

Improving Economic Opportunity through Health Care Training

Findings from the Health Profession Opportunity Grants Program

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DID HPOG 1.0 MEET ITS SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES?

HPOG increased occupational training and receipt of academic support, career support, and other services. A year and a half after enrolling, participants who received treatment

- were 15 percent more likely to be enrolled in training or related activities;
- were 12 percent more likely to have increased educational progress;
- were 27 percent more likely to be employed in the health care sector;
- were 4 percent more likely to have a job that offers health insurance; and
- had slightly higher earnings.

Longer-term impact results are forthcoming.

Health care is the fastest growing sector in the economy, with employment across many of the industry's occupations projected to grow. Mid-level health care occupations are in increasing demand as service delivery shifts toward lower-cost caregivers, an aging population needs more supportive health care services, and medical record-keeping becomes increasingly automated. At the same time, millions of Americans are stuck in low-wage, entry-level jobs with little prospect for advancement.

The Health Profession Opportunity Grants Program (HPOG) aims to provide Temporary Assistance for Needy Families recipients and other low-income people with education and training for occupations in the health care field that pay well and are in high demand.

HPOG is a time-limited grant program. In 2010, the Office of Family Assistance within the Administration for Children and Families awarded the first round of five-year HPOG grants (HPOG 1.0) to 32 organizations in 23 states; five of these were tribal organizations. A second round of five-year grants (HPOG 2.0) was awarded in 2015 to some new and some continuing grantees.

WHO DOES HPOG SERVE?

- Most participants are female, are unmarried, and have at least one dependent child.
- Participants must be Temporary Assistance for Needy Families recipients or have low incomes (over half have household incomes of less than \$20,000).
- More than half are receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits.
- Close to half are working at the time of program enrollment.
- More than half already have some postsecondary education.

WHAT DOES HPOG OFFER PARTICIPANTS?

HPOG provides education and training in different health care occupations, such as nursing, long-term care, allied health, medical billing, and health information technology. The program funds tuition for its participants, but other important parts of HPOG are the academic, employment, and other supportive services it offers that enable participants to succeed.

Through career navigators, case managers, and job counselors, the program helps participants learn about health care careers, assess and improve basic skills, select and enroll in appropriate training courses, and find employment during and after training.

HPOG helps students succeed by providing academic support before and during training (such as pretraining boot camps, tutoring, or mentors); assisting with additional costs such as training-related expenses (e.g., books, uniforms, and medical instruments), transportation, or child care; and working with participants on work-readiness skills.

Each grantee has the flexibility (within HPOG's broader goals) to design and implement its offerings to meet the specific needs of its target populations and local employers, selecting which trainings and services to offer and forming partnerships with other organizations.

HPOG incorporates a career-pathways approach. The program provides training not just for a job but for a career that leads to economic improvement and upward mobility. HPOG accomplishes this by offering health care trainings that lead to employer-recognized credentials and that combine to provide competencies in a defined career pathway. Depending on their initial skill level, participants can train for entry-level, mid-level, or high-level occupations and some go on to complete several health care trainings.

DOES HPOG WORK?

The Administration for Children and Families is funding evaluations of both rounds of HPOG, which are being carried out by Abt Associates and its subcontractors, including the Urban Institute. The impact evaluations compare the outcomes of people who were randomly assigned to "treatment" and "control" groups. Results after 15 to 18 months of participation are available. An evaluation of longer-term impacts, looking at participant outcomes three years after starting HPOG, will be released by the end of 2019. Descriptive measures of outcomes, which do not determine whether HPOG caused those outcomes, are also available.

HPOG 1.0 improved educational progress. Short-term results for HPOG 1.0 show HPOG had a significant positive impact on the educational progress of participants, who were more likely to complete or be enrolled in occupational training. HPOG increased educational progress for both younger and older participants, for participants of all race and ethnicity groups, and for participants with and without dependent children.

HPOG 1.0 increased supportive service receipt and health care employment. The main difference between HPOG and other programs in the community was the availability of supportive services. HPOG increased occupational training and receipt of academic support, career support, and other supportive services (such as transportation and child care assistance). Participants were also more likely to be employed in the health care sector, and their earnings were slightly higher (on average \$137 higher in the fifth quarter after enrolling). Many participants were still in training when these outcomes were measured. Future evaluation results will provide longer-term, post-training information on HPOG's impacts on employment and earnings.

ADDITIONAL READING

Health Profession Opportunity Grants 2.0: Year Two Annual Report (2016–17)

Pamela Loprest, 2018 <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/health-profession-opportunity-grants-20>.

Improving Economic Opportunity through Healthcare Training: Short-Term Impact Results from the First Round of the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG 1.0)

Laura R. Peck, Gretchen Locke, and Douglas Walton, 2018 <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/improving-economic-opportunity-healthcare-training-short-term-impact-results-first-round-hpog-10>.