purpose of the report is to:

- Develop a basic implementation strategy for the demonstration's three components—data collection, intervention, and evaluation—that keeps costs to a minimum;
- Develop optional implementation strategies that test more ambitious (and possibly multiple) interventions in order to provide more information to policy makers; and
- Estimate implementation and evaluation costs.

The report includes designs for providing JM services, collecting survey and other data, and conducting the evaluation, including detailed protocols for carrying out each step.

SSA is reviewing the findings from the report to make the final decision on whether to implement the demonstration project or revise it.

The full citation for the final report is:

Wittenburg, David, Stephen Bell, William Frey, Jarnee Riley, Pamela Holcomb, John Trutko, Michael West, and Kevin McManus. 2002. *Design of a Project on Job Retention Under the Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS): Final Report*. Prepared for the Social Security Administration.