



Career Transition Services (CTS) Workgroup

◆ Student Research Findings 2005



BACKGROUND

National Director Grace A. Kilbane established a Career Transition Services (CTS) Workgroup (membership list attached) in January 2005. The group's charge was to study the delivery and quality of Job Corps' career transition services and to make specific recommendations for improvement, where necessary.

Using the support of a contractor, the Workgroup conducted both quantitative and qualitative research which included data analysis and focus groups with 375 students and 80 graduates.

The purpose of this document is to share trend data and student findings with the Job Corps community. It is the Workgroup's hope that these findings will contribute to current and future efforts targeted at improving the delivery and quality of CTS services. Staff and employer interviews were also conducted in accordance with this project. Any forthcoming decisions or actions resulting from these findings will be announced or implemented under separate cover.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

The support contractor worked directly with the CTS Workgroup, the Job Corps Data Center (JCDC), and research contractors Decision Information Resources (DIR) and Battelle to analyze quantitative data that could reveal CTS trends. The purpose of this analysis was to study trends related to students' ultimate success beyond Job Corps. (DIR and Battelle conduct the graduate and former enrollee follow-up telephone surveys for Job Corps.) This analysis revealed the following:

- ◆ **Gender** – Males were more likely than females to have secured and retained jobs at all three survey points (13 weeks, 6 months, and 12 months).
- ◆ **Age** – Older students were more likely than younger students to have secured and retained jobs at all three survey points.
- ◆ **Length of Stay** – The longer a student remained in the program, the more likely he or she was to have secured and retained a job at all three survey points. The variance was most pronounced at initial placement.
- ◆ **Academic and Vocational Attainment** – Students who earned either a high school diploma or a GED certificate and completed vocational training, particularly beyond the base or initial TAR, were more likely to have secured and retained jobs than those students who only completed vocational training or received a high school diploma or GED certificate. Students who completed only vocational training were more likely to have obtained and kept jobs than those students who only earned a high school diploma or GED certificate.
- ◆ **Basic Vocational Training Compared to Advanced Vocational Training** – Students who completed advanced vocational training were more likely to have secured and retained jobs than those students who completed only basic vocational training.
- ◆ **NTC Vocational Training Compared to Non-NTC Vocational Training** – Students who received NTC vocational training were slightly more likely to have secured and retained jobs at all three survey points than students who received non-NTC vocational training.
- ◆ **Initial Placement Trade** – Data did not prove to be valuable in determining trends related to initial placement rates by trade.

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Graduates were more likely to have secured and retained jobs if they:

- *Were Male*
- *Were Older*
- *Remained in Job Corps Longer*
- *Earned a HSD/GED and Completed Vocational Training*
- *Completed Advanced Training*
- *Received NTC Vocational Training*



- ◆ **Service Utilization from Follow-up Surveys** – A minority of students indicated a need for CTS services provided at each of the three measurement points. On the whole, far less than 50 percent of the students who needed the services said they received them. Of the respondents who indicated the services needed were received, a strong majority identified the assistance provided as Very Helpful or Somewhat Helpful.
- ◆ **CTS Contract-to-Center Relationship** – There was not a statistically significant difference in the outcomes for CTS services provided through center-based contracts compared with CTS services provided by off-center service providers.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

To supplement the quantitative research, the CTS Workgroup instructed the support contractor to conduct targeted, focus group research at 11 Job Corps centers nationwide. Target sites were chosen to reflect the diversity of CTS arrangements (e.g., CTS provided by a center contractor vs. a third-party contractor).

Prior to center visits, the support contractor asked center staff members to select students in each phase of CDSS to participate in one of seven focus groups. Eight to 12 students were placed in each of the following groups:

- ◆ Group 1: Day-of or week-of-arrival students (less than 10 days)
- ◆ Group 2: Students in the CPP phase (less than 60 days)
- ◆ Group 3: Students in the CDP phase (60 to 180 days)
- ◆ Group 4: Students in the CTS phase (180 to 360 days)
- ◆ Group 5: Students in the CTS phase longer than average (360 to 540 days)
- ◆ Group 6: Placed graduates
- ◆ Group 7: Unplaced graduates

All students polled were asked a set of 24 general questions as well as approximately 7-10 questions unique to each respective category of students. The draft surveys were closely reviewed and edited by the CTS Workgroup.

A designated note taker recorded each focus group's responses to all survey questions, while a facilitator conducted the group discussion. These notes were later analyzed across all centers to yield the feedback outlined below.

STUDENT/GRADUATE FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK

- ◆ Leisure time was cited by students as an untapped time period for delivering or reinforcing employability and independent living skills.
- ◆ Residential advisers were cited by students as the most likely persons a student would keep in touch with after graduation. Others cited most often were vocational instructors and counselors.
- ◆ The ePCDP was not personal for most students. Instead, it was something staff members used to update student files. Students had little or no ownership of or buy-in to the process. (This feedback preceded recent ePCDP improvements.)
- ◆ CTS classroom space and resources were often limited (computers, staff to help during the day, etc.).



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- ◆ Transition pay was too low to truly get started in life on your own. Students told researchers that it is less than \$1,000 after taxes.
- ◆ Students often had a very *literal* understanding of the career transition services that they would receive: i.e., that Job Corps would *get them* a job, a car, housing, etc.
- ◆ CTS messages were being introduced in the Career Preparation Period (CPP) but were not reinforced consistently during the Career Development Period (CDP). Students recalled very little or no introduction during the Outreach and Admissions process (OA).
- ◆ Graduates who were successful appeared to be less likely to stay in touch with Job Corps staff because they were working, content and believed they no longer needed anything from Job Corps. (According to DIR, its survey data was unable to verify this finding.)
- ◆ Students and graduates expressed a strong preference to hear important messages in person vs. through a computer, telephone, reading material, etc. They were willing to hear messages through other diverse media, as long as personal contact also was involved.
- ◆ When asked directly, most students indicated they did not need training in employability skills. Instead, they thought this was “common sense.” (This was in direct contrast to what researchers heard from staff and employers.)





CTS WORKGROUP MEMBERS 2005:

- ◆ Marlene Broomer, MTC (CTS Provider)
- ◆ Teresa Dunn-Frank, Center Director, Pine Knot, representing CCCs
- ◆ Rachel Floyd-Nelson, Accountability Unit, Job Corps National Office
- ◆ Lynn Intrepidi, Regional Director, Philadelphia Region
- ◆ Edna Jackson, Jackson Pierce (CTS Provider)
- ◆ Pamela Knight, ResCare (CTS Provider)
- ◆ Andrew Larson, IUPAT (Painters Union), representing NTCs
- ◆ Adam Li, Job Corps Data Center
- ◆ David Mackenzie, Center Director, Hubert H. Humphrey
- ◆ Sandra Speight, Atlanta Regional Office (Regional CTS Workgroup)
- ◆ Isaac Squyres, McNeely Pigott & Fox (Workgroup Contractor)
- ◆ Maria Temiquel, Chief, Program Support Unit, Job Corps National Office
- ◆ Alan Lafferman, Program Support Unit, Job Corps National Office