

Non-Custodial Parent Choices

PEER Pilot: Impact Report

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KEY FINDINGS

Two new pilot programs represent efforts by the Texas Office of the Attorney General to extend and expand upon the original, highly successful Non-Custodial Parent Choices (NCP Choices) program. The Non-Custodial Parent Choices PEER curriculum enhancement pilot is the focus of this report, while the Establishment Pilot (NCP Choices-EP) is discussed in a parallel report. The PEER pilot, which began in late 2010 in Hidalgo County, El Paso, and Beaumont/Port Arthur, tests whether the addition of a curriculum including parenting and relationship skills and financial literacy to the standard workforce development services in the original program can measurably enhance the program's impacts on the ability of low-income non-custodial parents (NCPs) to support their children. This report describes the early impacts of this pilot, which has thus far shown success in increasing child support collections.

Early findings suggest that PEER has been highly successful in engaging noncustodial parents; roughly three out of every four NCPs ordered into PEER either completed the curriculum or obtained full-time employment during the pilot period. Impact evaluation results indicate that the PEER pilot has clearly led to increased child support collections, including both increased frequency and consistency of payments made by NCPs. PEER clients also participated more in workforce development, an unexpected but positive finding. Several puzzling findings also emerged, including a slight increase in potentially being sent to jail, which could have resulted from the increased monitoring associated with the program. And a slight increase in the rate of TANF receipt is difficult to interpret, in light of the increased payment of child support.

The one major caveat to these results is that these are early findings from a new program, so it is too soon to say whether the observed impacts will persist. The pilot shows enough promise that it should continue to be studied, with participants tracked over longer periods of time to more accurately estimate longer term impacts. Additional suggestions to consider for potential future evolution of the PEER program include utilizing the Advanced Curriculum (the second four weeks) as well as the Core, offering Spanish-only versions of the sessions, and developing a similar curriculum for the custodial parents as well.

INTRODUCTION

The Non-Custodial Parent Choices PEER Pilot (NCP Choices-PEER) represents an effort to test whether the highly successful NCP Choices program can be improved by the addition of a curriculum to enhance the already positive program impacts. The PEER pilot tests a version of NCP Choices that also includes use of a parenting and relationship skills, and financial education curriculum, in addition to the usual package of NCP Choices workforce development services. The question for the PEER pilot is whether this additional curriculum leads to greater impacts on important outcomes. This report utilizes a random-assignment design to examine the effectiveness of this variation on a proven successful program.

The original Non-Custodial Parent Choices initiative (NCP Choices) began in 2005 as a partnership between the Texas Office of the Attorney General (OAG) and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). These two agencies joined forces to implement a model employment project for unemployed and underemployed non-custodial parents (NCPs) who had fallen behind on their child support payments, and whose children were current or recent recipients of public assistance. The project, currently ongoing at full scale in eighteen locations, establishes links among IV-D courts responsible for child support issues, OAG child support staff, and local workforce development boards to provide employment services and child support compliance monitoring to NCPs who need them. Because it serves NCPs in the *enforcement* phase of their child support cases, during which collections are monitored and enforced by the OAG, this original program will be referred to as the *enforcement* version of NCP Choices.

The NCP Choices *enforcement program* has been found to be highly successful in improving payment of child support, in terms of both increased frequency and consistency of payment, as well as increasing NCP rates of employment, reducing unemployment claims, and even reducing TANF receipt among the associated custodial parents (for latest program evaluation see Schroeder & Doughty, 2009). Given this high level of success, it is natural to ask whether the standard package of workforce development services, intended primarily to help NCPs gain and keep a job, yields the greatest impacts relative to the investment in each NCP. One might ask, for example, whether additional services that are sometimes included in interventions such as this, including those that can build relationship,

parenting, and financial skills, might also help to boost child support payment levels, and potentially other important outcomes as well. The PEER curriculum was designed as an add-on to the original NCP Choices program to provide this assistance.

In order to obtain an objective outside assessment of this program, the OAG contracted with the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources (RMC) at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin to study the implementation of NCP Choices and its program variations at various stages, and to conduct an analysis of the program impacts on key outcome measures. This report estimates preliminary program impacts on important outcomes for early participants in the NCP Choices PEER curriculum enhancement pilot.

Following this introductory section, the report contains a background section including literature review and other context, followed by sections briefly describing Choices services, and the program design of the PEER pilot. After that is a section describing results from the implementation evaluation of the PEER pilot, including observations from site visits conducted in late spring 2011. The impact analysis research design is then described in a subsequent section, followed by a section with preliminary program impacts for PEER in its first year of implementation. Finally, a discussion section explores any conclusions that can be drawn thus far from the experience of this pilot program.

BACKGROUND

The number of children living in single-parent households in the United States has increased dramatically since the 1960s. While an estimated 9 percent of children under 18 years of age lived with a single parent in 1960 (Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2002; Garfinkel, Miller, McLanahan & Hanson, 1998), by 2008 this rate had increased to nearly 26.3 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). As a result, about half of children living in the United States today will spend some part of their childhood in a single-parent household (Legler, 2003).

Coupled to this is an increase in the number of never-married mothers, who tend to have lower rates of support than previously married mothers (Grail, 2007; Roff, 2008). By 2006, nearly one third of custodial mothers had never been married (Grail, 2007). Single-mother families are about five times as likely to be poor as married-parent families (Cancian and Reed, 2009).

Policymakers view the improvement of child support collection as a key strategy for reducing high poverty rates among single-parent families and reducing the public costs associated with supporting these families. Child support can be an important source of income for single-parent households, especially for poor families. Research indicates that twenty-two percent of poor women who received child support in 1995 were lifted above the poverty line by child support receipts (Miller et al., 2005). Among custodial parents below the poverty line who received full payments, the average amount of child support received (\$4,700) represented over 60% of their annual income (Grail, 2007). Furthermore, families that can combine earnings and child support received from NCPs are better able to make ends meet, sustain employment, and remain off of TANF cash assistance, as compared to single-parent families that do not receive support (Miller et al., 2005). Since so many single-head-of-household families continue to subsist on poverty-level wages (36.5 percent), increasing child support compliance will remain a key strategy for lifting these families out of poverty.

To the chagrin of many, the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA) substantially reduced federal financing of state child support enforcement. Although this incentive funding reduction was projected to reduce child support enforcement performance, particularly in higher-performing states like Texas (Lewin Group, 2007), the expected

reductions largely failed to materialize. Others noted that some provisions of the DRA made it easier for states to pass through child support collections to TANF recipients by (1) waiving the federal share of child support collected on behalf of current or former TANF recipients if states elect to pass through collections, and (2) denying the ability of States to require families to sign over their rights to past-due child support that accrued prior to their TANF application (Parrott, Schott, & Sweeney, 2007). Of course, greater pass-through policies directly place more of the funds collected into the hands of needy families. Moreover, there is research evidence suggesting that increasing pass-through while also disregarding some or all of this income for benefit determination purposes leads to both greater paternity establishment and greater child support collections (Cassetty, Meyer, & Cancian, 2002).

The child support program has made incredible strides in demonstrated effectiveness over the years. After a slight decline in total nationwide collections in 2009 for the first time in the program's history, child support enforcement collected \$26.6 billion in 2010. Despite the brief decline in 2009, which is widely attributed to the downturn in the U.S. economy on a scale not seen since the Great Depression, total collections still grew 7% percent in the interval from 2007 to 2010. Texas had the highest collections in the country in 2010, with \$2.83 billion in collections, an increase of 5.8% from 2009. In fact, Texas went against the national trend in 2009, when its total collections increased by 4.6% from the prior year. Texas has led the nation in collections distributed since 2007 (DHHS, 2010).

Nationally in 2010, 13.8 percent of child support cases included families currently receiving public assistance, a slight increase from prior years, and 42.7 percent included families who had previously received assistance (DHHS, 2010). In Texas, the child support caseload is less dominated by TANF and former TANF recipients, and becomes less so with each passing year. Only 5.9 percent of Texas FY 2010 child support cases included families currently receiving public assistance and 34.2 percent included families who previously received assistance. Nationwide in 2010, child support enforcement (CSE) collected just over \$1 billion for families currently receiving public assistance and just under \$9 billion for families who had previously received assistance (DHHS, 2010). In Texas in 2010, the current/former TANF disparity was greater, with CSE collecting only \$10.3 million for families currently receiving assistance and \$766 million for families who had previously received assistance (DHHS, 2010).

CHOICES PROGRAM SERVICES OVERVIEW

NCPs in the original, enforcement version of the NCP Choices program as well as those in the PEER pilot receive essentially the same Choices services as are available to clients in the regular, or TANF Choices program. This program is described briefly here, followed by a description of the program services as extended to NCPs.

TANF Choices Program

TANF Choices (formerly the JOBS program) is the employment and training program for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) families, operated under TWC's primarily work-first oriented service model which emphasizes personal responsibility, time-limited cash assistance, and the goal of work instead of welfare. The Choices program provides workforce development services to both single- and two-parent families. Although the program emphasizes work-first strategies such as job search, it has features of a mixed model, in that it provides training to some of those who may not be work-ready.

Participation in Choices begins with a workforce orientation for applicants as their introduction to workforce center services. The initial activities provided to the Choices participants include both job readiness and job search. Those participants who do not find immediate employment are required to participate in community service. Participants who are actively pursuing employment are eligible for support services, including child care, transportation assistance, work-related expenses, and other support services to help in employment efforts. Some training opportunities may be made available as well. Those public assistance recipients who are required to participate but fail to do so without "good cause" suffer sanctions and discontinuation of benefits. Finally, Choices participants are granted post-employment services to assist in job retention and to document wage gains, career progression, and progression to self-sufficiency.

NCP Choices Workforce Service Design

The Choices program described earlier looks very similar when extended to Non-custodial Parents. The NCP Choices program was developed to provide non-custodial parents with similar services to enable them to work and pay their child support obligations.

Workforce staff provides employment services to noncustodial parents to assist the unemployed or underemployed NCP in obtaining and retaining employment. Employment services include:

- Assessment,
- Registration in Work in Texas (WIT),
- Case management,
- Job referrals,
- Support services, and
- Retention services.

Workforce staff attends court dockets to meet with NCPs, in order to establish a relationship with them and schedule an appointment to begin employment assessment. An assessment is completed for each NCP at the beginning of their participation with the NCP Choices program. An employment plan is also developed for each NCP based on the information gathered in the assessment.

All unemployed NCP Choices participants are required to participate in workforce services at a minimum of 30 hours per week, which is considered full time engagement. Workforce staff maintains weekly contact with NCPs who are involved in job search activities. NCPs are provided with job referrals and are expected to report the results of their job search activities on a weekly basis to the workforce staff.

Workforce staff maintains communication regarding the NCPs' compliance status and activities with OAG staff via the Choices On-Line Tracking System (COLTS). Workforce documents compliance status at the 14th day after the order effective date, and potentially again at 30, 90 and 180 days.

Every NCP Choices client has a workforce specialist assigned to him or her to assist in the job search. In some locations, a resource room with computers and other resources is also available on site to facilitate the NCP job search. The workforce personnel provide supportive services such as resume writing, interview and basic communication skills. Once successfully employed, NCP Choices participants are tracked for 6 months to determine whether employment is retained. During this retention tracking period, NCPs may continue to receive supportive services so long as they are still participating in NCP Choices.

Another useful tool for assisting NCPs is that the workforce operators have partnered with local private businesses to provide subsidized employment (SE) to a small number of NCPs who can benefit from it. In the typical arrangement, workforce subsidizes the employment by 90 percent for up to six months. To be eligible, the employer has to agree to retain the NCP as a full time employee afterwards, or else get him or her another job involving transferable skills. Although this arrangement may not be strictly enforceable, employers who do not follow through can be eliminated from consideration for future subsidized employment placements.

NCP CHOICES PEER PROGRAM DESIGN

The PEER pilot is an enhancement project designed to provide an educational/motivational curriculum to noncustodial parents court-ordered into the NCP Choices program. Like the original enforcement program, PEER focuses on engaging low-income, unemployed NCPs who are already behind on child support payments, and often owing large arrears balances. To the typical NCP Choices services, the PEER program adds a unique parenting curriculum created to provide information and tools that help noncustodial parents understand and fulfill their responsibilities and obligations as parents. PEER emphasizes a strengths-based approach and active learning through group workshops in which noncustodial parents engage in interactive activities led by trained group facilitators. It is proposed that noncustodial parents who complete the PEER curriculum, in addition to NCP Choices program activities, will be more likely to consistently meet their child support obligations. In addition, PEER has the following goals:

1. To benefit children by increasing their noncustodial parents' emotional & financial support;
2. To strengthen co-parenting relationships; and
3. To promote noncustodial parents' parenting skills.

The PEER pilot participant assignments began June 3, 2010 and completed May 31, 2011 at three sites in Hidalgo County, El Paso, and Beaumont/Port Arthur. The final PEER cohort completed Core Curriculum workshops on June 30, 2011. An overview of PEER, including information on the curriculum, workshop sessions, and participant intake is provided next.

Program Overview

PEER is an add-on educational/motivational curriculum for noncustodial parents participating in NCP Choices. The PEER curriculum consists of Core and Advanced curricula, each including four weekly group workshops, and relies on three critical roles: the participant, the PEER coach, and the facilitator. Each PEER workshop session is designed to advance the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of the participants as they increase their emotional and financial support of their children and improve their co-parenting skills.

Noncustodial parents in PEER participated in weekly, two-hour group workshops led by a trained facilitator. The PEER curriculum was designed to be implemented with small groups, composed ideally of 12-25 noncustodial parents. During the pilot implementation, groups rarely approached that size; a minimum of 4 participants was required to form a group. Participants who attended the first PEER workshop together became part of a cohort and the cohort proceeded through the Core Curriculum workshop sessions together. PEER workshop sessions use interactive activities that align with stated behavioral objectives for each session to maximize participant interaction. PEER emphasizes the strengths of the noncustodial parent participants; facilitators expect and believe that every parent in PEER will achieve success.

PEER Curriculum

The PEER curriculum is divided into two components – the Core Curriculum and the Advanced Curriculum. The Core Curriculum, consisting of the first four workshop sessions, helps parents understand and accept their child support obligations by focusing on their child. Core Curriculum sessions direct noncustodial parents to focus on factors that are within their control, shift focus from the other parent to their child, recognize their accountability in sharing the costs associated with raising their child, and develop strategies to cope with the challenges of noncustodial parenting.

After completion of the Core Curriculum, according to the original design, PEER participants would be eligible to enroll in the Advanced Curriculum, which focuses on enhancing the parenting skills of the noncustodial parent. The Advanced Curriculum sessions were designed to allow parents to learn to recognize the unique talents they possess as a parent and how they can best use them, consider steps they can take to support their children's development, communicate and connect more effectively with their children as they grow, and develop a co-parenting plan that focuses on the children's best interests. During the pilot implementation, however, noncustodial parents only completed the Core Curriculum, and only one cohort in Beaumont completed the Advanced Curriculum.

PEER Roles

The PEER curriculum requires the cooperative effort of three main roles: the noncustodial parent participant, the workshop facilitator, and the Peer Coach. The participants enrolled in PEER are noncustodial parents who have been mandated to participate in PEER as a part of their court order. The workshop sessions allow participants to meet other parents facing similar challenges and to express their frustrations and concerns. PEER aims to support a diverse group of parents.

PEER facilitators are an integral part of the PEER curriculum. PEER facilitators have numerous responsibilities including preparation for workshops, facilitation of each two-hour workshop session, maintenance of records and collection of data, and ongoing communication with the OAG regarding curriculum effectiveness and suggestions for improvements. Optimally, PEER facilitators meet with PEER participants soon after they are ordered into the program to establish the working relationship. At each workshop session, PEER facilitators use interactive activities, encourage group discussion, and attempt to reduce the participation challenges to work towards an effective, engaging PEER session. PEER facilitators are available to participants before and after the sessions to answer questions and provide additional support.

Finally, the Peer Coach is intended to serve as a role model and inspiration for PEER participants. The program design calls for a Peer Coach to be an NCP Choices graduate who has maintained employment for a period of time and has consistently met his or her child support obligations. Peer Coaches participate in workshop sessions by sharing stories and examples of their struggles and successes with employment, child support, and co-parenting, while also serving as a peer to the participants. Peer coaches encourage respect of all participants in the group and are available for participants to share details or ask questions that they may not feel comfortable asking the facilitator. The role of the Peer Coach is important throughout the curriculum, but is most crucial in the core curriculum.

Procedures

PEER adds an enhancement curriculum to the NCP Choices program, but in many ways the NCP Choices program itself is unchanged. The key elements to the success of the original NCP Choices enforcement program are that 1) The Workforce staff is present in the courtroom to meet immediately with NCPs, and 2) non-compliance with the support obligation brings about consequences. These two elements remain central to PEER operations.

Eligibility

Eligibility criteria for PEER participants remain essentially the same as for NCP Choices. However, noncustodial parents ordered into PEER were exempted from participation in workshop sessions if they obtained employment before the start date of the first session and job requirements prevented them from attending sessions. In addition, as the PEER Curriculum is currently only available in English, noncustodial parents who only speak Spanish were not eligible for PEER.

Non-custodial parents are eligible for NCP Choices, and thus also for PEER, if they:

- Have a IV-D child support case that is current or former TANF or Medicaid,
- Are unemployed or under-employed, with underemployed defined as NCPs who are:
 - Working in an unstable job (e.g. seasonal, temporary jobs);
 - Capable of finding higher wage jobs but are working at low-wage jobs that requires less skill, training, or education than what the NCPs possess; or
 - Employed only part-time when the NCPs could work full-time.
- Reside in the participating local workforce development board's service area and have a court order within the participating court's jurisdiction,
- Are not medically unable to work, as documented by the Social Security Administration,
- Are not currently incarcerated or otherwise unable to participate, and
- Have a Social Security Number.

Random Assignment

For the purpose of evaluation of program impacts based on random assignment, noncustodial parents ordered into NCP Choices were randomly assigned to PEER or to a control group through use of a random assignment calendar created by the researchers. Calendar days within the implementation year were randomly designated as “PEER days” or “Control days.” Noncustodial parents who were court ordered into NCP Choices on calendar days designated as “PEER days” were assigned to participate in PEER, while parents ordered into NCP Choices on “Control days” were assigned to the control group for evaluation. Members of the control group received normal NCP Choices services but not the PEER curriculum

Intake

Within days of being ordered into NCP Choices, noncustodial parents are required to meet with workforce staff to complete intake. At intake, workforce staff provided information to participants on the workforce activities they are required to complete in order to remain compliant with the court order, including 30-hours of job search activities and attendance at scheduled meetings with workforce staff. Non-custodial parents ordered into PEER were also provided with the name and contact information of the workshop facilitator, as well as the date, time, and location of the first PEER workshop session they were required to attend. Workshop sessions were scheduled after a minimum of four participants were ordered into PEER. In the event that sessions were not yet scheduled due to an insufficient number of participants, they were told that the PEER facilitators would follow up with details as they became available. PEER participants were also informed at intake that completion of the four workshop sessions in the Core Curriculum was required to maintain compliance with their court order.

IMPLEMENTATION FINDINGS

This section presents findings from an analysis of the implementation experiences with the NCP Choices PEER pilot. The analysis was based in part upon discussions with staff in the agencies collaborating on the project and on interviews conducted during site visits to El Paso and Beaumont/Port Arthur.

Early Implementation Observations and Adaptations

PEER was adapted or revised in a number of ways during the early pilot period in response to suggestions from workforce staff, OAG staff, and PEER Facilitators. Concerns regarding participant attendance at sessions and attrition, or drop out, from PEER prompted improvements to PEER implementation. In addition, the skillful work of PEER Facilitators led to creative improvements which were integrated into the standard procedures whenever possible. A discussion of lessons from the pilot follows.

Enrollment Numbers

Due to the use of random assignment, only about half of eligible noncustodial parents were assigned to PEER. The number of eligible participants on each court docket varied by date, location, and other factors. This variation led to periodic low numbers of participants assigned to PEER, and sometimes caused significant wait times for participants to begin workshops, or less than four participants assigned to new cohorts. To address this challenge, OAG staff revised the policy to require a minimum of four participants to begin a PEER cohort. In future implementation of PEER, facilitators and workforce staff should work closely to assure the shortest wait times while still maximizing the number of participants in new PEER cohorts.

Attendance

Despite the fact that completion of the Core Curriculum became part of the court order for participants randomly assigned to PEER, attendance challenges were still a problem early in implementation. In response, OAG staff developed a policy and provided additional training to staff addressing the following:

- Emphasizing to participants at intake that participation is mandatory, and non-compliance with PEER or NCP Choices would be reported to the OAG.

- The first PEER workshop session is mandatory; participants who missed the first workshop were re-assigned to the next cohort.
- In extreme cases or emergencies, participants were allowed one make-up if a workshop session other than the first session was missed. Participants were required to notify the facilitator immediately and provide reasonable documentation.

Attrition

The effect of participant drop-out was to reduce the overall effectiveness of the group workshop sessions, and this problem was particularly acute in cohorts that began with five participants or less. The minimum size of the cohorts was addressed by the OAG policy addendum, however, attrition remained a challenge. To address this, PEER Facilitators were asked to follow-up with participants who stopped attending sessions through contacting the participant directly and/or contacting their workforce case manager. According to participants' reports of their reasons for dropping out and workforce data, the most common reason for participant attrition was obtaining employment. While this might technically be considered attrition from PEER, gaining employment is also regarded as a success of NCP Choices. The next most common reason for attrition was general non-compliance with NCP Choices requirements. The PEER Facilitator is crucial to participant retention. Facilitators frequently held additional office hours for participants and were diligent in contacting participants when they missed sessions.

Graduation

In order to recognize participants' completion of all PEER requirements, OAG staff worked with PEER facilitators to develop a PEER Graduation Certificate. Facilitators added a small ceremony at the close of the fourth workshop session to grant certificates to participants. This provided an opportunity for workforce and OAG staff to demonstrate their support of the participants. On several occasions, participants were surprised when the same Judge who ordered them into NCP Choices and PEER attended the small PEER Graduation ceremony to congratulate them.

Peer Coaches

Due in part to challenges with recruiting, Peer Coaches were not available for the pilot. For future implementation, recruiting should begin early in the planning of PEER,

and workforce staff should retain records and contact information of successful cases. In addition, facilitators should reach out to those parents with offers of substantial stipends in exchange for their service as a Peer Coach. Ideally, as more noncustodial parents graduate from PEER, the graduates will be able to serve as Peer Coaches in the future.

Language

The PEER Curriculum is currently only available in English. This limitation reduced the number of noncustodial parents eligible for PEER. The PEER Facilitator at the El Paso PEER site spoke Spanish fluently, and began to translate the materials. However, as the Curriculum is not fully available in Spanish, and conducting sessions in multiple languages was found to be disruptive, the Facilitator was ultimately unable to conduct Spanish workshop sessions. Spanish-speakers not eligible for PEER received all other standard NCP Choices services, but were omitted from the impact analysis presented later.

Implementation Results and Site Differences

PEER participant random assignment began June 3, 2010 and was completed May 31, 2011. The final PEER cohort completed workshops June 30, 2011. Graduation rates were respectable, particularly when taking into account other positive outcomes. Of the 194 NCP's assigned to participate in PEER workshops during this period, 50% (97) successfully completed all four core sessions and received a graduation certificate. An additional 26% (50) of participants did not complete the PEER sessions due to obtaining employment. While stopping due to gaining employment might traditionally be considered attrition, one of the stated goals of PEER and, more broadly NCP Choices, is to encourage NCPs to obtain employment. From this perspective, the overall rate of successful outcomes is 76%, counting both graduation and employment as successes. In summary, PEER was highly successful in engaging noncustodial parents, in that roughly three out of every four noncustodial parents ordered into PEER completed the PEER curriculum or obtained full-time employment during the pilot period.

Southeast Texas

Of the noncustodial parents ordered into PEER in the Southeast Texas PEER site, 59% received a graduation certificate after completing the Core Curriculum. An additional

17% of participants did not complete the PEER sessions due to obtaining employment, for an effective success (completion or employment) rate of 76%.

The Southeast Texas PEER site had one PEER Facilitator who conducted workshops at two locations – one in Beaumont and one in Port Arthur. This PEER site faced several challenges. First, otherwise eligible noncustodial parents residing in rural areas surrounding Beaumont and Port Arthur were faced with transportation barriers to participating in PEER. In addition, due to having court dates only once per week each for Beaumont and Port Arthur, if at least four noncustodial parents were not assigned to PEER on the designated date, the group would have to wait until the numbers increased. According to the PEER Facilitator and workforce staff, the waiting period between the court date and the start of PEER workshops reduced the perceived urgency of the lessons and perhaps led to more participants not attending the sessions as assigned. The PEER Facilitator and workforce staff at this PEER site were well-trained and compassionate, as PEER participants at this site expressed positive feelings toward the Facilitator, the curriculum, and other parents in their cohort.

El Paso

Of the participants at the El Paso PEER site, 54% completed the Core Curriculum and earned a graduation certificate. Nearly 1 in 4 (24%) of participants did not graduate due to obtaining employment. Thus, successful outcomes were achieved for 78% of PEER participants in the El Paso site. This PEER site had one Facilitator who conducted workshops at two locations in El Paso. This site was challenged by the number of eligible participants with limited English proficiency. The PEER Facilitator spoke fluent Spanish and was able to communicate with participants and initially attempted to make sessions available to both English- and Spanish-speakers. However, it became apparent that this accommodation was affecting the quality of the sessions for all participants, and thus Spanish-speakers were no longer enrolled in PEER. As was the case at the Southeast Texas PEER site, the Facilitator and workforce staff in El Paso worked diligently to help noncustodial parents benefit from PEER and obtain employment. Participants and staff felt that the Facilitator served as a 'role-model' to participants, and that this strengthened the PEER implementation at this site.

Hidalgo

The Hidalgo site graduated 42% of the parents assigned to PEER, while an additional 29% of participants obtained employment, for an effective success rate of 71%. The Hidalgo site had two Facilitators conducting workshops at three locations – Mission, Edinburg, and Weslaco. The facilitators had reported difficulty scheduling sessions when many participants had part-time employment, leading to low enrollment numbers, longer waiting periods, and difficulty retaining participants in PEER. To address this challenge, one Facilitator worked to establish an evening time for on-going workshops. The Hidalgo PEER site boasted of some of the most supportive relationships formed between participants in cohorts and the attendance of the Judge at PEER graduation ceremonies. However, following an agreement made with the judge, this PEER site ceased conducting workshops after six months, as planned, and thus did not contribute data for the latter half of the pilot period.

Participant Reactions

The success of the PEER pilot was largely dependent upon the curriculum, the Facilitators, and the noncustodial parent participants. The PEER curriculum is not a typical service offered through TWC, and when parents were informed they were required to participate, they often had mixed reactions, ranging from excitement to hesitation to guarded hostility. After completion of the Core Curriculum, however, almost all participants reported that PEER had positively impacted their lives. In order to gather more information on the responses of participants to the curriculum, participants answered several survey questions at the completion of each workshop session. Their responses were collected and categorized for content, allowing for multiple categorizations for each response. The findings from one of the final survey questions are discussed here.

When asked to complete the statement “One thing I will do differently because of PEER”, more than half of the PEER graduates reported that the most important take-away for them was about improving relationships, both with their child and their child’s other parent. Many participants learned specific lessons from the curriculum that were particularly meaningful to them, such as referring to the custodial parent as “mother of my child” or “my child’s other parent”. More than one in four graduates reported that they understood the importance of building a successful and respectful co-parenting relationship

through communication, working to understand the other parents' perspective, and focusing on the children. One graduate stated that he will "have a better relationship with the mother of my children", while another reported that PEER taught him to "try to understand how the other side of being a parent feels".

More than one in three PEER graduates stated that because of PEER, they will improve their parenting skills and relationships with their children. Participants' responses covered multiple areas of parenting. Many stated that they will spend more time with their children and work to communicate and connect with them more. Others wrote that they will provide consistent support for their children in many forms and despite challenges. As a demonstration of the commitment and inspiration that many graduates shared, one participant stated that he wants to "[Be] a better parent and show my child that I can do better," while another graduate indicated that he will "try to do better in supporting my kids emotionally, financially, and doing all I can do."

One in four PEER graduates also indicated that participating in PEER improved their general outlook and attitude. Parents wrote that PEER has helped them to "Stay focus[ed], consistent, keep my head up", "think ahead instead of the present", and to "take a bad situation and try and turn it into a positive one." In addition, graduates frequently reported that PEER had encouraged them to "take more responsibility for my actions and my kids" and "make better life choices so that my children can benefit from it positively and make better choices themselves."

Furthermore, 25% of PEER participants who completed the Core Curriculum reported that PEER had helped them to become more diligent in looking for work and meeting child support obligations. Graduates reported that because of PEER, they will "always provide financial support to my kids" and "continue working and supporting my kids." One participant summed it up, stating that because of PEER, he will "not give up and keep trying on looking for a job and keep staying there for my kids".

Finally, the significance of the group dynamics of the workshops should be recognized. According to responses to another item on the exit questionnaires, nearly 40% of graduates reported that the best part of PEER was the camaraderie with other participants and the opportunity to learn alongside other fathers facing similar challenges.

IMPACT ANALYSIS RESEARCH DESIGN

The goal of providing Choices program services to unemployed and underemployed non-custodial parents (NCPs) is to assist them in becoming responsible parents who can meet their financial and other obligations to their children. The PEER pilot tests whether the addition of an educational curriculum leads to greater program impacts, as compared to the original NCP Choices program services alone. The impact analysis was designed to determine the extent to which those ordered into the PEER program and their families benefit from the services received, relative to those receiving NCP Choices services only.

The impact analysis is presented in three chapters. This Research Design chapter presents the research questions, the expected program effects, and a description of the randomized control group design utilized to determine program impacts. The next chapter presents estimated program impacts, and a final chapter presents a discussion of the findings and their implications.

Research Questions

The impact evaluation addresses six research questions that aim to discover the effects of participating in the PEER curriculum on unemployed and low-income non-custodial parents whose families are currently or formerly receiving TANF, by comparing treatment group clients' outcomes to those of a control group. In utilizing a true experimental design complete with random assignment, we can estimate the counterfactual, or what would have happened in the absence of the program, by looking at a control group that was randomly assigned to receive only the regular NCP Choices enforcement services.

The original NCP Choices program model included mandatory, court-ordered participation in workforce development services with the threat of jail time for non-participation for non-custodial parents of children who were or are receiving welfare benefits. As an extension or enhancement of this program, the research questions were designed to examine the effects of the NCP Choices PEER program on child support collections and other forms of support, workforce development participation, employment and earnings, unemployment claims, and TANF and other benefit receipt by associated custodial parents. Detailed research questions on these outcomes of interest are as follows:

1. Does the program lead to increased child support payments by non-custodial parents?
2. Does the program lead to more consistent payment of child support over time?
3. Does the program lead to increased workforce development participation by non-custodial parents? Or, does it lead to increased incarceration rates for non-payment of child support?
4. Does the program lead to increased employment rates and earnings levels by non-custodial parents?
5. Does the program lead to reduced unemployment claims by non-custodial parents?
6. Does the program for non-custodial parents lead to decreased TANF participation, or participation in other public assistance programs such as Food Stamps, for the associated custodial parents (CPs) and their children?

These questions and the expected effects of the program, if any, are summarized in Table 1. Based on recent studies of Texas low-income NCP populations (Schroeder, Looney, and Schexnayder, 2004; Schroeder, King, and Hill, 2005), including evaluations focusing on the enforcement version of NCP Choices (Schroeder & Doughty, 2009), the PEER program is expected to lead to increased and more consistent child support collections, and perhaps a concomitant reduction in receipt of TANF or other benefits. Since both the treatment and control groups receive regular NCP Choices workforce development services, it is not expected that the program will lead to increased employment or related measures.

Table 1. Research Questions and Expected NCP Choices PEER Effects

Research Question	Expected NCP Choices PEER Effect
Q1. Payment of child support.	+
Q2. Consistent payment of child support.	+
Q3. Workforce development participation by NCP.	. ¹
Q4. Employment and earnings of NCP.	?
Q5. Unemployment claims by NCP.	?
Q6. Use of TANF or other benefits by CP.	-

Random Assignment Design

Random assignment is the gold standard among program designs for valid estimation of program impacts. Randomly assigning potential participants to experimental and control groups ensures that, on average, no differences exist between the two groups at the point of entry to the program, and thus any differences that emerge later can be confidently attributed as program impacts. For the PEER pilot, NCPs ordered into this program were randomly assigned to receive either the regular NCP Choices support services plus PEER curriculum (treatment group), or just the regular NCP Choices services (control group). Random assignment was done in groups or clusters, with the date of being ordered into Choices determining whether one gets assigned to the experimental or control group. A spreadsheet containing randomized group assignments for all dates on which orders to the program could occur was consulted to determine a given client’s assignment. All clients assigned on the same day were ordered into the same group. This was done to reduce the likelihood of immediate contamination of procedures that could occur due to one client hearing about another’s assignment.

¹ Random assignment to the PEER groups occurs at the point of workforce participation, so all participants in PEER should participate in workforce services.

This section documents the characteristics of the treatment and control groups. By comparing the characteristics of members of these two groups as of the dates of their random assignment, it is possible to confirm whether the random assignment procedure seemed to have functioned properly. Table 2 lists the characteristics of members of these two groups at the point of random assignment. Note that this comparison includes all clients assigned from the beginning of the program through January, 2011. T-tests indicated no significant differences between these two groups on any of the listed dimensions. Thus, the random assignment procedure appears to have been functioning in an unbiased manner, yielding comparable treatment and control groups that should have high internal validity for assessing the impacts of the PEER pilot program.

Table 2. Comparison of NCP Choices PEER Treatment and Control Groups

	PEER Treatment Group	PEER Control Group
All NCPs	N=162	N=168
NCP age (years)	32.9	34.1
NCP male	100.0%	100.0%
NCP Hispanic	69.8%	66.7%
NCP black	24.1%	25.6%
NCP number of active CS cases	1.6	1.6
NCP number of dependents	7.9	6.8
Age of youngest dependent, years	6.6	6.5
Age of oldest dependent, years	10.5	11.3
Time since first observed NCP earnings (quarters)	33.9	33.8
NCP employed at program entry	24.7%	26.2%
Percent of time NCP employed over 4 years prior to program	41.3%	39.4%
NCP average quarterly earnings over 4 years prior to program	\$2,582	\$2,312
NCP experienced earnings dip of at least 20% within prior 2 years	55.6%	50.0%
Any Unemployment Insurance claims filed in year prior to program	11.7%	10.7%
Any Unemployment Insurance benefits received in year prior to program	4.3%	7.1%
Time since first CS case opened (days)	2814	2858
Time since CS first collected on this case (months)	60.3	55.5
Time since CS last collected on this case (months)	12.0	11.1
Percent of time CS collection was made in prior year	21.5%	20.7%
Any CS collection made via federal offset in prior year	13.6%	15.5%
Percent of time TANF received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	3.9%	3.9%
Percent of time Food Stamps (SNAP) received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	75.1%	77.9%
Percent of time NCP responsible for carrying health insurance, prior year	32.9%	29.4%
Percent of time NCP responsible for medical support payments, prior year	4.3%	8.3%
Any low-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	6.8%	6.5%
Any high-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	.6%	.0%
Capias issued for arrest of NCP in 6 months prior to program	11.7%	14.3%
Approximate arrears balance at program entry	\$43,621	\$45,697
Total current support obligation (PP1) at program entry	\$768	\$768
Total arrears obligation (PP2) at program entry	\$139	\$205
Those experiencing an earnings dip	N=90	N=84
Time since earnings dip occurred (quarters)	5.54	5.25
Percent of earnings which earnings dip represents	85.5%	85.4%

PROGRAM IMPACTS

As discussed earlier, the effectiveness of the random assignment mechanism was confirmed, with no differences observed between the control and experimental groups for the PEER pilot. The impact estimates reported here were further adjusted for the minor differences that remained between the groups. We can be confident, because of the successful random assignment of persons to treatments, that the enhanced PEER curriculum *caused* any differences observed later between the two groups.

Impacts of the NCP Choices PEER curriculum are discussed in this section. Impacts presented here are computed for participants entering the program between June 2010 and January 2011. Post-program outcomes are estimated through the fourth quarter of 2010 for UI earnings, through the first quarter of 2011 for UI claims, through April 2011 for TANF, through June 2011 for child support measures, and through July of 2011 for SNAP (Food Stamps) and workforce measures.

Workforce Development Participation by Non-custodial Parents

Since the NCP Choices PEER pilot involved random assignment *at the point of participation in workforce services*, it makes little sense to expect a program impact on workforce development participation by non-custodial parents. Interestingly, as shown in Table 3, there was a small impact on the percent of time participating in workforce services, with those receiving the PEER curriculum participating in Choices slightly longer. No statistically significant difference was seen on whether they participated in Choices at all within 6 months of program entry.

The final measure shown in Table 3 revealed low rates of NCPs being ordered to jail for non-payment of child support or non-participation in Choices. This potential jailing rate was slightly higher for NCP Choices PEER clients, as compared to members of the control group. This finding is consistent with PEER participants being slightly more closely monitored, due in part to their weekly attendance at the PEER meetings.

Table 3. NCP Choices PEER Impact on Workforce Development

	NCP Choices PEER Adjusted Mean	Control Group Adjusted Mean	NCP Choices PEER Impact
Percent of time NCP participating in Choices program	50.7%	46.9%	3.8% *
Any Choices participation by NCP within 6 months of program entry	91.9%	86.5%	5.4%
Percent of months in which NCP ordered to jail for non-payment of child support	8.2%	4.3%	3.9%**

Note: ** indicates statistically significant difference at the .01 level, * at the .05 level

Payment of Child Support

The next set of analyses addresses the question whether the NCP Choices PEER curriculum leads to increased child support payments. One measure gauges the frequency of the NCP making any child support payment and another examines the average dollar amount of payments². These measures are computed on a monthly basis. Since the follow-up interval is relatively short, these should be regarded as short-term impacts. Measures in the subsequent section quantify the *consistency* with which child support payments were made over time.

As shown in Table 4, participation in NCP Choices PEER caused a four percentage point increase in the frequency of any child support collections subsequent to being ordered into the program. There was no statistically significant difference in the average monthly dollar amount of child support collections.

A final child support collections measure indicates the percentage of participants from whom any collection was made within six months of program entry. A slight negative impact was observed on this measure, indicating that, in contrast to the increased collection rates for those in the PEER treatment group, one percent fewer treatment group members

² Note that because of data limitations, child support payments that were collected via federal offset (income-tax refunds, for example) were not included in these collections figures. Because they were equally excluded for NCP Choices PEER treatment and control group members, this should not substantially bias the net impacts reported.

made at least one payment within a six-month follow-up of program entry.

Table 4. NCP Choices PEER Impact on Child Support Collections

	NCP Choices PEER Adjusted Mean	Control Group Adjusted Mean	NCP Choices PEER Impact
Percent of time any child support collections made	51.2%	47.1%	4.1% *
Monthly average child support collections	\$244	\$250	-\$6
Any child support collection made within 6 months of program entry	79.4%	80.4%	-1.0% **

Note: ** indicates statistically significant difference at the .01 level, * at the .05 level

Consistent Payment of Child Support

Making larger child support payments more often is certainly important, but for families to rely on this as a steady source of income, they need the payments to be made consistently over time. To gauge the *consistency* of child support collections, two measures were constructed that tabulated, for every three month period subsequent to program entry, the proportion of time any collections were made in at least two out of three months, and in all three out of three months³. Results of this comparison of child support payment consistency, shown in Table 5, indicate that the NCP Choices PEER impact on consistency of child support payment was positive but only statistically significant for the second measure, making payments in three out of three months. NCP Choices PEER participants were 5 percentage points more likely to pay in three out of every three months, relative to their control group counterparts. This impact represents a significant 15 percent increase in the frequency of consistent payment of child support.

³ Child support payment consistency measures were introduced in Schroeder, Looney, & Schexnayder, 2004.

Table 5. NCP Choices PEER Impact on Consistency of Child Support Collections

	NCP Choices PEER Adjusted Mean	Control Group Adjusted Mean	NCP Choices PEER Impact
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months	51.2%	47.4%	3.8%
Consistent payment of child support, 3 out of 3 months	33.8%	29.3%	4.5% *

Note: ** indicates statistically significant difference at the .01 level, * at the .05 level

Employment and Earnings of Non-custodial Parents

The next analysis examines whether NCP Choices PEER leads to increased employment rates and earnings levels of non-custodial parents. Three indicators include one that gauges the percent of time NCPs were employed subsequent to program entry, another that measures the quarterly earnings levels of those who were employed, and a third, unconditional earnings measure that is calculated including both the employed and unemployed. As shown in Table 6, the NCP Choices PEER curriculum to this point has had no significant impacts on measures of NCP employment rates or earnings levels. Although the apparent differences in employment and earnings might seem to be in the expected direction, the lack of statistical significance of these differences dictates that the impacts be treated as zero. It should be noted that the follow-up interval for UI earnings is at present six months shorter than the follow-up for child support measures. Thus, due to lags in data reporting, it is too early to tell whether PEER will ultimately impact earnings or employment.

Table 6. NCP Choices PEER Impact on Employment and Earnings

	NCP Choices PEER Adjusted Mean	Control Group Adjusted Mean	NCP Choices PEER Impact
Percent of time NCP employed	50.2%	42.1%	8.1%
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs	\$3613	\$3317	\$296
Unconditional earnings, including those employed and unemployed	\$1878	\$1460	\$418

Note: ** indicates statistically significant difference at the .01 level, * at the .05 level

Unemployment Insurance Claims by Non-custodial Parents

Next, several analyses address questions including whether NCP Choices PEER causes reduced rates of filing unemployment claims or receiving unemployment benefits, and whether the program causes more stable earnings trends, leading to greater eligibility for the unemployment insurance (UI) program if NCPs were to lose their jobs. The first questions were answered by gauging the percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims subsequent to program entry, the percent of months in which NCPs received unemployment benefits, and the dollar amount of unemployment benefits received.

As shown in the first three rows of Table 7, to date there have been no significant impacts of the NCP Choices PEER curriculum on filing of unemployment claims or receipt of unemployment benefits. Since this type of measure is likely to show effects of an employment program only after several quarters have elapsed, it is not surprising that no effects have yet accrued.

Table 7. NCP Choices PEER Impact on Unemployment Insurance Measures

	NCP Choices PEER Adjusted Mean	Control Group Adjusted Mean	NCP Choices PEER Impact
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims	.8%	1.3%	-.5%
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits	.4%	.4%	.0%
Average monthly unemployment benefits received by NCP	\$23.21	\$5.27	\$17.94
Percent of time monetarily eligible for UI based on earnings	22.2%	21.2%	1.0%

Note: ** indicates statistically significant difference at the .01 level, * at the .05 level

The question regarding monetary eligibility for unemployment was answered based on NCP earnings histories subsequent to the program, by calculating the percent of time in which NCP earnings were sufficient to qualify monetarily for the UI program (if he or she were to lose his/her job). Thus far, as shown in the last row of Table 7, NCP Choices PEER has had no significant impact on monetarily eligibility for unemployment benefits. This

measure also suffers from the same reduced follow-up interval discussed earlier in regards to UI employment and earnings, and it is therefore unlikely that significant impacts on this measure would be seen this soon.

Receipt of TANF and other Public Assistance by Custodial Parents

The final analysis attempts to determine whether PEER for non-custodial parents has led to decreased TANF and/ or SNAP (Food Stamp) participation for the associated custodial parents (CPs) and their children. Two measures count the percent of post-program months in which the custodial parent(s) received any TANF or SNAP benefits, and two more measures look at the average dollar amounts of program benefits received on a monthly basis. Findings shown in Table 8 indicate that thus far, the PEER curriculum has had no significant impact on receipt of TANF or SNAP benefits by the custodial parents associated with NCPs ordered into PEER.

Table 8. NCP Choices PEER Impact on Receipt of TANF and SNAP by Custodial Parent

	NCP Choices PEER Adjusted Mean	Control Group Adjusted Mean	NCP Choices PEER Impact
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits	5.2%	3.8%	1.4%
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s)	\$11	\$8	\$3
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits	74.9%	75.3%	-.4%
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s)	\$534	\$501	\$33

Note: ** indicates statistically significant difference at the .01 level, * at the .05 level

DISCUSSION

The program impacts reported here are somewhat limited in their usefulness due to the fact that NCP Choices PEER has only been operating a relatively short time. Thus, the follow-up interval that has accrued to this point is too short to estimate impacts with a high degree of reliability. What this means, in statistical terms, is that the impact study, thus far, has less statistical power than is necessary to reliably determine the impacts of this program. Under conditions of low statistical power, one can only detect strong effects; weaker effects need greater statistical power to be detectable. Thus, we can speculate that the handful of impacts reported here that are statistically significant may be early indicators of relatively strong effects. On the other hand, there may be weaker effects of the program on other measures that will only emerge with additional follow-up time.

Despite this somewhat short follow-up interval, and the fact that PEER is an add-on service to the successful NCP Choices program, the PEER pilot has thus far demonstrated several noteworthy impacts. Positive impacts on child support collections were reported, including increased frequency of collections and increased consistency. Interestingly, although no impacts on workforce participation were expected, PEER participants were more likely to participate in workforce development over time. Finally, although the follow-up interval for employment and earnings outcomes was reduced, the tendencies were toward greater employment and earnings among PEER participants, suggesting that with additional follow-up time, statistically significant impacts of PEER on employment and earnings could emerge.

Several puzzling findings emerged as well, such as the results that indicate a slightly higher percentage of control-group members making any child support payment within six months of program entry. This finding is difficult to explain because it goes against the overall trend of child support effects, which showed greater frequency and consistency of payments among PEER participants. Another puzzle is that participants assigned to PEER were slightly more likely to go to jail for non-compliance. This result does not necessarily indicate that PEER *graduates* were more likely to go to jail, but one interpretation is that, with weekly workshops providing more opportunities for the participants to be observed, NCPs ordered into PEER who were noncompliant with the workshops may have been more likely to be reported for non-compliance by both PEER Facilitators and Workforce staff.

Although the positive child support collections impacts show promise, there are several reasons one would not expect strong findings from this program at this early date. The first, already noted earlier, is the low statistical power due to small sample size and short follow-up that makes it likely that only the strongest effects would be detectable this early. Second, and perhaps not as obvious, is that this impact analysis is actually testing for program effects over and above the impact of an already proven successful program. All participants in the PEER study, including both treatment group and control group members, receive the enforcement version of NCP Choices services, a program that has been shown to lead to increased child support and employment rates and reduced TANF, among other findings (Schroeder & Doughty, 2009). Indeed, the high monthly average child support reported for both groups in the PEER study, at almost \$250 per month, suggests that the Choices services in PEER are effective for both the treatment and control groups. Attempts to get another program, any program, to improve upon these positive findings is a fairly tall order. In this context, the fact that some measures of child support payment frequency and consistency have increased in response to the PEER intervention is an impressive finding.

Next Steps and Future Directions

The obvious next step for this project includes continuing to follow the PEER participants to date who have completed the program to allow longer-term impacts to accrue. Beyond this point, which is discussed in detail later, several other suggestions are offered based on feedback from PEER Facilitators, PEER participants, and OAG staff, as follows.

Although the full program includes both the core and advanced curricula, during the pilot implementation only the four sessions of the Core Curriculum were required for participants to receive a graduation certificate and fulfill their court obligation. One site completed the four sessions of the Advanced Curriculum with a small cohort of three participants. In the future, the Advanced Curriculum should be employed with all participants, thus allowing for evaluation of the full curriculum and activities.

Noncustodial parents who were not fluent in English were not eligible to participate in the PEER pilot. Because a large share of parents in the Texas child support caseload have limited English proficiency, the need for a Spanish translation of the PEER and Spanish-only versions of the sessions should be considered in the future.

Noncustodial parents who completed PEER appear to have benefited from the group workshops on parenting, relationship skills, and financial literacy, in addition to the workforce development services and supports included with NCP Choices. Currently, however, services are not available to the *custodial parents* through PEER. Suggestions from PEER participants, Facilitators, and workforce staff discussed the need for a PEER session for custodial parents. In fact, a PEER session for custodial parents is currently in development by OAG staff and may be available in future PEER curricula.

Finally, as discussed throughout this report, this PEER program evaluation has been conducted at the close of a short pilot period with very little time to follow-up on participant outcomes and estimate long-term impacts. Many of the effects measured here, such as impacts on employment and child support payments, take time to accrue. Thus, additional analysis of the impact of PEER on participants should be conducted at longer follow-up intervals, preferably from one to three years after the pilot period ended. The addition of new clients would also help to boost the statistical power of this impact study, whether by re-opening existing sites or starting new ones. However, even if enrollment were to remain discontinued, extending the follow-up interval for previous PEER clients would increase the chances of detecting additional program impacts if they exist.

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