

# **Texas Non-Custodial Parent Choices: Program Impact Analysis**

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## **Key Findings**

In 2005, the Texas Office of the Attorney General, Texas Workforce Commission, and child support courts initiated a five-site child support compliance and employment pilot project linking IV-D courts, OAG child support, and local workforce development boards. The project, called **NCP Choices**, provides employment services linked to enhanced child support monitoring to low-income non-custodial parents (NCPs) who have fallen behind on their child support payments. The pilot was expanded in 2007 to include an additional six sites, and expansion continues to this date.

Researchers at the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin estimated impacts of NCP Choices on key outcome measures after four years of operation in four of the five original sites, and short-term outcomes in six expansion sites, and studied the process of NCP Choices. Program impacts were estimated using a scientifically valid quasi-experimental comparison group design.

**Results indicated that, relative to the comparison group, NCPs ordered into the program:**

- **Paid their child support 47% more often, and paid \$57 per month more, for a 51% increase in total collections**
- **Paid their child support 50% more consistently over time**
- **Continued to pay their child support more often, in greater amounts, and more consistently over time even two to four years after the program**
- **Were employed at 21% higher rates, an effect that also persisted at least two to four years after the program**
- **Were about one third less likely to file an unemployment claim in any given month in the first year after the program**
- **Participated in NCP Choices workforce development 82% more than did the comparison group, indicating a high degree of compliance with the order, with levels of participation by NCPs well beyond the range of what has been reported for programs serving low income NCPs, including other ‘mandatory’ programs.**

- **The custodial parents (CPs) associated with NCP Choices participants were 21% less likely to receive TANF benefits in the first year after the program, and 29% less likely two to four years after the program. These CPs were 2% more likely to receive Food Stamps, but this impact only occurred during a down economy.**
- **Earnings of employed NCP Choices participants were lower– likely a result of more of them entering new employment at a somewhat lower wage.**

Site differences in NCP Choices impacts were successfully explained by survey ratings of the sites on dimensions of program process, and these results gave some clues to improving program performance. NCP Choices program impacts also varied under different economic conditions. The impacts of NCP Choices on child support collections frequency, average amount collected, and consistency of collections were all higher under conditions of moderate employment growth, as opposed to lesser but still positive impacts when employment growth stagnated. Program impacts on employment were greater when the local unemployment rate was low. And finally, NCP Choices was found to increase Food Stamp receipt under conditions of zero employment growth, but had no impact when employment growth was moderate. On most measures the NCP Choices program still showed positive impacts even under some of the worst economic conditions this country has seen in decades.

Finally, given the high degree of success observed to date, the Texas Legislature should fund a statewide expansion of the NCP Choices program, and the federal government should make it easier for other states to develop similar programs. Expansion of the program would likely significantly benefit the state of Texas and low-income families alike.

## **Executive Summary**

The Non-Custodial Parent Choices (NCP Choices) program grew out of a collaborative effort between the Texas Office of the Attorney General (OAG) and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to implement a model employment project for low-income non-custodial parents (NCPs) of children who are current or recent recipients of public assistance, and who are behind on their child support payments. NCP Choices was initially implemented as a demonstration project in four sites in late 2005, then expanded to six additional sites in late 2007. The project establishes links among IV-D courts responsible for child support issues, OAG child support enforcement staff, and local workforce development boards, with the goal of providing workforce development services to these NCPs so that they may better meet their obligations to support their families.

To provide an objective outside perspective on the program, the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin (RMC) was contracted to conduct an analysis of program impacts on key outcome measures after four years of operation in the four original sites, including short-term outcomes in the six expansion sites, and to study the process of NCP Choices. This evaluation estimates program impacts on child support collections, workforce development participation, employment and earnings levels of NCPs, unemployment claims among NCPs, and TANF and other benefit receipt by the custodial parents (CPs). It also updates the previous process studies with analysis of a site survey of all staff in partner agencies in 10 NCP Choices sites.

A review of the child support enforcement literature indicates that, for those who receive it, child support can be one of the most important sources of income in assisting single parent households to escape from poverty. Despite significant gains over the last decade or so, receipt of child support among public assistance families still has room for improvement. Many of the NCPs responsible for this are unable to meet their financial obligations due to unemployment or underemployment. Previous programs designed to engage low-income NCPs in workforce programs often suffered from low enrollment, implementation, and service coordination challenges, and as a result found modest impacts at best. Evidence suggests, however, that mandatory programs with “swift and certain consequences” for non-participation can help alleviate enrollment problems, and that low-

income NCPs, if successfully engaged in workforce services, are better positioned to meet their child support obligations.

The NCP Choices service model is straightforward: noncompliant NCPs are given the choice of paying their child support obligations, participating in workforce services, or going to jail. The distinguishing features of NCP Choices are mandatory participation and clear choices—pay child support, participate in work readiness efforts, or risk jail time.

To update the process studies reported upon previously (Schroeder et al, 2008), the research team conducted an online site survey of all persons responsible for the components of the NCP Choices program, including staff from the OAG Child Support Division, TWC and its local contractors providing workforce development services, and the IV-D (Child Support) court judges and their staff.

The purpose of the survey was to measure and quantify site differences in important features of the NCP Choices program, with the ultimate purpose of determining whether these features are related to the degree of success experienced at the various sites. Analysis of survey responses suggests that the ten sites vary on four major dimensions, including:

- NCP Motivation, measuring opinions about typical NCPs;
- Perceived Program Follow-through, measuring opinions about whether NCPs in the program are adequately tracked, compliance is ensured, and they are otherwise not allowed to “slip through the cracks;”
- Adequate and Available Workforce Services, gauging opinions about the extent to which workforce services are immediately available, convenient, and adequate to help NCPs gain employment; and
- Partners Capable and Collaborating, measuring the extent to which all three partners, the OAG, Court, and workforce agency or contractor, are believed to be performing their respective roles adequately, collaborating, and communicating well.

Sites’ scores on these dimensions are utilized to aid in interpreting the results of the impact analysis.

The research design for the impact analysis included the selection of a quasi-experimental comparison group of non-participating NCPs from the same areas. Although a small portion (18%) of those ordered into the program had to be removed from further analysis to yield a high quality comparison group, tests indicated that the remaining NCP Choices clients and the selected comparison group were highly similar in their observable characteristics just before program entry. This indicates a high level of internal validity for determining the impacts of the NCP Choices program, and thus a high level of confidence that subsequent differences observed were likely due to the NCP Choices program. It is important to recognize, however, that the effects reported here do not solely measure the impact of the Choices program on NCPs, but the *impact of being given the choice*: to participate in Choices, make a payment, or go to jail.

Results indicate, first of all, that those ordered into NCP Choices participated in workforce development at far greater levels than did their comparison group counterparts. Eighty-two percent of those ordered into the program participated at some point within one year of this order, as compared to essentially zero participation among comparison group members. These findings confirm a high degree of compliance with the order, with levels of participation by NCPs well beyond the range of what has been reported for other programs serving low income NCPs, including other ‘mandatory’ programs.

Moving on to the outcomes of primary interest, results indicated that those who were ordered into NCP Choices subsequently paid child support more often and in greater amounts. Monthly collection rates from NCP Choices participants were forty-seven percent higher than from the comparison group in the first year after the program, and the amounts collected averaged \$57 per month higher. Moreover, these positive impacts continued well into the second through fourth years after the program, suggesting that the long-term economic benefits will continue to accrue. Eighty-four percent of NCP Choices clients made at least one payment within a year of program entry. Finally, of great importance to the economic self-sufficiency of the custodial parents, those ordered into NCP Choices were significantly more *consistent* in making child support payments over time, and these positive impacts also persisted into at least the second through fourth years after the program.

Those ordered into NCP Choices were subsequently employed at much higher rates than were their comparison group counterparts; a twenty-one percent increase in quarterly

employment was seen in the first year, and a thirteen percent increase was seen in the second through fourth years after the program. However, NCP Choices participants who were employed had lesser total earnings than employed members of the comparison group, an effect that is sometimes observed in programs that successfully move large numbers of people into employment. In summary, employment gains of those ordered into NCP Choices were clear and long-lasting, but the average earnings of the employed have yet to rise to the level of members of the comparison group.

As further evidence of positive employment effects, those ordered into NCP Choices were about one third less likely to file an unemployment claim in any given month in the first year after the program, relative to the comparison group. Furthermore, the earnings trends of those ordered into NCP Choices were subsequently stable enough to gain a seven percent increase in monetary eligibility for unemployment insurance, relative to the comparison group. This is important because monetary eligibility for unemployment insurance carries a greater likelihood of actually receiving unemployment benefits, and therefore weathering any potential job loss long enough to get another job

And finally, in a sign that the benefits of NCP Choices also affected the self-sufficiency of custodial parents, CPs associated with NCP Choices participants showed about a twenty-one percent decrease in TANF receipt in the short term, and a twenty-nine percent decrease in the longer term, relative to that of CPs associated with the comparison group members. Paradoxically, CPs associated with NCP Choices participants showed about a two percent increase in receipt of Food Stamps (SNAP) benefits in the first year, which expanded to a four percent increase in later years. This initially puzzling effect was found to be largely related to a severely depressed economy.

The impacts of NCP Choices on most measures were found to vary significantly by site. As they were designed to do, the site-level ratings on the survey subscales accounted for much of the site-level variation in impacts. Regarding child support collections, for example, sites that were rated highly on Partners Capable and Collaborating, Perceived Program Follow-through, and NCP Motivation all tended to have larger impacts on child support collections. Meanwhile, sites rated highly on Adequate and Available Workforce Services tended to have the largest employment impacts. Sites that were rated highly on Perceived Program Follow-through tended to have the most positive earnings gains due to NCP

Choices, although in many sites the impacts were negative. Sites that scored well on Partners Capable and Collaborating tended to show the greatest declines in TANF receipt due to NCP Choices. And finally, the biggest *increases* in Food Stamp receipt due to NCP Choices were seen in sites with the *lowest* scores on Partners Capable and Collaborating.

The extent to which NCP Choices program impacts varied under different economic conditions was also studied. The impacts of NCP Choices on child support collections frequency, average amount collected, and consistency of collections were all higher under conditions of moderate employment growth, as opposed to lesser but still positive impacts when employment growth stagnated. Program impacts on employment were greater when the local unemployment rate was low. And finally, the puzzling effect of increased Food Stamps receipt was mostly explained by economic conditions at the sites. NCP Choices was found to increase Food Stamp receipt under conditions of zero employment growth, but had no impact when employment growth was moderate. Taken together, these findings suggest that overall economic conditions understandably have a constraining effect on the outcomes possible to achieve under a program like NCP Choices.

On the other hand, on most measures the NCP Choices program still showed positive impacts even under some of the worst economic conditions this country has seen in decades. From this we may conclude that the program is robust enough to assist NCPs in gaining employment and meeting their obligations to their families under most conditions, but that it does so even better when economic conditions provide employment and advancement opportunities for the NCPs.

Next steps include an evaluation of a variation on the NCP Choices program that will serve *establishment* cases, or cases for which child support orders have not yet been established. This approach should allow workforce development services to be targeted on those NCPs likely to fall behind on their child support obligations, and should help to get them the assistance they need before large child support arrears balances are allowed to accrue. Whether this extension of the NCP Choices program is ultimately successful may depend on the creativity of the OAG and other partners' staff in designing the right incentives to get the targeted NCPs into workforce services that could benefit them, in the absence of a serious jail threat. Preliminary program impacts will be estimated for this extension of the program in fiscal year 2009-2010.

Finally, given the high degree of success observed to date, the Texas Legislature should fund a statewide expansion of the NCP Choices program, and the federal government should design rules to make it easier for other states to develop similar programs. Assuming the economy begins to recover, statewide expansion of the program would likely result in millions of dollars of savings. Meanwhile, non-custodial parents could get the assistance they need to enable them to meet their financial obligations to their children, and low-income families all over the state could benefit from this proven successful model.

## **I. Introduction**

The Non-Custodial Parent Choices initiative (NCP Choices) began in 2005, when the Texas Office of the Attorney General (OAG) partnered with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to implement a model employment project for unemployed and underemployed non-custodial parents (NCPs) of children who are current or recent recipients of public assistance, and who were behind on their child support payments.<sup>1</sup> The project established 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.

In order to obtain an objective outside assessment of the 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 conduct an analysis of the program impacts on key outcome measures, and to study the implementation of NCP Choices at various stages. This report presents results from an impact analysis, utilizing scientifically valid methodology involving a pre-post comparison group design to estimate program impacts after almost four years of operation in the four original sites, and just over a year in six expansion sites. It also updates the previous implementation work using insights from an electronic survey of staff in partner agencies in 10 NCP Choices sites. These include four original sites that began operations in late 2005: Bexar County, Hidalgo County, Gulf Coast Counties, and El Paso County; as well as six that started in late 2007: Cameron County, Dallas County, Harris County, Jefferson/Orange County, Lubbock County, and McLennan County.

### **Choices Program Overview**

To understand the NCP Choices program, one should examine the original Choices program, established by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to address the employment and training needs of welfare families and custodial parents. The Choices program is the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Employment and Training program (formerly the JOBS program) operated under TWC's primarily work-first oriented

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<sup>1</sup> Note that appendix table A-26 includes explanations of most acronyms used in this report.

service model. The TWC website provides the following rationale for the Choices program: “both State and federal welfare reform legislation emphasizes personal responsibility, time-limited cash assistance benefits, 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 some training to those who are not 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 are 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, wage gains, career progression and progression to self-sufficiency.” Given this model, the NCP Choices program was developed to provide non-custodial parents with similar services.

### **NCP Choices in Brief**

The NCP Choices program is a model employment program for unemployed or low-income NCPs whose child was either currently receiving or had ever previously received public assistance. The program links IV-D courts, OAG’s child support enforcement efforts, and TWC’s local workforce boards. This particular approach and model grew out of research and experience with serving this target population over at least a decade.

In previous efforts involving NCPs, workforce providers, child support agencies, and non-profit community based organizations had attempted to connect unemployed non-custodial parents with employment services to enable those individuals to better support their children financially. The outcomes or impacts from these projects were typically modest, generally resulting in only slight increases in earnings among participants and some gains in child support paid. Programs with the best outcomes—that is, higher and more consistent

child support payments—“were those that linked a strong judicial order to participate in employment services, close monitoring of NCP program participation by workforce staff, reports of non-participation back to the courts, and ‘swift and certain consequences’ for non-participation (in other words, jail time!)” (OAG, 2005).

The NCP Choices program targets unemployed NCPs with unpaid child support orders in cases managed by the OAG’s Child Support Division that involved families who currently or previously had received Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits or Medicaid. The NCPs must also reside in the geographical areas served by the participating local workforce boards.

### **NCP Choices Program Model**

The NCP Choices model is straightforward: targeted NCPs are given the choice of paying their child support, participating in workforce services, or going to jail. The primary distinguishing features of NCP Choices are *mandatory participation* and *clear choices*—pay, play or suffer the consequences.

Key elements of the NCP Choices model include the following:

- The OAG identifies NCPs on its caseload who are currently noncompliant with their child support payments, who are associated with a family that either is or has been on welfare, and who also reside in the designated workforce service areas.
- The IV-D Court either sets an enforcement docket for the identified NCPs, or includes eligible NCPs on a regularly scheduled docket.
- OAG staff prepares court orders or modified probation orders.
- NCPs have the choice of signing the consent order to participate in workforce services, making a payment, or going to jail.
- Contractor staff for the local workforce board attends the enforcement docket, enrolls NCPs at the IV-D court, and explains the contract outlining NCP rights and responsibilities and the consequences of non-participation. Depending on the site, they then either set appointments for NCPs to come to one-stop centers to receive workforce services or the local workforce representative offers immediate assistance at the courthouse in a designated office.
- The program’s web-based database, the Choices On-Line Tracking System (COLTS), allows both OAG and workforce staff to track the progress of identified NCPs and securely exchange relevant information.

- A 30-day or 90-day compliance status report regarding NCP program participation and/or reported employment is sent to OAG and the IV-D courts from the boards' contractor staff.
- This evidence on NCP participation and employment is entered at a scheduled compliance hearing, or through testimony by the workforce representative.
- Capias—court orders to take custody—can be issued for noncompliant NCPs. The individual Judges have discretion to evaluate the reason for noncompliance and decide whether to give these NCPs another chance with the program.
- NCPs who successfully find employment are monitored for six months by the local workforce representative to ensure they remain employed.

### **Impact Analysis Overview**

The impact analysis is primarily concerned with assessing the impact of the NCP Choices Program on several outcomes of interest. These outcomes fall into categories of participation by NCPs in workforce development, to gauge the effectiveness of mandatory program participation; child support collections, which affects the self-sufficiency of families and potential cost savings to the state; and employment/earnings, unemployment claims among NCPs, and TANF receipt by custodial parents (CPs), as measures of economic self-sufficiency. Specific outcomes of interest include:

- Workforce development participation by NCPs,
- Frequency of child support payments,
- Consistency of child support payments over time,
- Employment rates and earnings levels for NCPs, and
- Unemployment Insurance claims by NCPs
- TANF and other public assistance participation among associated CPs and their children.

### **Organization of the Report**

This report is organized into five chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter II reviews the research literature on non-custodial parents and programs referring and providing them with workforce development services. This review emphasizes programs designed for non-custodial parents in Texas, including earlier research and evaluation

projects conducted by the Ray Marshall Center. Chapter III provides a summary of process analysis observations and findings from prior NCP Choices reports, followed by new analysis based on an online survey of all important actors in all the local sites. Chapter IV details the research questions and expected effects, describes the comparison group research design for the impact analysis, and presents results of the comparison group selection. Finally, Chapter V provides estimated program impacts for all ten sites, with impacts for the original sites broken out into short-term (one year) and longer-term (two to four years) time frames. It also discusses implications, particularly in light of the survey findings, and includes discussion of limitations of the analysis and next steps.

## **II. Non-Custodial Parents in the Literature**

### **Background**

The number of children living in single-parent households in the United States has increased dramatically since the 1960s. While an estimated nine percent of children under 18 years of age lived with a single parent in 1960 (Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2002), by 2008 this rate had increased to nearly 32 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). As a result, most children living in the United States today will spend some part of their childhood in a single-parent household (Legler, 2003).

Policymakers are especially concerned with the disproportionate number of single-parent households living in poverty. According to the 2007 American Community Survey, while 9.5 percent of all U.S. families had incomes below the poverty level, 36.5 percent of families with a female head of household and no husband present fell below the poverty level in 2007. Between 1994 and 2006, five of every six custodial parents were mothers (Grail, 2007). In Texas the picture is even worse, with 12.8 percent of all families below the poverty level in 2007, and 40.3 percent of families comprised of a female head of household with no husband present living below the poverty level (American Community Survey, 2007). These trends are likely to become more pronounced as data become available for the current recession period. 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). In 2006, nearly one third of custodial mothers had never been married (Grail, 2007).

### **The Significance of Child Support**

Policymakers view child support 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:

- 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 receive full payments, the average child support received (\$4,700) represented over 60% of annual income (Grail, 2007.)

- Families that can combine earnings and child support from NCPs are better able to make ends meet, sustain employment, and remain off of TANF assistance, as compared to single-parent families that do not receive support (Miller et al., 2005).
- In 2008, 13.1 percent of child support cases included families currently receiving public assistance and 45.1 percent included families who had previously received assistance (DHHS, 2008). In Texas, the child support caseload is slightly less dominated by TANF and former TANF recipients. Only 6.4 percent of Texas FY 2008 child support cases included families currently receiving public assistance and 38.2 percent included families who previously received assistance.
- Nationwide in 2008, child support enforcement (CSE) collected about \$978 million for families currently receiving public assistance and \$9.9 billion for families who had previously received assistance (DHHS, 2008).
- In Texas in 2008, the current/former TANF disparity was greater, with CSE collecting \$14.4 million for families currently receiving assistance and \$821 million for families who had previously received assistance (DHHS, 2008).

Compliance with child support orders has improved substantially in recent years, in part because of changes implemented as part of national and state welfare reforms. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) enacted in 1996 made nearly 50 changes to the child support enforcement system, including streamlined paternity establishment procedures, implementation of the National Directory of New Hires to track NCPs with child support arrears, and uniform interstate child support laws (DHHS, 2004). As a result of these and other changes:

- The proportion of families in the child support program receiving payments more than doubled from 1996 (20 percent) to 2003 (50 percent) (Turetsky, 2005). In Texas, Schexnayder et al. (1998) found that “paternity establishments, established orders and collections have all increased as a result of Texas’ efforts to strengthen enforcement procedures.”
- The number of parents receiving the full amount due increased from 37 percent in 1994 to 45 percent in 2005 (Miller et al., 2005).
- In 2008, child support enforcement collected almost \$26.5 billion nationally, a 6.9% percent increase from 2007. Texas had the highest collections in the country in 2008, with \$2.56 billion in collections, an increase of 14.6% from 2007. Texas has led the nation in collections distributed since 2007 (DHHS, 2008).

Despite these gains, the system continues to have its shortcomings:

- The proportion of custodial mothers receiving support has remained fairly constant (75 percent) over the past decade.
- Child support receipt rates for TANF recipients have increased over time but remain lower than receipt rates for non-recipients of TANF.
- Fewer TANF parents (53 percent) have child support awards than their non-TANF counterparts (63 percent).

And perhaps most disturbingly, recent federal legislation, in the form of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA), substantially reduced federal financing of state child support enforcement. Effects of this incentive funding reduction are projected to reduce child support enforcement performance, particularly in higher-performing states like Texas (Lewin Group, 2007). In the absence of state replacement of these funds, expected effects include:

- Reduced establishment of orders,
- Reduced current collections, and
- Increasing effects over time, as current order establishment declines affect future collections.

On the other hand, Parrott, Schott, and Sweeney (2007) note that some new provisions of the DRA make 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).

Thus, the overall effects of the DRA on child support collection and distribution for poor families may be difficult to determine. Furthermore, upcoming TANF reauthorization may well restore or reverse some of the most detrimental changes introduced by the DRA.

Since so many single-head-of-household families (36.5 percent) continue to subsist on poverty-level wages, increasing child support compliance will remain a key strategy for lifting these families out of poverty.

### **Reasons for Noncompliance**

Non-custodial parents who fail to comply with child support orders are often stereotyped as “deadbeats,” or mean-spirited individuals who are indifferent to their children’s needs. However, research demonstrates that parents’ actual reasons for noncompliance are far more complex. In fact, there is strong evidence that most NCPs care about the well-being of their children and want to be involved in their lives (Sylvester and O’Connell, 2002). The complex reasons NCPs fail to meet their formal child support obligations include general mistrust and suspicion of child support enforcement, use of informal supports, disputes with the custodial parent, and perhaps most importantly of all, lack of financial resources.

### ***Mistrust and Suspicion***

NCPs may view the child support enforcement system as unfair, insensitive, and punitive. Non-custodial parents:

- Often assume that orders are pre-set and allow no room for negotiation, creating a “resentment of the insensitivity of the system towards their precarious and shifting circumstances” (Furstenberg et al., 1992).
- Complain that the system is more diligent in enforcing child support orders than enforcing their visitation rights (Baron and Sylvester, 2002).
- Perceive the child support system as equivalent with the criminal justice system, and assume that the primary goal of the program is punitive action towards them (Reichert, 1999; Doolittle and Lynn, 1998).
- Have “a general feeling that the courts should not interfere in their families” (Furstenberg et al., 1992).

### ***Informal Supports***

For a variety of reasons, many NCPs provide their children with an “informal” version of child support such as gifts of cash, clothing, diapers, formula, or toys (Sander and Rosen, 1987). Possible explanations for a tendency towards provision of informal support include distrust of government, a personal preference for tangible gifts, potential for

increased contact with the children, concerns that income earned illegally will draw unwanted attention to the NCP's finances, and avoidance of TANF pass-through policies, which in some states (Texas included) retain a portion of child support payments for the state as a reimbursement for public assistance funds paid to the family.

### ***Disputes with the Custodial Parent***

NCPs sometimes withhold child support due to disagreements with the custodial parent (Baron and Sylvester, 2002). Common sources of tension between the parents include disputes over custody, visitation rights, or child support; hostile relations with custodial parent's extended family; jealousy over competing romantic relationships; disputes over child-rearing practices; and poor personal relationships between the parents as a result of immaturity and limited exposure to positive relationship role models.

### ***Lack of Financial Resources***

Perhaps the biggest barrier to paying regular child support that NCPs face are that many are poor themselves and face a variety of financial challenges. For example:

- Boyd (1999) found that 41 percent of low-income, non-custodial fathers had been unemployed for at least one year.
- Sorensen and Zibman (2001) found that 2.5 million non-custodial fathers lived in poverty and had a limited ability to pay child support.
- Sorensen et al. (2007) found that 78% of NCPs whose income was less than \$10,000 per year paid less than half of their current support during the year. However, once incomes exceeded \$10,000 per year compliance with orders increased.

The reasons for NCP financial challenges are complex. Economic trends over the past thirty years – including the decline in the manufacturing sector and emigration of jobs out of the inner city – have left unskilled men especially with fewer opportunities for meaningful employment (Knox and Miller, 2001). Other barriers to gainful employment faced by NCPs include:

- **Limited Education** – Sorensen (1997) found that an estimated 40 percent of low-income NCPs had not completed high school or earned a GED.

- **Limited Work History** – Many NCPs have little or no work experience, making it difficult for them to obtain well-paying jobs (Sylvester and O’Connell, 2003).
- **Mental Health & Behavioral Issues** – NCPs may experience feelings of depression, anxiety, and hopelessness (Weinman, Smith and Buzi, 2002).
- **Substance Abuse** – Some NCPs have drug or alcohol addictions that affect their employability (Baron and Sylvester, 2002).
- **Insufficient access to transportation** – The lack of reliable transportation makes it difficult for NCPs to secure and retain good jobs.
- **Transience** – Many low-income NCPs move frequently, have no stable home setting, and are difficult to contact (Doolittle and Lynn, 1998).
- **Criminal Backgrounds** – Reichert (1999) indicates that up to 70 percent of all low-income NCPs have had contact with the criminal justice system. Criminal backgrounds create serious obstacles to securing employment.

If research demonstrating that NCPs want to be responsible parents is correct, addressing the complex array of issues facing this population may be the most promising route to improving child support enforcement and, subsequently, improving the lives of children in single-parent families. The following section discusses some of the strategies programs are trying in order to address these issues.

### **Enhanced Child Support Enforcement**

Given the continuing challenge of improving child support compliance, there is considerable interest in “enhanced child support enforcement” programs which go beyond traditional child support enforcement activities in order to test innovative approaches to increasing compliance. The highest portion of arrears tends to be owed by NCPs with low or no incomes. Sorenson et al. (2007) found that 11% of NCPs owed 54% of total child support arrears and that three-quarters of these high debtors earned less than \$10,000 per year. Programs that increase the income of NCPs would likely increase child support compliance. In the eight states studied by Sorenson, 93% of NCPs with incomes over \$10,000 per year paid child support in the past year, but only 57% of NCPs with no or low-income contributed in the past year. These programs typically focus on efforts to connect unemployed and underemployed non-custodial parents with employment services so they can better support their children financially. Common services include job training and/or job placement assistance; group and individual counseling; mediation and/or legal assistance with custody

or visitation issues; parenting education; mentoring; case management; and assorted supportive services such as basic needs assistance and substance abuse counseling.

To date, the effects of the majority of NCP programs have been modest and, at times, equivocal. A recent literature review (Looney and Schexnayder, 2004) found that programs for non-custodial parents:

- Encourage participation in workforce activities;
- Increase employment, at least in the short term;
- May increase earnings; and
- Sometimes increase the frequency of child support payments.

Because of data collection issues and difficulties in comparing programs with greatly varying approaches, quality of services, and intensity of services, the reasons for these relatively weak impacts are not entirely clear. However, research does suggest that - excluding circumstances beyond programs' control (e.g., an economic downturn) - there are two fundamental challenges facing enhanced child support enforcement programs for NCPs: difficulty implementing services as designed, and difficulty recruiting, enrolling, and retaining participants.

### ***Implementation Challenges***

Difficulties in implementing services as designed are certainly not unique to programs that serve NCPs. The most commonly cited problems relate to the timeframe for a program: longer-than-expected startup periods and overall program evaluation durations that are too short for the interventions to have their desired effect (Looney and Schexnayder, 2004; Schroeder, Looney, and Schexnayder, 2004). Research suggests that these problems could be resolved if 1) program designers will allow sufficient time for a development phase to test and refine interventions prior to full implementation and 2) funders will adapt their schedules to provide programs with ample time to implement a program and sustain it long enough for effects to take hold and be measured.

There are also noteworthy challenges associated with coordinating services across multiple organizations. Substantial time should be reserved for planning, coalition building, and testing prior to full-scale implementation. Looney and Schexnayder (2004) recommend

that staff have a demonstrated ability to “build referral networks with local organizations, effectively communicate priorities to staff members, and be open to considering feedback and suggestions, and approach programmatic challenges with creative solutions.”

### ***Participation Challenges***

Participation issues are even more complex. A disconcertingly large share of programs serving NCPs in the past decade found it difficult to recruit the targeted number of parents. Some of the challenges associated with participation rates can be mitigated through thoughtful planning, more effective program management, and changes in program design. But some of the challenges are so persistent they suggest a paradigm shift may be necessary. The first and most important step is to address these implementation challenges so that programs are able to provide significant numbers of NCPs with the services the programs advertise. This not only helps with retention but can also help with organic recruiting because NCPs alerting other NCPs about the program is known to affect NCP program participation (Looney and Schexnayder, 2004). Program designers must also pay attention to eligibility rules: casting a wider net is likely to engage a larger number of NCPs. It is important to keep eligibility issues in mind when selecting a funder; many grants – especially those provided by the federal government – have stipulations that limit eligibility for potential participants.

Once these two underlying issues are addressed, program directors must next choose whether they wish to run a voluntary program or a program that compels participation through a judicial mandate (or a mix of both). Voluntary programs typically need to engage in creative, aggressive outreach campaigns to attract participants. Strategies include media campaigns, posting fliers, canvassing, and house visits. Referrals from partner agencies may also be helpful. If a program is able to gain the trust and approval of its participants, they may also be a good source of recruits. One site of the Bootstrap project had 14 “peer referrals” in which fathers referred friends and family members to the program (Looney and Schexnayder, 2004).

While some NCPs will *voluntarily participate* in enhanced child support enforcement programs out of concern for their child’s well being, these parents are, in fact, rare. As discussed previously, many NCPs fear and distrust the formal child support system and are

reluctant to get involved in any program associated with it. Furthermore, because most government and social service programs have historically targeted women and children, there may be a stigma associated with men's participation (Looney, 2004). Given the fact that the overwhelming majority of NCPs are male, this stigma could act as a major deterrent to participation.

To overcome these challenges, most voluntary programs employ some sort of incentive to encourage participation. Past incentives include adjustments to child support orders, arrears forgiveness, the opportunity to access legal counsel, and cash stipends. The efficacy of using incentives is unclear. While programs that provided cash stipends have had modest success with incentives, they nevertheless struggled to reach their enrollment goals (Schroeder, Looney, and Schexnayder, 2004; Looney and Schexnayder, 2004).

An alternate strategy for improving participation rates is *mandating participation* through judicial orders reinforced by “swift and certain consequences” for non-participation. Experience suggests that these strategies may have some promise. The Shawnee County Non-custodial Project began as a voluntary Welfare-to-Work project. After multiple outreach attempts, only two NCPs enrolled in the program, both of which dropped out the same day. However, when the program shifted to a model in which a judge mandated participation or jail, 65-80 percent who agreed to participate did so and 65-90 percent of the participating NCPs made monthly payments (Hayes, 2004). The Parents' Fair Share Demonstration also found that the likelihood of sanctions for nonappearance made a difference in appearance rates (Doolittle and Lynn, 1998).

Nevertheless, sanctions also have their limitations. Getting NCPs to appear at a meeting to review or set their child support orders—the first step to establishing a participation mandate—can be very challenging. The Parent's Fair Share initiative had appearance rates ranging from 5 percent to 70 percent. Furthermore, cost issues present a challenge, as it sometimes costs taxpayers more to support the parent in jail for a few days than the parent's total monthly child support obligation (NASWA, 2002). Imposing sanctions for nonappearance proved to be more difficult than anticipated under the Parent's Fair Share program (Doolittle and Lynn, 1998). Most importantly, sanctions alone fail to address the root causes of noncompliance for poor NCPs who have difficulty paying due to

low or nonexistent earnings and problems with mental illness or substance abuse, among others.

The present evaluation of the NCP Choices program will provide a strong test of the question whether the use of sanctions to mandate compliance can succeed in improving both participation rates and program outcomes.

### **III. Process Analysis**

An early implementation study on NCP Choices was described in a previous report (Schroeder et al, 2005), followed by detailed analysis of the processes involved in a more mature NCP Choices program (Schroeder et al, 2007). Results of the latter report are summarized briefly below.

In order to gather process data for the present evaluation report, the research team conducted an online survey of all persons responsible for the various components of the NCP Choices program, including staff from the Office of the Attorney General, the Texas Workforce Commission and its local contractors providing workforce development services, and the IV-D (Child Support) court judges and their staff. This survey was administered in June through July of 2009. It was completed by staff at the four original NCP Choices sites: Bexar County (San Antonio), El Paso County, Gulf Coast Counties, and Hidalgo County; as well as six additional sites that established NCP Choices programs in late 2007: Cameron County, Dallas County, Harris County (Houston), Jefferson/Orange Counties (Beaumont), Lubbock County, and McLennan County (Waco). Preliminary analysis of survey responses is presented below. The results of the survey are used later to aid in interpretation of the results of the impact analysis.

#### **Summary of Prior Process Studies**

The following general observations are offered based on the detailed review in the summer of 2007 of implementation experiences in El Paso County, Bexar County, Gulf Coast Counties and Hidalgo County in the Rio Grande Valley.

First, the NCP Choices model—with its emphasis on limited but clear choices, mandatory participation, and “swift and certain” consequences (i.e., jail) for NCPs failing to participate—appeared consistent with the evaluation literature on such efforts and had definite “buy-in” from the key players at the state level and in each of the local sites visited. This is critical for successful implementation of the model. In one site, the threat of jail time is thought to be less of a deterrent to non-compliant NCPs because of potential lack of judicial follow-through.

Second, the program is widely believed to be a success at all four of the original sites. This belief is largely confirmed by empirical evidence presented below, although the degree of success was found to vary by site. All respondents seemed fully engaged in and committed to project implementation and anxious to continue and expand the project.

Third, some NCPs have significant barriers to participation, employment, and career advancement that may be difficult to fully address in the NCP Choices program. Helping individuals with substantial barriers—including poor education, uneven work history, limited skills, criminal backgrounds, substance abuse, mental illness, and transportation difficulties—to become economically self-sufficient and make consistent child support payments may take more than is envisioned in this initiative. There has been an ongoing mismatch between the job skills and qualifications that NCPs embodied and well-paying employment in the areas of growth in these local labor markets. On the other hand, addressing some of these issues through long-term training would pose equity concerns with the custodial parents who were in need of child support. Providing both long-term training to NCPs and contemporaneous monetary support to the associated CPs could solve the equity issues, but would be an expensive (though possibly worthwhile) proposition.

Fourth, NCPs ordered into NCP Choices tend to have very high child support arrears balances – on the order of \$30,000 or more, about three times higher than for the typical NCP in these counties. Thus, these are arguably some of the harder-to-serve NCPs; however, they also have the highest potential for program success in terms of arrears reduction. By concentrating limited program resources on those with the greatest arrears balances, NCP Choices provides an opportunity to make substantial progress in collecting these debts.

Finally, new problems will likely surface with the continuing, ongoing expansion of the program into new sites that will provide challenges to the program coordinators. The utilization of annual Peer Learning Colleges, or full-day collaborative meetings among front-line staff of both the original and expansion sites, has proven to be helpful in disseminating best practices information and coming up with new solutions.

### **Present Study: Online Survey of Staff Opinions**

The purpose of the online survey was to quantitatively measure important features of the NCP Choices program in order to discern variations from site to site, and ultimately to

determine whether one or more of these features is related to the level of success experienced at the various sites. The survey was administered to all staff from ten sites that had been operating an NCP Choices program as of mid-2008.

The survey instrument has 38 questions, including six background questions, 29 questions about the program, and three optional survey development questions. The background questions established the recipient's relationship to the program; the program questions measure the recipient's opinions about the program; and the survey development questions helped us determine the usability of the survey and potential for future improvement. Twenty-four of the 29 program questions were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale with responses including "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Neutral," "Disagree," "Strongly Disagree," and one an additional choice for "Don't Know/Not Applicable." These 24 items (see Appendix Table A-1 for items) will be the focus of extensive analysis below.

Survey Monkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)) was used to deliver the survey via the Internet because it is readily accessible from all sites, affordable, reasonably secure, and has features for easy tracking and follow-up with respondents. One-hundred-fifty-four recipients, consisting of all front-line staff in the ten sites, were each sent an initial email invitation to take the survey. Those who did not respond were sent several reminders, including for many a follow-up phone call after several email attempts. Recipients were allowed nearly two months from the initial email to respond before the survey was closed, although most responded within the first month.

### ***Survey Scoring***

Of the 154 email invitations sent out, 115 respondents eventually completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 75 percent. Although this is slightly below the 83 percent response rate observed in the 2008 version of this survey, 75 percent is still quite good for an internet survey. Of the 24 survey response items related to the NCP Choices program that were answered on the 5-point Likert (agree/disagree) scale described above, seventeen of them had been included in the 2008 version of the survey and were found to cluster into four dimensions. In addition to these, seven new items were added to bring the total to twenty-four. The seven new items were designed to bring the total number of items for each of the four subscales to six, and to create more balance between negatively and positively-worded

items on each subscale. In the end, three of the four subscales had higher internal consistency (see below) than they had in the prior survey, and all four were consistent enough to be useful for making comparisons among the program sites. The four subscales thus created from these twenty-four items provided the basis for further analysis, and are described next.

### *Subscales*

**NCP Motivation.** The first subscale, which will be referred to as NCP motivation, consists of six items measuring opinions about typical NCPs and their motivations (see Table 1 for items). The scale was found to have moderate internal consistency, with a Cronbach's coefficient alpha of 0.53, a level that is slightly below that reported for the previous version of this subscale, but is good enough to measure meaningful differences among the sites.

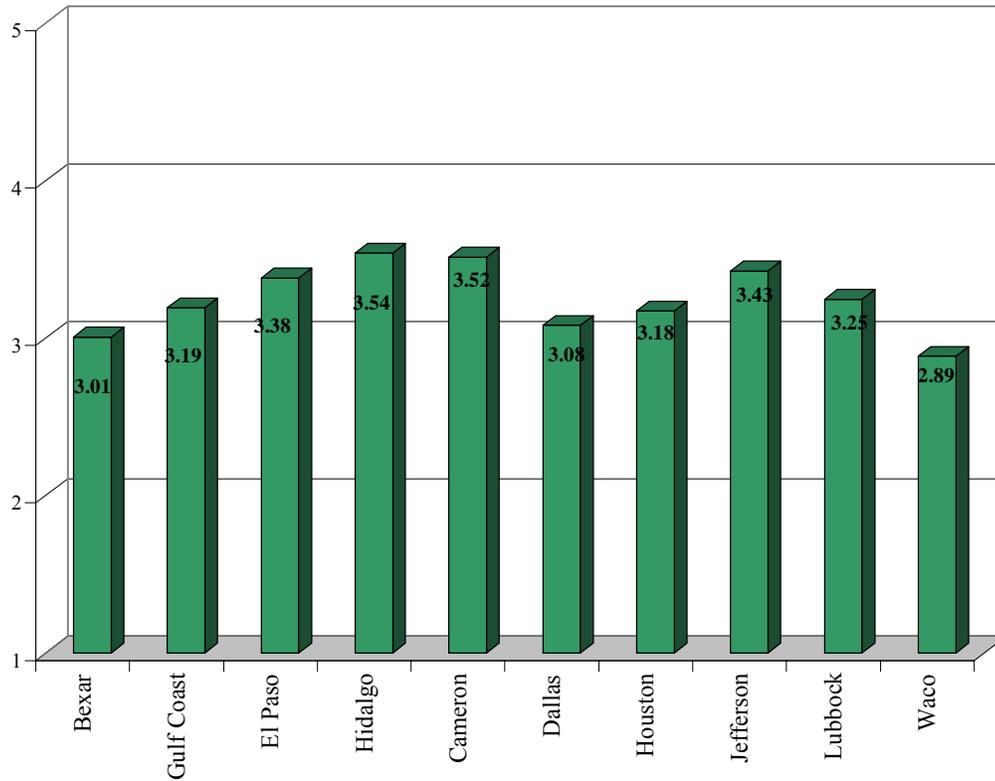
**Table 1. Items for NCP Motivation**

Q1	Most NCPs ordered into the program would pay more child support if their earnings were higher.
Q2 [R]	Some NCPs truly are deadbeats, and will do everything they can to avoid their responsibilities.
Q4	Most NCPs ordered into the program take full advantage of the resources offered them.
Q11 [R]	Some NCPs are not ordered into the NCP Choices program because the services would be wasted on them.
Q18 [R]	Some NCPs would rather go to jail than to get a regular job or join NCP Choices.
Q19	Most NCPs ordered into the program really want to earn money and support their children

Note: [R] indicates the item is reverse-scored, otherwise higher values signify higher agreement.

Differences among the NCP Choices sites on the NCP motivation subscale are illustrated in Figure 1, with scores for the four initial sites shown on the left and the six newer sites on the right of the panel. Partners at the two lower Rio Grande valley sites, including the Hidalgo County (original) and Cameron County (new) sites, reported that they have the most motivated NCPs among these sites. Interestingly, sites reporting the least motivated NCPs included the three largest urban areas (Bexar/San Antonio, Dallas, and Harris/Houston) plus Waco. Although the patterns among sites on this subscale may be meaningful, statistical tests reveal that the sites' scores do not differ significantly from each other on average, so this subscale has limited diagnostic use for discerning the source of program impacts.

**Figure 1. NCP Motivation, scores by site**



**Perceived Program Follow-through.** The next subscale, referred to as Perceived Program Follow-through, consists of six items measuring opinions about whether NCPs in the program are adequately tracked, whether their compliance with program requirements is ensured, and whether NCPs are otherwise not allowed to “slip through the cracks” (see Table 2 for items). The scale was found to have a coefficient alpha of 0.71, a more than adequate level of internal consistency for observing differences among sites.

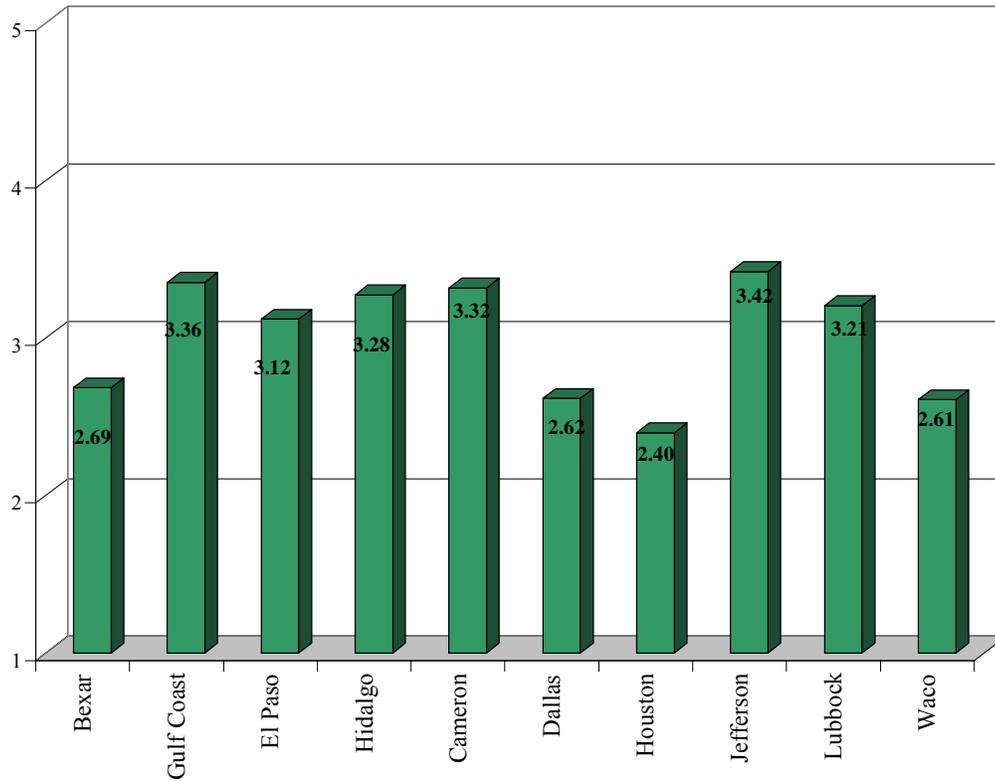
**Table 2. Items for Perceived Program Follow-through**

Q7	The courts are rarely lenient with NCPs ordered into the program who are non-compliant.
Q15 [R]	Some NCPs get ordered into NCP Choices but fail to show up for follow-up appointments or otherwise slip through the cracks.
Q16	Nearly all NCPs who fail to meet NCP Choices program requirements are sent to jail the next time they see the judge.
Q17	All NCPs ordered into the NCP Choices program are later brought back before the judge to ensure their compliance with program requirements.
Q21 [R]	Some NCPs ordered into the NCP Choices program can go for months before being brought back before the judge, or are not brought back at all, for a compliance hearing.
Q22 [R]	NCPs who are ordered into the program but are noncompliant are usually given a second chance by the judge.

Note: [R] indicates the item is reverse-scored, otherwise higher values signify higher agreement.

Differences among the NCP Choices sites on the Perceived Program Follow-through subscale are illustrated in Figure 2. Unlike the first subscale noted above, the sites' scores were found to differ significantly from each other on Perceived Program Follow-through, so the patterns could be particularly meaningful for discerning what aspects of sites might be responsible for program impacts. Although most sites reported reasonable levels of follow-through, once again the three largest urban areas (Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio) plus Waco recorded the lowest scores on this subscale.

**Figure 2. Perceived Program Follow-through, scores by site**



**Adequate and Available Workforce Services.** The third subscale, Adequate and Available Workforce Services, consists of six items gauging opinions about the extent to which workforce services are immediately available, convenient, and adequate to help NCPs gain employment (see Table 3 for items). A decent internal consistency among items of this subscale, with a coefficient alpha of 0.63, is adequate for present purposes.

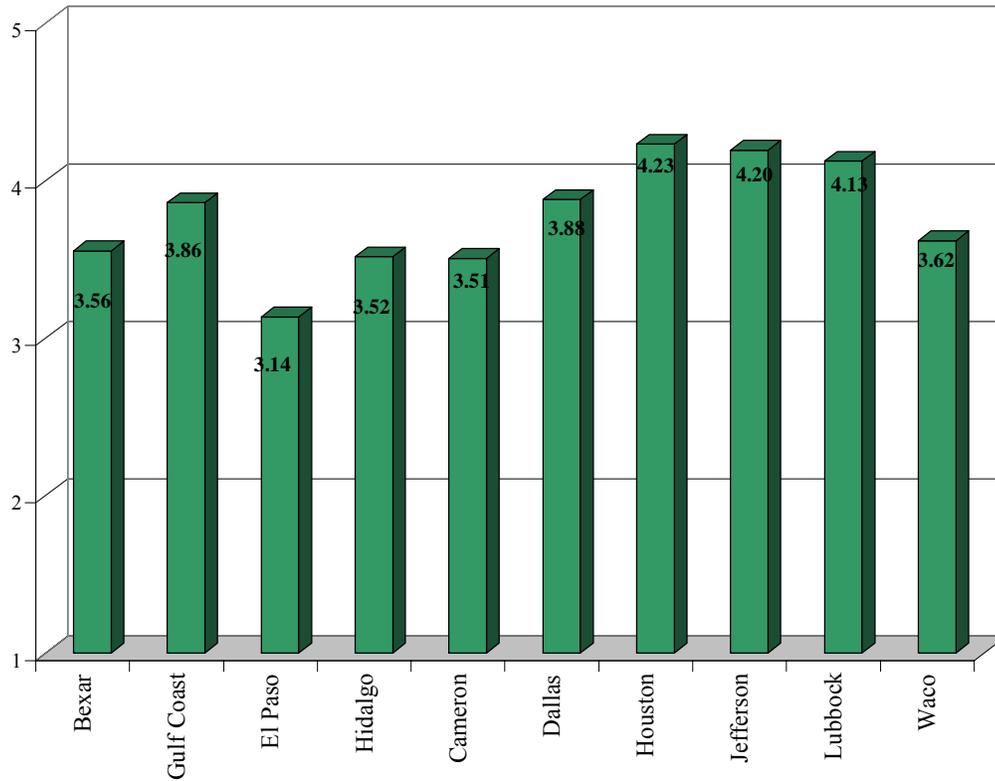
**Table 3. Items for Adequate and Available Workforce Services**

Q8	There is always a workforce representative in court, or immediately available by phone, when NCPs are ordered into the NCP Choices program.
Q9 [R]	The Workforce facility sometimes has too few staff available to meet the needs of the NCPs.
Q13	The workforce facility is very convenient to the courthouse.
Q14 [R]	Many NCPs need more help gaining employment than the services typically provided through the NCP Choices program.
Q20	The workforce representative has adequate resources (workspace, technology, etc.) at the courthouse to effectively assist NCPs when they are initially ordered into NCP Choices.
Q23	The workforce services offered to NCPs through the NCP Choices project are adequate to help them gain employment.

Note: [R] indicates the item is reverse-scored, otherwise higher values signify higher agreement.

Differences among the NCP Choices sites on the Adequate and Available Workforce Services subscale are illustrated in Figure 3. The sites' scores were found to differ significantly from each other on Adequate and Available Workforce Services. Although according to their generally high scores, nearly all sites appear to offer adequate, available, and convenient workforce services, many of the newest sites tended to score highest on this measure.

**Figure 3. Adequate and Available Workforce Services, scores by site**



**Partners Capable and Collaborating.** The next subscale, Partners Capable and Collaborating, consists of six items measuring the extent to which all three partners, the OAG, Court, and workforce agency or contractor, are believed to be doing a good job performing their respective roles, as well as the extent to which they collaborate and communicate well (see Table 4 for items). A coefficient alpha of 0.83 on this scale is excellent.

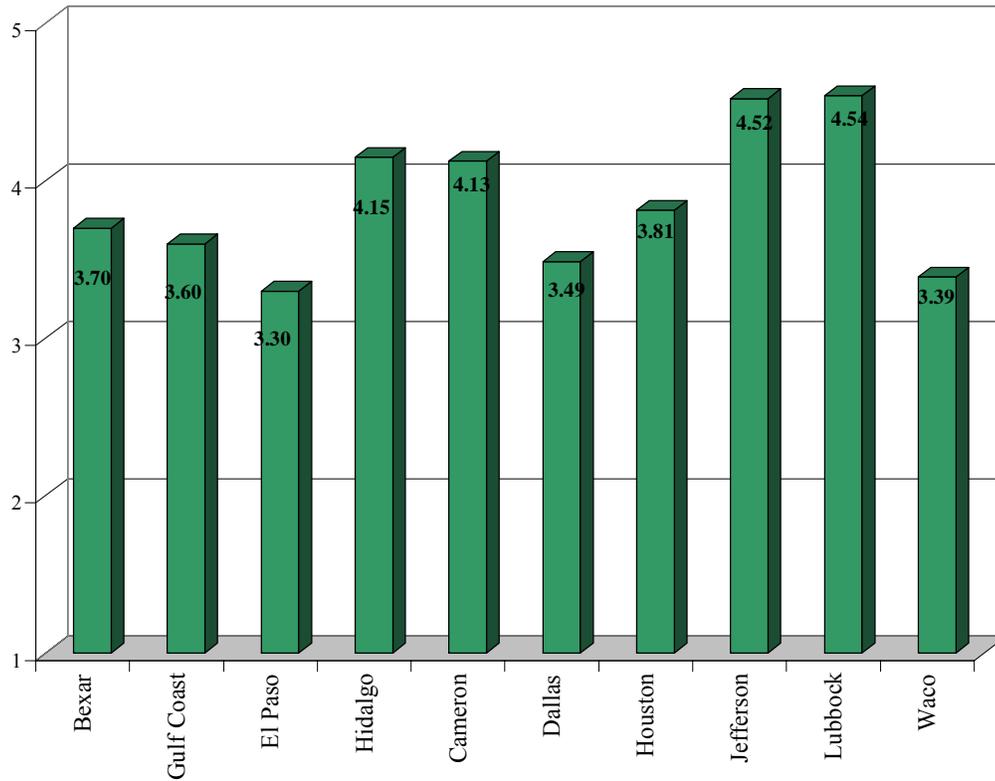
**Table 4. Items for Partners Capable and Collaborating**

Q3	There is adequate collaboration and communication among all partners on the NCP Choices team (OAG, judge, and workforce) for NCP Choices program success.
Q5 [R]	Communication among NCP Choices partners (OAG, Judge, Workforce Services) is sometimes weak and can impede program success.
Q6	The partner(s) from the OAG do a good job performing their role to make the NCP Choices project a success.
Q10	The partner(s) from the workforce agency do a good job performing their role to make the NCP Choices program a success.
Q12	The judge and court do a good job performing their role to make the NCP Choices project a success.
Q24 [R]	One or more of the partners (OAG, Judge, Workforce Service) could do a better job collaborating in order to improve the success of the NCP Choices program.

Note: [R] indicates the item is reverse-scored, otherwise higher values signify higher agreement.

Differences among the NCP Choices sites on the Partners Capable and Collaborating subscale are illustrated in Figure 4. The sites' scores differ significantly from each other on Partners Capable and Collaborating, so the differences among the sites can meaningfully be interpreted. The Jefferson/Orange and Lubbock sites scored highest on this, indicating the highest level of perceived collaboration and capability, while El Paso, Waco, and Dallas tended to score the lowest. Furthermore, as with the previous subscale, this subscale shows a high level of agreement with the items overall, with average responses near 4-“agree” so that overall the collaboration and capability of partners should be regarded as good.

**Figure 4. Partners Capable and Collaborating, scores by site**



Score profiles of the NCP Choices sites on these four survey subscales will be used as context to enhance the discussion of any observed site-level differences in program impacts, presented below.

## **IV. Impact Analysis Research Design**

The goal of providing Choices program services to unemployed and underemployed non-custodial parents (NCPs) was to assist them in becoming responsible parents who can meet their financial and other obligations to their children. The impact analysis was designed to determine the extent to which those ordered into NCP Choices and their families benefit from the services received, in terms of increased payment of child support and other measures, as compared to similarly situated unemployed and low-income NCPs who are not offered such services.

The NCP Choices impact analysis is presented in two chapters. This Research Design chapter presents the research questions, the expected effects of the NCP Choices program, a description of the quasi-experimental comparison group selection, and the results of this procedure including quality of the matches produced. The next chapter, Program Impacts and Discussion, presents estimated program impacts and a discussion of their implications, including limitations of the analysis and next steps.

### **Research Questions**

The impact evaluation addresses six research questions. The questions aim to discover the effects of being ordered into the NCP Choices program on unemployed and low-income non-custodial parents whose families are currently or formerly receiving TANF by comparing NCP Choices clients' outcomes to those of a comparison group. The comparison group consists of similarly situated NCPs in the same geographical areas who are not ordered into the NCP Choices program. As described in the following section, this comparison group is formed through quasi-experimental selection procedures.

The NCP Choices program model includes 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. The research questions are designed to elucidate effects of the NCP Choices program on child support collections, 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 NCP Choices program lead to increased child support payments by non-custodial parents?
2. Does NCP Choices lead to more *consistent* payment of child support over time?
3. Does NCP Choices lead to increased workforce development participation by non-custodial parents? Alternatively, does it lead to increased incarceration rates for non-payment of child support?
4. Does NCP Choices lead to increased employment rates and earnings levels by non-custodial parents?
5. Does NCP Choices lead to reduced unemployment claims by non-custodial parents?
6. Does NCP Choices 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 NCP Choices program, as informed by the literature, are summarized in Table 5. In particular, based on recent studies of Texas low-income NCP populations (Schroeder, Looney, and Schexnayder, 2004; Schroeder, King, and Hill, 2005), the NCP Choices program is expected to lead to increased and more consistent child support collections, increased employment, reduced unemployment claims, and reduced reliance on TANF or other benefits by the associated custodial parents.

**Table 5. Research Questions and Expected NCP Choices Effects**

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Expected NCP Choices Effect</b>
Q1. Payment of child support.	+
Q2. Consistent payment of child support.	+
Q3. Workforce development participation by NCP.	+
Q4. Employment and earnings of NCP.	+
Q5. Unemployment claims by NCP.	–
Q6. Use of TANF or other benefits by CP.	–

### **Subgroup analysis**

In addition to determining the overall impacts of the NCP Choices program, it is also important to know under what conditions the impacts are found to vary. For example, the program has now been implemented in more than ten distinct sites (and counting), with each site having at least some variation in how they operate the program, not to mention their vastly differing labor markets, educational and training opportunities, transportation systems, clientele, etc. Thus, in addition to determining overall program effects, the researchers also ask whether the observed program impacts varied for different subgroups of the overall program group, as described below.

### ***Site Variation***

For each research question, tests will be done to determine whether the program impact on the outcome of interest varied significantly by site. In cases where impacts are found to vary by site, further analysis will be done to estimate the impact separately for each site.<sup>2</sup> As part of this process, the four original NCP Choices sites will be tabulated separately from the six later sites, due to several years of difference in the potential follow-up intervals for these two groups. In addition, the measures computed for the original and later sites will

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<sup>2</sup> It is not appropriate to examine impacts separately by subgroup in those cases where such impacts were not found to vary significantly by that subgroup. To avoid interpreting random noise, site-level impacts will not be presented in such cases.

vary as well. In many cases, for example, the longer follow-up period for the original sites allows impacts to be broken into first year impacts and later year impacts, while such division would not be supported for the later sites. Where appropriate, some effort will also be made to interpret any site-level differences in programs impacts in terms of any differences between sites revealed in the process study.

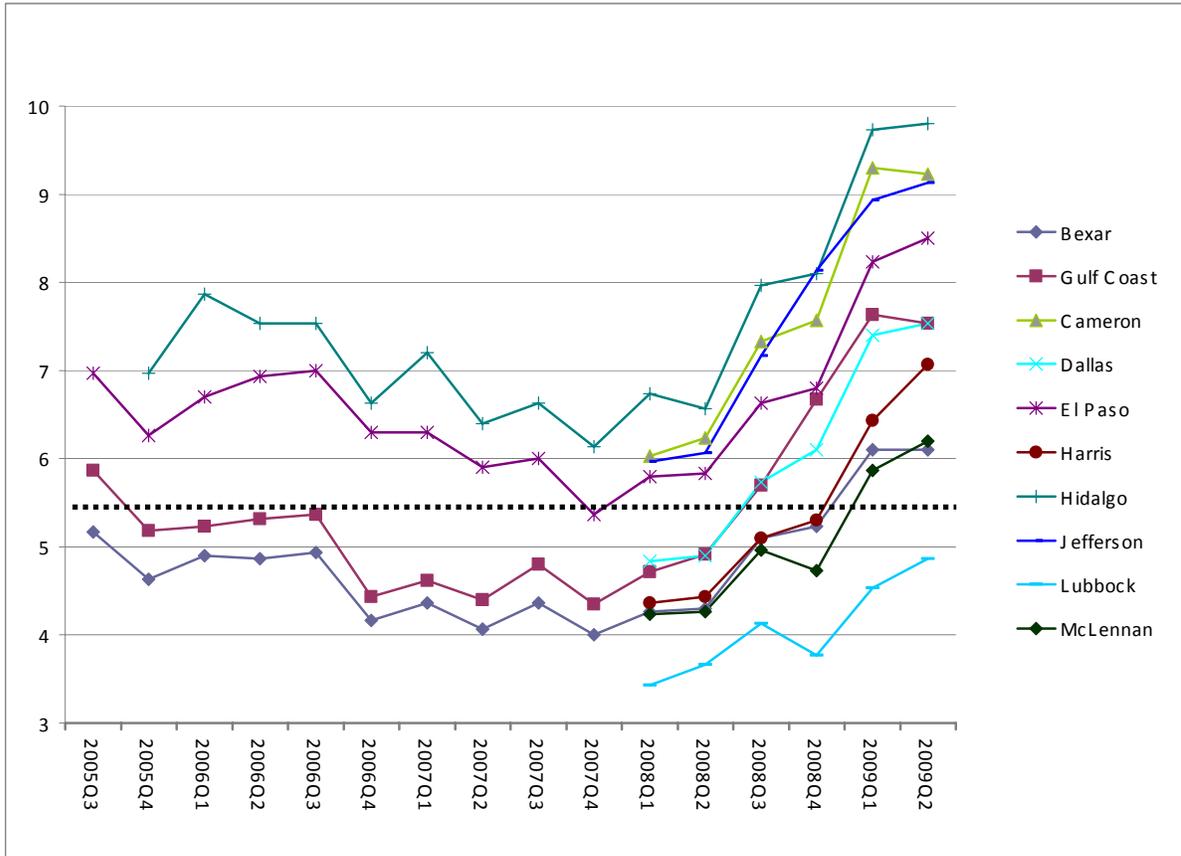
### ***Economic Environment Variation***

Due to the severity of the recent economic downturn, there is substantial interest in understanding to what extent the impacts of the NCP Choices program vary under differing economic conditions. The current economic recession, which officially began in late 2007, has thus far, according to some measures, been worse than any recession since the Great Depression that began in 1929 and persisted for many years. One fairly obvious impact of this is that jobs will be more difficult to find and/or keep under these extreme recessionary conditions. However, it is not at all clear whether those ordered into NCP Choices should be more or less affected by these difficult conditions, relative to comparison group members. Under the constraints of the comparison group design, described in detail below, NCP Choices clients and the comparison group members must live in the same counties at the same points in time. The two groups should thus be exposed to essentially the same labor market conditions. It is an open question, therefore, whether the additional tools and services available to NCP Choices clients through workforce services will enable them to better navigate this difficult labor market. In order to address this important question, researchers will also attempt to determine, for most outcome measures, to what extent program impacts varied significantly under different economic conditions.

Perhaps the most common indicator of the robustness of local labor markets is the *unemployment rate*, or the proportion of the total labor force in an area that is currently out of work. Figure 5 shows the unemployment rates over time for the counties in which each of the ten program sites operates. Each site's line is restricted to the approximate time period in which they have been operating their NCP Choices program. This figure dramatically illustrates the recession's impact on Texas, as all the lines accelerate upwards beginning in late 2007 and early 2008. Somewhat encouraging, however, is the fact that most of the lines appear to be leveling off in the latest period for which impacts are measured here: the second

quarter of 2009. Even if the recession has in fact peaked, recent experience suggests that employment will recover slowly at best, over a period of several years.

**Figure 5. Unemployment Rates over Time, by Site**

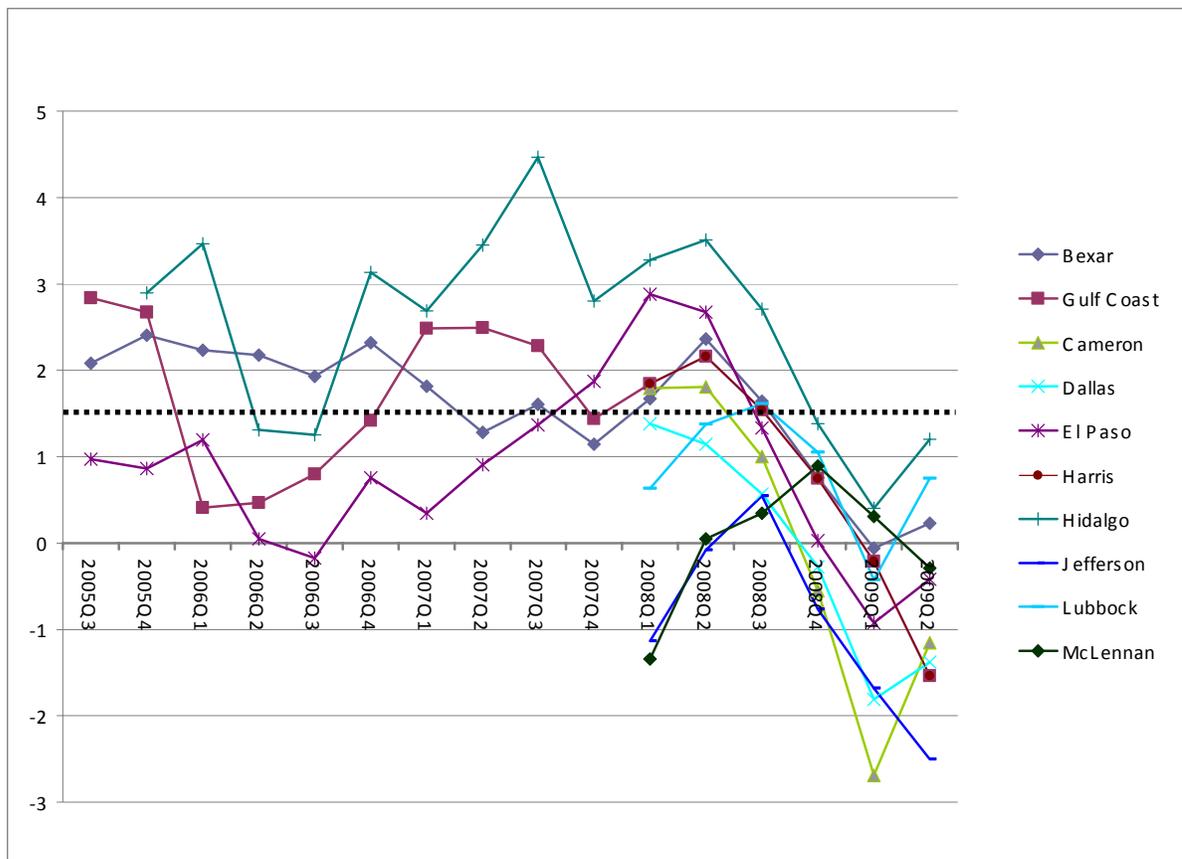


Note: Unemployment rates shown for sites only in those intervals in which they were active NCP Choices sites. The bold dotted line at 5.5% indicates the cutoff between high and low unemployment.

Figure 5 also illustrates a problem with relying solely on employment rates to measure different economic conditions among these sites. Some of the counties in which NCP Choices has been implemented, including primarily those in south and east Texas, tend to have chronically high unemployment rates, as indicated by their trends being above the dotted line, which roughly divides high from low unemployment rates, for the entire period. Meanwhile, at least one site, Lubbock, had low unemployment for the entire period, while several others remained mostly below the line. The problem with this situation is that, if one were to rely solely on unemployment rates as indicators of economic conditions, the effects of a bad economy would be well confounded with site effects. That is, it would be almost

impossible to tell with much certainty whether program performance would suffer because a poor economy, or whether it simply did poorly at certain sites for other reasons. The other problem is time. Generally speaking, most of the high unemployment occurs at the end of the study period, which means, among other things, that most of the new sites have operated under more difficult conditions, which have gotten progressively worse during their time in operation. It also means that the longest follow-up intervals, approaching four years in some cases, are now associated with a severe economy. These time differences, and much of the related differences between old and new sites, can be partially addressed by focusing the economic conditions subgroup analysis on first-year impacts. Furthermore, in order to resolve the confound relationship between unemployment rates and site effects, we look to another measure of economic conditions.

**Figure 6. Employment Growth Rates over Time, by Site**



Note: Employment growth rates only shown for sites in those intervals in which they were active NCP Choices sites. The bold dotted line at 1.5% indicates the cutoff between high and low employment growth, perhaps more properly referred to as moderate and zero employment growth.

Figure 6 shows *employment growth rates* over time for the counties in which NCP Choices operates, and again the rates are plotted for each site only during the approximate time period in which the site has been operating its program. Employment growth rates indicate the growth of the total labor force in each area, expressed as a percentage increase in the labor force relative to its size twelve months earlier. As the figure illustrates, employment growth rates can be more volatile, as many areas repeatedly dip below and rise above the dotted line separating high from low employment growth during the period of study. In a sense, this volatility is important for un-confounding economic and other site influences on program impacts. More importantly, the measure separates those sites that are gaining jobs from those that are losing jobs, so it should be less affected by which sites have chronic high or low unemployment. Instead, it should provide a clearer measure of the availability of jobs, or lack thereof, which constrains the employment possibilities of both those ordered into NCP Choices and the comparison group members.

Taking all of this into account, analyses will be conducted to assess whether NCP Choices has differential impacts under differing economic conditions by examining the extent to which selected short-term program impacts vary under conditions of both 1) high or low unemployment rates, as well as 2) high or low employment growth rates. In those cases where impacts vary significantly due to these factors, we will separately estimate the impacts of NCP Choices under each condition.

### **Quasi-Experimental Comparison Group Design**

Ideally, from the perspective of impact evaluation, the NCP Choices demonstration would have been conducted as a true experiment by randomly assigning potential participants to experimental and control groups. However, because a random assignment design was not feasible for the NCP Choices demonstration, an alternative approach to comparison group selection was utilized. Over the years, researchers have developed a number of ‘quasi-experimental’ approaches for creating counter-factual comparison groups when random assignment is not possible for whatever reason (NRC, 2001). Although the methods are not perfect, they represent the best approach available, short of random assignment, for selecting near-equivalent comparison groups.

One approach to creating a ‘quasi-experimental’ comparison group that is as similar as possible to the experimental group in all measurable respects involves selection of multivariate ‘nearest neighbors.’ This involves systematically comparing each experimental group member to all potential comparison group members on a number of characteristics using a formula to compute multivariate distance. The dimensions on which they are compared typically consist of demographic, economic, program participation and other characteristics. The potential comparator with the closest matching characteristics, known as the ‘nearest neighbor,’ is then selected to be in the comparison group. This process is continued until all members of the experimental group have had their own nearest neighbors chosen. Outcomes are then compared for the two groups in order to compute net impacts (e.g., Heckman, 1992; Heckman & Hotz, 1984). A detailed discussion of comparison group selection is provided below.

### **Comparison Group Selection Procedure**

The following procedures and variables were used in the selection of nearest neighbors to comprise the quasi-experimental comparison group. The selection of nearest neighbors for the NCP Choices project began with the identification of an appropriate pool of clients from which to choose the comparison group. Because it was desirable to have members of the comparison group be as similar as possible to those ordered into NCP Choices, the statewide database of NCPs with active child support cases was utilized as a starting point. From this, the matching procedure considered detailed geographic, demographic and historical information on their child support collections, earnings, and other relevant information to select similarly situated NCPs, as described below.

### ***Matching Procedure***

Nearest-neighbor matching is an iterative computational process done for one NCP Choices participant (or target) at a time, as follows. First, the initial pool of potential neighbors for the target participant was restricted to those with an exact match on important categorical dimensions, including county of residence, gender, time, and others, for which ‘distance’ is difficult or impossible to quantify. Next, the target participant was compared against every remaining potential neighbor on all important near-continuous dimensions that could be measured through our administrative data sources. To objectively measure the

degree of similarity between a target and potential comparator, standardized absolute distances between each pair on relevant dimensions were summed to arrive at a measure of total multivariate distance (Mahalanobis, 1936). When all potential neighbors had been compared to the target, the one with the shortest distance, or the person most similar to the target in multivariate space, was selected as the nearest neighbor. This neighbor was retained for the comparison group, then removed from further matching consideration<sup>3</sup>, and the process was repeated for the remaining NCP Choices participants until the selection of the comparison group was complete.

In some circumstances, particularly when the quality of matches produced in this manner suffers, it may be necessary to utilize a technique called ‘caliper matching,’ in which both members of the most poorly matched pairs are removed from further analysis.

### ***Basic dimensions for matching***

The basic dimensions for selecting a comparison group of non-custodial parents not ordered into the NCP Choices program would typically consist of variables from the following categories:

- Demographics at program entry, including age, marital status, and race/ethnicity;
- Employment and earnings histories, as measured from the UI earnings database;
- Child support case features, including number and ages of children, collections history (including the current arrears balance that makes the NCP a target), and number of other cases with which the NCP is associated;
- Features of the custodial parent (CP) on the case to which the NCP is linked, including demographics, employment, earnings, and assistance histories, and number of other child support cases on which the CP is listed;
- Geography, as measured by county of residence (exact match required);
- History of NCP participation in workforce development services; and
- Date of entry into the NCP Choices program was controlled for implicitly by selecting comparison group members based on their characteristics as of each NCP Choices group member’s program entry date.

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<sup>3</sup> This is known as sampling without replacement, and it prevents the same comparator being selected for the comparison group multiple times. While it is possible to sample with replacement and get slightly better matches, this requires a complex adjustment to the standard errors, and can lead to the undesirable situation of having one person serve as comparator for a large number of treatment group members.

Not all of the dimensions identified above were included in the match procedure. However, the subset of measures used (see Table 6 and Table 7) includes all the most important ones to ensure adequately matched comparison group members.

### **Comparison Group Selection**

This section describes the situation before and after the selection of a comparison group for evaluating the impacts of NCP Choices. First, Table 6 presents a comparison of NCP Choices clients against the *entire pool* of available, comparable NCPs with active child support cases in the same counties as those served by NCP Choices. This comparison illustrates the ways in which the NCPs ordered into the NCP Choices program differed systematically from other NCPs in the same areas. Later, after the selection is completed, Table 7 compares select NCP Choices clients against members of the comparison group chosen to be as similar as possible to NCP Choices clients on these measured dimensions.

#### ***Before selection: NCP Choices clients compared to all NCPs***

Table 6 compares relevant pre-program characteristics of NCP Choices clients and the entire pool of NCPs from which a comparison group is to be chosen. Initially, the comparison group pool consists of all other similarly situated NCPs with active child support cases in one of the twelve target counties (including Bexar, Brazoria, Cameron, Dallas, El Paso, Galveston, Harris, Hidalgo, Jefferson, Orange, Lubbock, and McLennan counties) served by the ten sites. Only NCP Choices clients ordered into the program by November 2008 are included, in order to allow at least a six-month follow-up interval for the outcome analysis.

Results of this comparison indicate that NCP Choices clients differed substantially from other NCPs who had active child support cases in the same counties. NCP Choices clients tend to be younger, slightly more likely to be female, more likely to be black, have more active child support cases, have more than twice as many dependent children, and their youngest dependents tend to be younger than those of other NCPs in the same geographic areas. NCP Choices clients also have longer earnings histories, but are less likely to have been employed in the quarter of entry or in the four years prior to that point, have substantially lesser average earnings levels in recent years, and are about twice as likely to have experienced a recent dip of twenty percent or more in their earnings levels. NCP

Choices clients tend to have been paying child support longer, but are less likely to have made a payment recently, made payments less than half as often in the prior year, are more likely to have made a payment through federal offset in the prior year, and are much more likely to have had a capias issued recently for their arrest, as compared to other NCPs in the target areas. NCP Choices clients tend to owe more in both ongoing child support obligations as well as regular payments to arrears, or overdue support. They also tended to owe much greater child support arrears balances at program entry: an incredible \$36,000 per NCP, compared to less than \$11,000 per NCP in the potential comparison group pool<sup>4</sup>. The custodial parents (CPs) associated with NCP Choices clients were about three times as likely to have been receiving welfare (TANF) benefits in the prior two years, and almost twice as likely to have been receiving Food Stamps (now called the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, or SNAP) during that period. Those ordered into NCP Choices were less likely to be responsible for carrying health insurance for the children associated with their cases, according to their child support orders, but more likely to have been ordered to pay cash support for medical coverage. Finally, NCP Choices clients were more likely to have participated recently in workforce development programs available to them at the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). Many of the differences shown here could be regarded as indicative of why these NCPs were targeted for selection into the NCP Choices program.

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<sup>4</sup> Note that arrears balances for various points in the past, such as when an NCP was ordered into the program, were projected using an estimation procedure with known flaws. For example, the presence of collections via federal offsets can be inferred, but the exact dollar amount is unknown due to data restrictions. There is no reason to believe, however, that the estimated arrears balances are any less accurate for NCP Choices clients than for other NCPs.

**Table 6. Comparison of NCP Choices Clients with Other NCPs in Same Counties**

	<b>NCP Choices</b>	<b>All Other NCPs in Target Counties</b>	
<b>All NCPs</b>	N=2,296	N=522,689	
NCP age (years)	33.8	37.6	**
NCP male	95.2%	98.1%	**
NCP Hispanic	54.6%	55.5%	
NCP black	35.7%	22.4%	**
NCP number of active CS cases	1.7	1.2	**
NCP number of dependents	6.4	2.7	**
Age of youngest dependent, years	6.5	8.3	**
Age of oldest dependent, years	10.8	11.0	
Time since first observed NCP earnings (quarters)	24.9	22.8	**
NCP employed at program entry	44.1%	50.3%	**
Percent of time NCP employed over 4 years prior to program	40.1%	51.0%	**
NCP average quarterly earnings over 4 years prior to program	\$1,949	\$4,389	**
NCP experienced earnings dip of at least 20% within prior 2 years	48.8%	24.9%	**
Any Unemployment Insurance claims filed in year prior to program	6.5%	5.5%	
Any Unemployment Insurance benefits received in year prior to program	3.3%	3.7%	
Time since CS first collected on this case (months)	40.4	38.2	**
Time since CS last collected on this case (months)	7.8	5.0	**
Percent of time CS collection was made in prior year	22.1%	48.8%	**
Any CS collection made via federal offset in prior year	13.2%	8.7%	**
Percent of time TANF received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	13.4%	4.4%	**
Percent of time Food Stamps (SNAP) received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	70.2%	39.4%	**
Percent of time NCP responsible for carrying health insurance, prior year	35.7%	46.0%	**
Percent of time NCP responsible for medical support payments, prior year	11.9%	6.5%	**
Any low-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	9.5%	2.8%	**
Any high-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	.9%	.3%	**
Capias issued for arrest of NCP in 6 months prior to program	23.0%	1.8%	**
Approximate arrears balance at program entry	\$36,073	\$10,811	**
Total current support obligation (PP1) at program entry	\$544	\$345	**
Total arrears obligation (PP2) at program entry	\$131	\$79	**
<b>Those experiencing an earnings dip</b>	N=1,120	N=264,134	
Time since earnings dip occurred (quarters)	4.9	4.9	**
Percent of earnings which earnings dip represents	82.9%	75.8%	**

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

***After selection: NCP Choices clients and the selected comparison group***

For research that utilizes quasi-experimental evaluation techniques, the results hinge critically on differences in outcomes for NCP Choices participants and those of the comparison group. Thus, it is vitally important to ensure that the groups are as equivalent as possible before any services are delivered. Researchers could expect to observe, if the comparison group selection were done well, that the measurable characteristics of the groups at program entry should differ only by chance. In order to test whether the characteristics of the groups differ at a level that could be explained by chance alone, tests were performed on the means of the continuous matching variables that describe the two groups. It was expected that few or no significant differences would be found.<sup>5</sup>

The comparison group selection was initially made using a weighted multivariate nearest-neighbor matching procedure, as described above. The selected comparison group was found to be quite similar to the group of NCP Choices clients. Unfortunately, however, the results of tests performed subsequent to the match indicated that the initial comparison group was significantly different from NCP Choices clients on a number of measured dimensions. Numerous methods are available for correcting such a situation, but perhaps the simplest solution involves removing poorly matched NCP Choices/comparison group pairs from further analysis: a method known as ‘caliper matching.’ The advantage of using a caliper to remove poor matches is that the remaining groups of NCP Choices clients and comparison group members are more similar to each other. Thus, one can have greater confidence that any differences that emerge subsequent to program entry are due to the program, rather than to pre-existing differences between the groups. The disadvantages are a slightly smaller sample size, which reduces statistical power for detecting small effects, and a slight loss of generalizability, which means the results are not quite representative of *all* those ordered into NCP Choices, but rather of all those ordered into the program for whom comparable non-participants could be found. Having to resort to a caliper to maintain high

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<sup>5</sup> Due to the nature of statistical inference, when using a 95 percent confidence level one can expect to find approximately one spurious difference for every twenty comparisons made. This is because the probability of a type I error (concluding there is a difference when in fact no difference exists) is 0.05, or one in twenty. Due to the large number of comparisons involved in these tests, researchers should only be concerned if the number of statistically significant differences exceeds that which could be expected due to chance alone.

match quality is likely a natural consequence of a mature program serving a large proportion of eligible clients in each area.

The caliper match was implemented by selecting a multivariate distance value as a cutoff. Individual members of matched pairs whose absolute distance value was above the cutoff would be removed from both the NCP Choices and comparison groups, while members of pairs with distances below the cutoff would be retained for estimation of program impacts. A cutoff value of 0.5 was chosen to provide a balance between maximizing the similarity of the two groups at the point of entry into the program, and minimizing the losses of generalizability due to dropping of clients.<sup>6</sup> Application of this cutoff resulted in different proportions of clients being dropped from the various sites, due to varying degrees of match quality at the sites. The end result of the caliper application was that eighteen percent of clients were dropped overall, with 1875 of the original 2296 clients retained for the impact analysis. Waco (45%), Brazoria (39%), and Lubbock (36%) counties lost the largest proportion of clients due to application of the caliper, indicating these areas had the worst matches, on average, while Harris (5%), Dallas (4%), and Orange (0%) counties lost the least. Appendix Table A-4 compares characteristics of those ordered into NCP Choices who were retained for further analysis and those who were dropped due to application of the caliper.

Table 7 presents a comparison of NCP Choices clients and the final set of quasi-experimental comparison group members, who were initially selected from the larger pool of NCPs in the same twelve counties identified previously, and then were subjected to the caliper procedure described above. A comparison of the second and third columns of Table 7 indicates that the aggregate-level characteristics of these two groups were nearly identical at the point of entry into the program. T-tests comparing the two groups on all listed characteristics confirmed that there were only three significant differences between them on the observed dimensions. Those ordered into NCP Choices, on average, were associated with custodial parents who were slightly more likely to have recently received TANF, or welfare benefits. Those ordered into NCP Choices also tended to owe slightly greater

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<sup>6</sup> It is difficult to assign units to the distance measure so that this cutoff value of 0.5 would be meaningful. However, to place it in context, it should be noted that average distances between NCP Choices clients and unselected NCPs were typically in the range from 5 to 12, depending on the county, while the average distances of those pairs retained after application of the caliper ranged from 0.13 to 0.29.

ongoing monthly child support payments, and they tended to have greater arrears balances, although these differences were much smaller than the differences observed prior to the match. Furthermore, the direction of these differences tend to be toward harder-to-serve clients in the NCP Choices group, so these few pre-existing differences would not provide a credible alternative explanation to any positive program impacts. This comparison of NCP Choices versus comparison group members was also done separately by site, in order to support site-level impact estimation. Detailed results of this comparison by site, which essentially replicated the overall findings of few differences, are listed in Appendix Tables A-5 through A-14. Despite the fact that most differences were not statistically significant, the slight differences remaining between the groups are to a large extent controlled for statistically when estimating impacts, as described in the next chapter.

In summary, the selection procedure that included a caliper, or cutoff, to retain only the best matched pairs appears to have created a comparison group and a subset of NCP Choices clients whose observable characteristics are quite similar at the point of entry into the program. Although this approach slightly reduces the generalizability of the findings, the quasi-experimental design implemented here is likely to have good internal validity for determining the impacts of the NCP Choices program. Note, however, that this does not mean that the groups are necessarily as similar as possible on dimensions that were not capable of being measured through the available administrative data sources. The limitations of a quasi-experimental approach are such that it can only ensure comparability on aspects that can be measured with the available data.

**Table 7. Comparison of NCP Choices Clients  
with Selected Comparison Group**

	<b>NCP Choices</b>	<b>Overall Comparison Group</b>
<b>All NCPs</b>	N=1,875	N=1,874
NCP age (years)	33.6	33.6
NCP male	95.9%	96.0%
NCP Hispanic	57.8%	58.8%
NCP black	32.1%	31.4%
NCP number of active CS cases	1.49	1.46
NCP number of dependents	4.52	4.23
Age of youngest dependent, years	6.69	6.59
Age of oldest dependent, years	10.47	10.21
Time since first observed NCP earnings (quarters)	24.7	25.2
NCP employed at program entry	42.1%	41.4%
Percent of time NCP employed over 4 years prior to program	39.5%	39.9%
NCP average quarterly earnings over 4 years prior to program	\$1,918	\$1,877
NCP experienced earnings dip of at least 20% within prior 2 years	47.2%	47.2%
Any Unemployment Insurance claims filed in year prior to program	5.2%	5.2%
Any Unemployment Insurance benefits received in year prior to program	2.7%	2.7%
Time since CS first collected on this case (months)	39.0	38.9
Time since CS last collected on this case (months)	7.7	7.8
Percent of time CS collection was made in prior year	21.1%	21.3%
Any CS collection made via federal offset in prior year	13.5%	11.7%
Percent of time TANF received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	11.8%	9.5% **
Percent of time Food Stamps (SNAP) received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	67.9%	66.7%
Percent of time NCP responsible for carrying health insurance, prior year	34.0%	34.3%
Percent of time NCP responsible for medical support payments, prior year	11.6%	10.3%
Any low-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	8.2%	6.6%
Any high-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	.7%	.5%
Capias issued for arrest of NCP in 6 months prior to program	16.0%	16.0%
Approximate arrears balance at program entry	\$23,827	\$20,546 **
Total current support obligation (PP1) at program entry	\$407	\$364 **
Total arrears obligation (PP2) at program entry	\$84	\$89
<b>Those experiencing an earnings dip</b>	<b>N=885</b>	<b>N=884</b>
Time since earnings dip occurred (quarters)	4.9	4.9
Percent of earnings which earnings dip represents	84.0%	83.6%

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

## V. Program Impacts and Discussion

As discussed above, the quasi-experimental comparison group selection procedure, modified to select the best matches using a caliper, produced a comparison group of matched NCPs who were quite similar in all measured ways to the NCP Choices participants before their entry into the program. The impact estimates reported below were further adjusted for the minor differences that remained between the two groups.

Because of the success of the caliper-adjusted matching procedure, we can be confident that the impacts reported in this section were at least partially due to NCP Choices participation. Although only a true experiment with random assignment can unambiguously determine that NCP Choices services *caused* these outcomes, we are far more certain about the true cause of the observed differences than if we had simply observed pre-post changes in outcomes or used a comparison group selected unscientifically from a convenience sample.

### **Workforce Development Participation by Non-custodial Parents**

One of the first goals of the NCP Choices program was to get eligible NCPs into workforce development services that they may need in order to improve their employment prospects. Thus, the first set of outcome analyses was designed to examine two research questions related to the extent to which those ordered into NCP Choices were engaged in the program and services were received:

- Does NCP Choices lead to increased workforce development participation by non-custodial parents?
- Does NCP Choices lead to increased incarceration rates of NCPs?

The first question was included as a check on whether and to what extent NCP Choices clients actually followed through with workforce development services. The second question was designed as an attempt to measure the near opposite outcome: the extent to which NCPs were subjected to greater rates of incarceration for either a failure to cooperate with NCP Choices requirements, or for non-payment of child support. Unfortunately, the best measure of incarceration currently available in administrative data for both NCP Choices clients and comparison group members has several weaknesses that led us to exclude it from

this report. Better measures of potential incarceration are still being sought for future impact reports.

It is important to recognize, as discussed elsewhere in this report, that this impact evaluation does not measure the impact of workforce development participation per se. Instead, the impact of NCP Choices captures the effect of *being ordered into* the program, together with the corresponding threat of jail time for noncompliance. Thus, it was expected that not all NCPs ordered into the program would participate in NCP Choices, and in fact, some portion would likely end up being ordered to serve time in jail.

### ***Overall***

Table 8 reveals that, as expected, being ordered into the NCP Choices program was associated with significantly greater levels of NCP participation in the NCP Choices program subsequent to program entry. The first measure, capturing the percent of time NCPs participated in the NCP Choices program, reveals that those ordered into NCP Choices participated for nearly 4 months subsequent to program entry, on average, as compared to zero participation by comparison group members. Because Choices services do not typically last more than a year, the measures in this section were only examined for the first year after the order to participate in the program. The second measure of workforce development participation, which gives a better idea of the total share of NCPs participating in NCP Choices, shows that 82 percent of those ordered into the program participated at some point within one year of this order, as compared to essentially zero participation among comparison group members. These findings confirm a high degree of compliance with the order.

The third and fourth measures of NCP workforce development participation capture NCP involvement in *any* program, including NCP Choices, Employment Services (ES), Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Food Stamps Employment and Training (FSE&T), Project RIO (Re-Integration of Offenders), and Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) services<sup>7</sup>. These measures, shown in Table 8, also revealed significantly increased participation by NCP Choices clients, relative to that of the comparison group. Those ordered into NCP Choices participated in some form of workforce development about 33 percent of the time in

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<sup>7</sup> Note that these ‘any workforce development’ measures are not strictly independent of the ‘any Choices’ measures above. They are presented as additional descriptive information only.

the year subsequent to the order, as opposed to less than two percent for the comparison group. Further, about 83 percent of clients ordered into NCP Choices participated in some form of workforce development within twelve months of program entry, while only about six percent of their comparison group counterparts participated. Again, this indicates that the program was highly successful in getting NCPs into workforce development services, while very few comparison group members found their way to similar services on their own.

**Table 8. NCP Choices Impact on NCPs’ Workforce Development Participation**

	<b>NCP Choices Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>Comparison Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>NCP Choices Impact</b>
Percent of time NCPs participating in NCP Choices program, year 1	32.1%	.0%	32.1% **
Any NCP Choices participation by NCPs within 1 year of program entry	81.7%	.1%	81.6% **
Percent of time NCPs participating in any workforce development program(s), year 1	33.2%	1.5%	31.7% **
Any workforce development participation by NCPs within 1 year of program entry	83.1%	6.3%	76.8% **

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

***Impacts under Differing Economic Conditions***

As discussed previously, we examined whether program impacts varied in response to the recent economic downturn by looking for variations in program impact under conditions of low versus high unemployment rates and low versus moderate employment growth rates. Tests for statistical interactions found that program impacts on workforce development participation in the first year did vary under different economic conditions. Table 9 illustrates this NCP Choices program impact under conditions of moderate versus zero employment growth, and demonstrates that greater program participation occurred under moderate employment growth rates, or when the economy is booming, as compared to when the economy was not growing. Similar effects to the one shown were also observed, involving increased workforce participation under conditions of low unemployment, as well as nearly identical patterns of interactions with both economic conditions measures when using NCP Choices participation as the measure.

**Table 9. NCP Choices Impact on NCPs' Workforce Development Participation, under Varying Employment Growth Levels**

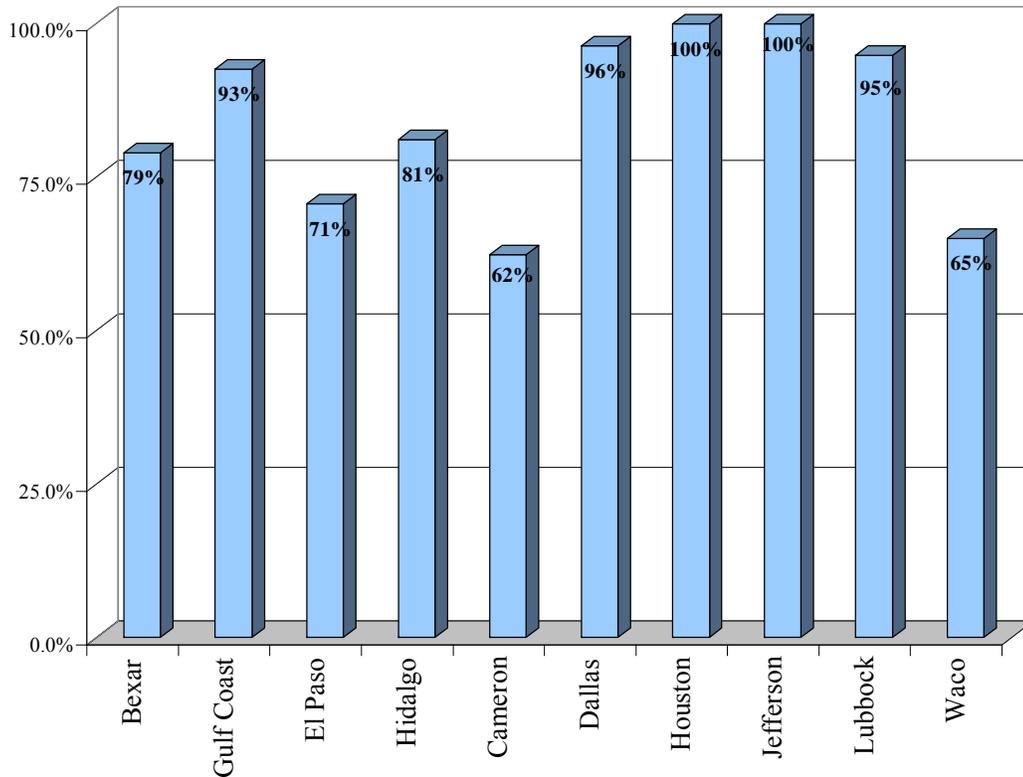
	<b>NCP Choices Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>Comparison Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>NCP Choices Impact</b>
Percent of time NCP participating in any workforce development program(s), year 1, zero employment growth	31.5%	1.5%	30.0% **
Percent of time NCP participating in any workforce development program(s), year 1, moderate employment growth	35.2%	1.5%	33.7% **

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

***Impacts by Site***

Tests indicated that the estimated impacts of NCP Choices on all four workforce development measures varied significantly by site. An illustration of one of these effects, the NCP Choices effect on any NCP Choices Participation in year one, is shown in Figure 7.

**Figure 7. Impact on Any NCP Choices Participation in Year 1, by Site**



From this figure, it is apparent that many of the six expansion sites (the rightmost columns in the figure) achieved a high rate of participation in NCP Choices in the year after the order to participate, with four sites apparently eliciting between 95% and 100% participation. Although it is difficult to imagine how sites could show a 100 percent impact on Choices participation, it should be noted that the numbers of participants in these expansion sites are small, relative to the original sites, and that some participants had been removed using the caliper match. The Waco and Cameron County sites, on the other hand, achieved the poorest rates of participation in NCP Choices. Of the original sites, the Gulf Coast site showed the greatest impacts on Choices participation, with the remaining three original sites achieving moderate levels of participation.

The results of all site-level comparisons on workforce measures are tabulated in Table 10, for the original sites, and in Table 11 for the expansion sites. For ease of comparison, only the impact column is shown in these tables (see Appendix Tables A-15 through A-24 for complete results by site for all measures).

**Table 10. NCP Choices Impacts on NCPs' Workforce Development Participation by Site, Original Sites**

	<b>Bexar</b>	<b>Gulf Coast</b>	<b>El Paso</b>	<b>Hidalgo</b>
Percent of time NCPs participating in NCP Choices program, year 1	49.5% **	27.9% **	13.6% **	24.4% **
Any NCP Choices participation by NCPs within 1 year of program entry	85.1% **	94.5% **	70.3% **	76.4% **
Percent of time NCPs participating in any workforce development program(s), year 1	49.4% **	28.7% **	12.8% **	27.1% **
Any workforce development participation by NCPs within 1 year of program entry	82.1% **	87.6% **	65.0% **	68.9% **

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

Although the patterns of NCP Choices impacts on participation in any workforce development programs largely conform to the patterns observed in Figure 7, they differ slightly when considering the percent of time spent in such programs. In only one original site, Bexar County, did participation in Choices average as much of half of the time in the year after being ordered into the program. Among the expansion sites, Dallas approached half time participation, Jefferson/Orange participation was over 60%, and in Houston participation was over 75% in the first year.

**Table 11. NCP Choices Impacts on NCPs' Workforce Development Participation by Site, Expansion Sites**

	<b>Cameron</b>	<b>Dallas</b>	<b>Harris/ Houston</b>	<b>Jefferson/ Orange</b>	<b>Lubbock</b>	<b>Waco</b>
Percent of time NCP participating in NCP Choices program	40.9% **	46.3% **	76.0% **	63.8% **	27.6% **	24.3% **
Any NCP Choices participation by NCP within 1 year of program entry	62.4% **	96.4% **	100.0% **	100.0% **	94.9% **	65.0% **
Percent of time NCP participating in any workforce development program(s)	39.0% **	45.3% **	75.2% **	62.2% **	27.7% **	24.3% **
Any workforce development participation by NCPs within 1 year of program entry	54.4% **	91.8% **	95.8% **	97.5% **	93.2% **	65.0% **

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

It should be noted that although Choices and other workforce development participation was measured objectively using administrative data, it is still possible that some of the site differences seen here are due to potential site-level variation in what extent of contact between clients and the workforce representative would trigger entry into the participation tracking system.

Appendix Table A-3 lists site-level correlations between various outcome measures, including workforce development participation, and the four subscales that purport to identify process differences among the sites. As expected, the subscale that best predicts participation in either NCP Choices in particular or workforce development in general is the Adequate and Available Workforce Services scale. The pattern of this finding indicates that those sites that are perceived to have the most adequate and available workforce services are also those sites that achieved the greatest impacts on workforce development participation. Thus, this finding serves both to justify and explain much of the site-level variation seen in this section, and to validate the Adequate and Available Workforce Services subscale.

### **Payment of Child Support**

The next set of analyses attempts to answer the question whether the NCP Choices program leads to increased child support payments. Several measures address this question<sup>8</sup>, with one gauging the frequency of any child support collections and another examining the average dollar amount of collections. These measures are computed on a monthly basis, and since the post-program follow-up period now extends to nearly four years for some of the earliest participants, results for these and many other measures to follow are further divided into short-term and long-term impacts. Short-term impacts are those observed in the first year after the program, while long-term impacts are those that occur in the second and later years after the program. The final measure of child support collection constrains the time interval to ask what share of NCPs made *any* payment within twelve months of program entry. Related measures in the next section will attempt to quantify the *consistency* with which such payments were made over time.

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<sup>8</sup> Note that because of data limitations, child support payments that were collected via federal offset (i.e., income-tax refund intercept) were not included in these collections figures. Because they were equally excluded for NCP Choices and comparison group members, this should not substantially bias the net impacts reported.

## ***Overall***

As illustrated in Table 10, NCP Choices participation was associated with a substantial 14 percentage-point increase in the frequency of any child support collections in the first year after being ordered into the program. Although the absolute frequency of collections is not very high, occurring in less than half of the months following program entry, it is still impressive considering the population and their typical payment histories. Furthermore, the increased frequency of collections for NCP Choices participants represents about a 47 percent gain in collections rate relative to the comparison group, which is quite impressive for any population. Furthermore, while the impacts of many social programs typically tend to fade relatively quickly over time, frequency of child support collections among those ordered into NCP Choices was still about eight percentage points higher than the rate among comparison group members, or about a 23 percent increase in collections even two to four years after the order to participate. This indicates that the child support collections benefits of NCP Choices participation tend to persist for many years after program participation.

In addition to increased frequency of collections, the NCP Choices program was also found to be associated with a substantial increase in the average monthly dollar amount of child support collections. Overall, in the first year after the program, NCP Choices participants paid approximately \$57 per month more in child support than their comparison group counterparts, a substantial 51 percent increase in total collections.<sup>9</sup> And again, looking at longer term impacts, child support was still being collected at a rate of \$32 per month more than from comparison group members, or a 25 percent increase two to four years after the order to participate in the program.

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<sup>9</sup> Although a statistical test on the average collections across all months, including months with zero collections, can be misleading due to the non-normal nature of the underlying distributions, research suggests that this concern is unwarranted with sufficiently large sample sizes, as in the present study.

**Table 12. NCP Choices Impact on Child Support Collections**

	<b>NCP Choices Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>Comparison Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>NCP Choices Impact</b>
Percent of time any child support collections made, year 1	44.0%	30.0%	14.0% **
Percent of time any child support collections made, later years	41.9%	34.0%	7.9% **
Monthly average child support collections, year 1	\$169	\$112	\$57 **
Monthly average child support collections, later years	\$159	\$127	\$32 **
Any child support collection made within 12 months of program entry	83.6%	60.2%	23.4% **

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

Modest overall rates of child support collection like those seen above can be due to either small numbers of people paying most of the time or to large numbers of people paying less frequently. Thus, the final measure was created to distinguish between these two possibilities to see which was more responsible for the effects observed above. When looking at whether any child support payment was made within one year after program entry, one finds that 84 percent of NCP Choices clients made payments, or almost twice as many as the share making payments in any given month. And as with the other measures, the estimated impact of NCP Choices on this measure was a 23 percentage-point increase, or a 39 percent increase in collections overall.

***Impacts under Differing Economic Conditions***

Tests for statistical interactions found that the NCP Choices program impact on both any child support collected within the first year, as well as the average total collections during this period, varied significantly by level of employment growth. Average total collections also varied by unemployment level (similar pattern, not shown). As Table 13 illustrates, NCP Choices had greater positive impacts on child support collections when employment growth was high. The NCP Choices impact was a 15.3 percentage point

increase in any collections when employment was growing, as compared to only a 13.1 percentage point increase under more stagnant or declining employment conditions. Similarly, and perhaps even more impressive, the NCP Choices impact on average collections was \$74 per month under moderate employment growth, a 62 percent increase, as compared to a \$42 monthly impact, or 40 percent increase, under zero employment growth. Thus, the NCP Choices program appears to be more successful in increasing child support collections in a booming economy. Perhaps most important, however, is that the NCP Choices impacts on collections remain at an impressive 40% increase even in some of the worst economic conditions seen in many decades.

**Table 13. NCP Choices Impact on Child Support Collections, under Varying Employment Growth Levels**

	<b>NCP Choices Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>Comparison Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>NCP Choices Impact</b>
Percent of time any child support collections made, year 1, zero employment growth	42.1%	29.0%	13.1% **
Percent of time any child support collections made, year 1, moderate employment growth	46.3%	31.0%	15.3% **
Monthly average child support collections, year 1, zero employment growth	\$148	\$106	\$42 **
Monthly average child support collections, year 1, moderate employment growth	\$193	\$119	\$74 **

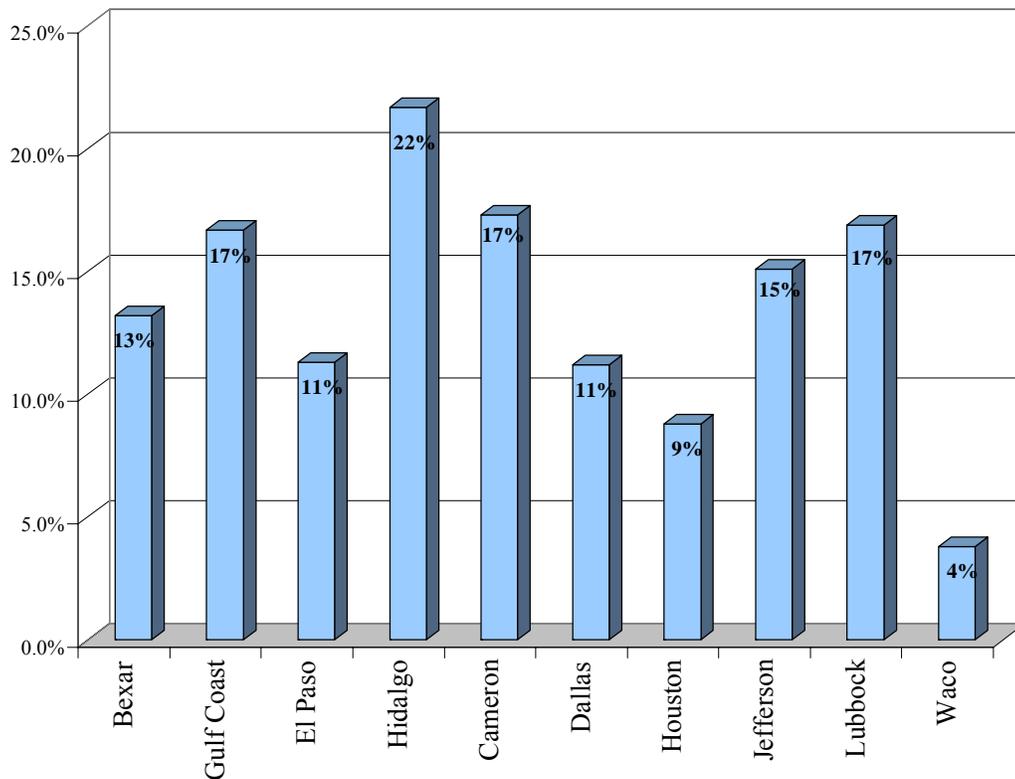
Note: \*\* indicates statistically significant difference at the .01 level, \* at the .05 level

***Impacts by Site***

Statistical analyses were done to test whether the estimated impact of NCP Choices varied across the ten pilot sites, and the results indicated that the impacts did vary significantly by site on both the collections frequency and monthly average child support collections measures. Figure 8 illustrates one of these effects, the short term impact of NCP Choices on child support collections frequency, by site. Hidalgo County had the greatest impact on short-term child support collections, followed closely by the Gulf Coast, and several expansion sites: Cameron County, Lubbock, and Jefferson/Orange. Waco was the

only site that had no significant impact on collection frequency. Table 14, for the original sites, and Table 15, for the expansion sites, show the estimated impacts of NCP Choices participation by site for these measures.

**Figure 8. Short-term Impact on Child Support Collections Frequency, by Site**



It is noteworthy that virtually all of the sites were successful at increasing the frequency of child support collections, with only Waco showing an impact that was in the expected direction but too small to be statistically significant. For the most part, these impacts persisted, albeit at a slightly reduced level, over time in the original sites.

**Table 14. NCP Choices Impacts on Child Support Collections by Site, Original Sites**

	<b>Bexar</b>	<b>Gulf Coast</b>	<b>El Paso</b>	<b>Hidalgo</b>
Percent of time any child support collections made, year 1	13.2% **	16.7% **	11.3% **	21.7% **
Percent of time any child support collections made, later years	6.0% **	8.8% **	8.5% **	8.8% **
Monthly average child support collections, year 1	\$45 **	\$66 **	\$23 **	\$148 **
Monthly average child support collections, later years	\$1	\$45 **	\$25 **	\$76 **
Any child support collection made within 1 year of program entry	---	---	---	---

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

Some sites were more successful than others at increasing the average amount of child support collected, with Hidalgo County increasing the most. Gulf Coast also did well on average amount of collections, followed by several new sites, including Lubbock, Cameron County, and Waco. Waco is an interesting case; as noted above it did not show significantly increased frequency of collections, although it did manage to increase the average amount of collections by \$45 per month. Anecdotal evidence for this site suggests a high rate of lump-sum payments, which would explain the increased average payment but would not necessarily be noticeable in the frequency measure. Average amount of collections did not increase significantly in the Jefferson/Orange site, although in fairness it should be noted that their numbers of participants (36, after the caliper) are still too few to detect a small to medium-sized effect.

**Table 15. NCP Choices Impacts on Child Support Collections by Site, Expansion Sites**

	<b>Cameron</b>	<b>Dallas</b>	<b>Harris/Houston</b>	<b>Jefferson/Orange</b>	<b>Lubbock</b>	<b>Waco</b>
Percent of time any child support collections made	17.3% **	11.2% **	8.8% **	15.1% **	16.9% **	3.8%
Monthly average child support collections	\$47 **	\$38 **	\$35 **	\$5	\$63 **	\$45 **

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

Site-level impacts on both frequency and average amount of collections were found, as shown in Appendix Table A-3, to be highly correlated with subscale scores on Partners Capable and Collaborating. This indicates that in sites where all partners were generally perceived to be doing their parts to ensure the program's success, the strongest impacts on child support collection measures were observed. This provides an important validation of the collaborative program model.

### **Consistent Payment of Child Support**

To gauge the *consistency* of child support collections over time, a measure was 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 the three months.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, as above, this measure was computed separately for both short-term outcomes in the first year after the program and long-term outcomes in subsequent years.

### ***Overall***

Results of these child support consistency comparisons, shown in Table 16, indicate that the NCP Choices impact on consistency of child support payment was positive and statistically significant for both measures. NCP Choices participants were 15 percentage points more likely to pay child support in at least two out of every three months in the first year after the program than were their comparison group counterparts. This relative increase in consistent payment is quite substantial, representing more than a 50 percent increase in the frequency of consistent payment. Furthermore, the increase in payment consistency persisted into the longer term, with an eight percentage point increase in payment consistency, or a 24 percent increase in consistent payment two to four years after the program.

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<sup>10</sup> Similar results were found for a measure of those making payments in all three out of three months. Child support payment consistency measures were introduced in Schroeder, Looney, & Schexnayder, 2004.

**Table 16. NCP Choices Impact on Consistency of Child Support Collections**

	NCP Choices Adjusted Mean	Comparison Adjusted Mean	NCP Choices Impact
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months, year 1	44.0%	29.3%	14.7% **
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months, later years	42.2%	34.0%	8.2% **

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

***Impacts under Differing Economic Conditions***

Tests measuring for interactions between the NCP Choices program and economic conditions in their effects on consistency of child support payment found only a significant interaction with employment growth levels. As seen with the other collections measures, the impact of NCP Choices on consistent payment of child support was even more positive when employment growth was high than when it was low. Again, however, as shown in Table 17, the impact was still 13.5 percentage points, or a 47 percent increase in consistent payment even under severe recessionary economic conditions.

**Table 17. NCP Choices Impact on Consistency of Child Support Collections, under Varying Employment Growth Levels**

	NCP Choices Adjusted Mean	Comparison Adjusted Mean	NCP Choices Impact
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months, year 1, zero employment growth	42.1%	28.6%	13.5% **
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months, year 1, moderate employment growth	46.4%	30.0%	16.4% **

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

***Impacts by Site***

Further tests indicated that the estimated impact of NCP Choices on consistent payment of child support varied significantly by site for each of the measures. These impacts by site in are shown in Table 18 for the original sites, and in Table 19 for the expansion sites.

**Table 18. NCP Choices Impacts on Consistency of Child Support Collections by Site, Original Sites**

	<b>Bexar</b>	<b>Gulf Coast</b>	<b>El Paso</b>	<b>Hidalgo</b>
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months, year 1	13.1% **	17.1% **	11.3% **	24.8% **
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months, later years	5.6% **	9.7% **	8.5% **	9.0% **

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

Again, all sites were successful to varying degrees at increasing the consistent payment of child support, while Waco’s impact was in the expected direction but not statistically significant. The Hidalgo County NCP Choices program once again showed the greatest impact on consistency of child support payment, while Gulf Coast did well, and among expansion sites, Cameron County, Lubbock, and Jefferson/Orange all did well at increasing consistent payment.

**Table 19. NCP Choices Impacts on Consistency of Child Support Collections by Site, Expansion Sites**

	<b>Cameron</b>	<b>Dallas</b>	<b>Harris/ Houston</b>	<b>Jefferson/ Orange</b>	<b>Lubbock</b>	<b>Waco</b>
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months	20.0%**	11.2%**	9.1%**	16.7%**	19.1%**	3.1%

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

As observed with general child support collections measures, site-level impacts on consistency of collections were found to be highly correlated with subscale scores on Partners Capable and Collaborating (see Appendix Table A-3). This suggests that sites in which all partners were generally perceived to be doing their parts to ensure the program’s success showed the strongest impacts on consistency of child support collections.

### **Employment and Earnings of Non-custodial Parents**

The next set of analyses answers the question: Does NCP Choices lead to increased employment rates and earnings levels by non-custodial parents? This question was answered with two measures, one that gauges the percent of time NCPs were employed subsequent to

program entry, and another that measures the quarterly earnings levels of those who were employed in any given calendar quarter. As before, these measures are calculated both for short term, one year impacts, as well as longer term impacts looking two to four years beyond the order to participate in the program.

**Table 20. NCP Choices Impact on Employment and Earnings**

	NCP Choices Adjusted Mean	Comparison Adjusted Mean	NCP Choices Impact
Percent of time NCP employed, year 1	46.5%	38.3%	8.2% **
Percent of time NCP employed, later years	43.3%	38.3%	5.0% **
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs, year 1	\$2953	\$3540	-\$587 **
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs, later years	\$3637	\$4264	-\$627 **

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

**Overall**

As shown in Table 14, the NCP Choices program appeared to have significant impacts on both NCP employment rates and earnings levels, but these two effects went in opposite directions. Over eight percent more NCP Choices participants were employed at any given time in the first year after program entry, an employment impact of 21 percent. Unfortunately, however, those who were employed earned about \$587 less per quarter than did employed comparison group members. The substantial increase in employment is consistent with program goals, but the reduction in earnings levels is somewhat troublesome. One could argue that the reduced earnings levels of those who are employed is a direct result of a greater share of NCP Choices participants gaining employment, albeit in lower-wage entry-level jobs. If this were the case, then the negative earnings effect might be expected to diminish over time, as those recently entering jobs gain more experience. In fact, the last report on NCP Choices impacts (Schroeder & Chiarello, 2008) showed just such a pattern. Unfortunately, with updated numbers including longer follow-up intervals in the present report, the longer term analysis no longer supports this interpretation. When looking at impacts two to four years after entering the program, one finds there are still significant

differences in average earnings of employed members of the two groups. Fortunately, however, the employment gains observed in the short term for those ordered into NCP Choices did persist into the longer term, in the form of a five percentage point gain, or a thirteen percent increase in employment rates.

***Impacts under Differing Economic Conditions***

Tests indicate that the impact of NCP Choices on employment differed significantly only with varying levels of the unemployment rate. No interactions were found involving the average earnings level. As shown in Table 21, not surprisingly, the NCP Choices program had a greater impact on employment rate, more than five percentage points greater, when the unemployment rate was low, as compared to when it was high. This translates into a twenty-nine percent increase in employment when unemployment rates were low, but still an impressive fifteen percent increase in employment under tight labor market conditions.

**Table 21. NCP Choices Impact on Employment, under Varying Unemployment Levels**

	<b>NCP Choices Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>Comparison Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>NCP Choices Impact</b>
Percent of time NCP employed, year 1, low unemployment	48.5%	37.7%	10.8% **
Percent of time NCP employed, year 1, high unemployment	44.6%	38.9%	5.7% **

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

***Impacts by Site***

Impacts of NCP Choices on employment and earnings were found to vary significantly by site on all measures. As seen in Figure 9, the one site with by far the largest effect on short-term employment was Jefferson/Orange, with an amazing twenty-nine percentage point increase in employment. Also showing impressive employment gains were Bexar County, among the original sites, and Cameron County and Houston, among new sites.

No significant impact on employment was seen in Dallas, Lubbock, or Waco, although the tendency was in the right direction in all cases, and the numbers of participants in these expansion sites are not yet adequate to detect small effects.

**Figure 9. Short-term Impact on Employment Rates, by Site**

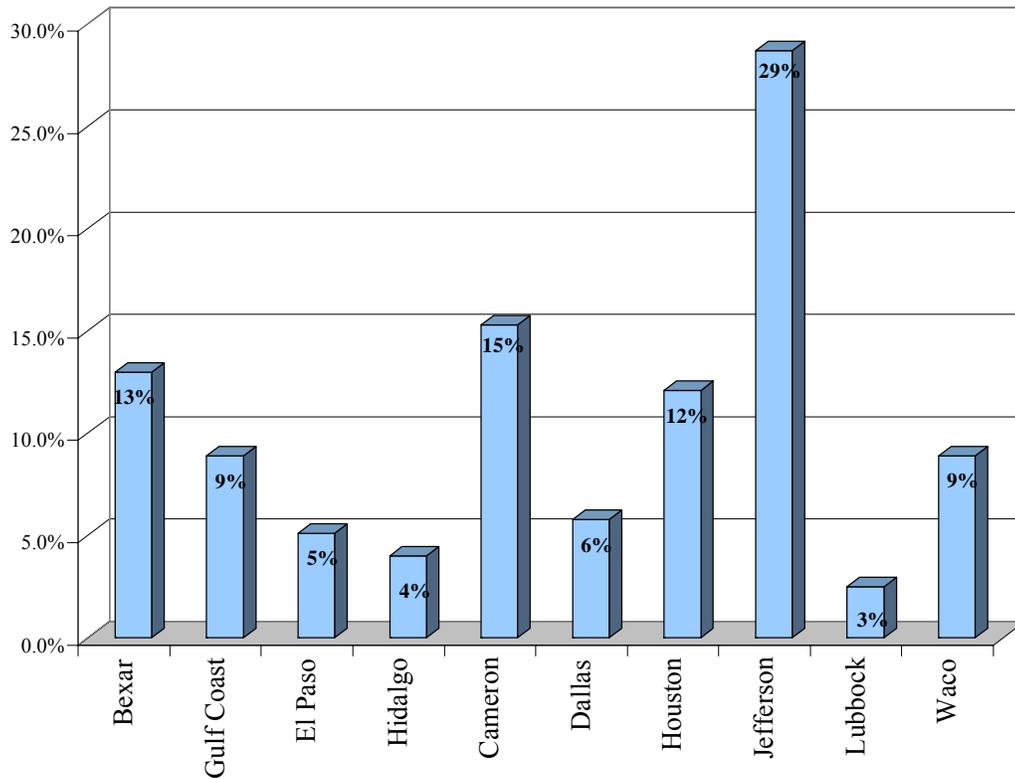


Table 22 and Table 23 show detailed impacts by site, for the original and expansion sites, respectively, on the employment and earnings measures. From this table it is clear that the employment impacts persisted best in the Gulf Coast site, where two to four years after the program those ordered into NCP Choices were employed ten percentage points more than were those in the comparison groups. On the other hand, positive employment impacts persisted least in El Paso and Hidalgo.

**Table 22: NCP Choices Impacts on Employment and Earnings by Site, Original Sites**

	<b>Bexar</b>	<b>Gulf Coast</b>	<b>El Paso</b>	<b>Hidalgo</b>
Percent of time NCP employed, year 1	13.0% **	8.9% **	5.1% **	4.0% *
Percent of time NCP employed, later years	5.9% **	9.7% **	2.7%	3.8%
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs, year 1	-\$618 **	-\$375	-\$644 **	-\$546 **
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs, later years	-\$1002 **	-\$158	-\$493 **	-\$442

Note: --- indicates that the significant overall effect for this outcome did not vary significantly by site. \*\* indicates statistically significant difference at the .01 level, \* at the .05 level

Impacts of NCP Choices on earnings of the employed tended to vary substantially among sites. Although most sites showed negative impacts, Lubbock showed a surprising \$1262 per quarter increase in earnings. This finding provides a nice complement to the Lubbock site’s nonsignificant impact on employment rates, suggesting that workforce development at this site might somehow encourage job advancement over placement. The next best sites on this measure were Gulf Coast and Houston, with no significant impacts on earnings.

**Table 23. NCP Choices Impacts on Employment and Earnings by Site, Expansion Sites**

	<b>Cameron</b>	<b>Dallas</b>	<b>Harris/Houston</b>	<b>Jefferson/Orange</b>	<b>Lubbock</b>	<b>Waco</b>
Percent of time NCP employed	15.3%*	5.8%	12.1%**	28.7% **	2.5%	8.9%
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs	-\$1269*	-\$1074*	-\$519	-\$1458	\$1262**	-\$1254**

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

Site-level impacts on employment (see Appendix Table A-3) were found to be highly correlated with subscale scores on Adequate and Available Workforce Services, indicating that those sites perceived to offer the best workforce services also had the greatest employment impacts. This finding tends to validate the job placement function of these services. On the other hand, impacts on earnings of the employed were most highly

correlated with Perceived Program Follow-through, suggesting that other factors were responsible for any earnings gains observed in conjunction with being ordered into NCP Choices.

### **Unemployment Insurance Claims by Non-custodial Parents**

Does NCP Choices lead to reduced rates of filing unemployment claims or receiving unemployment benefits among non-custodial parents? Does it make a difference for the stability of NCP earnings trends, making them more likely to be eligible for the unemployment insurance (UI) program if they were to lose their jobs? The first question was answered by gauging the percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims subsequent to program entry, and the percent of months in which NCPs received unemployment benefits. Both of these measures were calculated for short-term, first year impacts, as well as for second and later years after the program. It was also addressed by calculating the impact on the dollar amount of unemployment benefits received. The second question 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 him/her monetarily for the UI program (if he or she were to lose his/her job). Unemployment Insurance eligibility subsequent to a job loss depends in part on earnings levels over the previous five quarters, but actual receipt of unemployment benefits depends on other factors as well as monetary eligibility, such as the reason for leaving the job. Thus, any impacts that lead to stabilized earnings trends for NCPs could have the added benefit of making them eligible for this important safety net.

**Table 24. NCP Choices Impact on Unemployment Insurance Measures**

	<b>NCP Choices Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>Comparison Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>NCP Choices Impact</b>
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims, year 1	1.3%	1.9%	-.6% *
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims, later years	2.3%	2.0%	.3%
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits, year 1	.8%	1.2%	-.4% *
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits, later years	1.8%	1.5%	.3%
Average monthly unemployment benefits received by NCP	\$31	\$44	-\$13 *
Percent of time monetarily eligible for UI based on earnings	36.4%	34.1%	2.3% **

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

***Overall***

As shown in Table 16, the NCP Choices program was associated with significantly reduced rates of filing unemployment claims in the first year after the program among NCPs ordered into the program. This effect did not, however, persist into the longer term among sites that could measure longer term impacts. A similar pattern emerged for the measure of NCPs receiving unemployment benefits, as those ordered into NCP Choices were less likely to receive such benefits in the first year after the program, while there was no difference in later years. In the first year after the program, NCPs in the comparison group were about fifty percent more likely to file an unemployment claim in any given month, and about fifty percent more likely to receive unemployment benefits.

Those ordered into NCP Choices also received about \$13 per month less in unemployment benefits than did those in the comparison group. While these monthly numbers may seem small, it should be noted that they are averaged across both those receiving unemployment benefits and the vast majority who are not, so the effects for those receiving benefits are actually substantial.

Finally, for those ordered into NCP Choices, a 2.3 percentage point increase in the likelihood of being monetarily eligible for UI in any given quarter was observed, or a seven percent increase in eligibility relative to the comparison group. This is important because monetary eligibility for unemployment insurance carries a greater likelihood of actually receiving unemployment benefits, and therefore weathering any potential job loss long enough to get another job. Thus, the prospects for long-term self-sufficiency of these NCPs are enhanced by becoming eligible for this workers' safety net.

### ***No Subgroup Variation in Impacts***

Impacts of NCP Choices on rates of filing unemployment claims and related measures among NCPs were not found to vary significantly by site, nor by economic conditions. Thus, no subgroup-specific impact comparisons on unemployment claims or related measures are presented here.

### **Receipt of TANF and other Public Assistance by Custodial Parents**

The remaining analysis addresses the question whether NCP Choices for non-custodial parents led to decreased TANF participation for the associated custodial parents (CPs) and their children. A similar question asked whether NCP Choices was associated with reduced participation in the Food Stamps program, which now goes by the acronym SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program). Both measures count the percent of post-program-entry months in which the custodial parent(s) received TANF or SNAP benefits, with receipt of benefits for any part of the month considered as receipt for the entire month. Related measures also look at the average dollar amounts of benefits received under such programs, on a monthly basis. As with other measures, these outcomes are divided into short-term and longer-term outcomes for the original sites.

### ***Overall***

Table 25 illustrates that, consistent with program goals, custodial parents associated with those NCPs ordered into NCP Choices were significantly less likely than those associated with comparison group members to be receiving TANF following program entry. In the first year after the program, the 1.4 percentage-point decrease in TANF receipt that was observed, although seemingly small in absolute terms, represents about a twenty-one percent decrease in TANF receipt relative to that of CPs associated with the comparison

group. And in the longer term, in the second through fourth years after the program, TANF receipt was reduced by 1.6 percentage points, for an even greater twenty-nine percent reduction in TANF receipt. Similar findings emerged from the comparison of TANF benefit levels received. Both in the short and longer term, a \$3 per month decrease in TANF benefits was observed among custodial parents associated with those ordered into NCP Choices. This figure, representing the average across both those receiving and not receiving TANF, amounts to a 21 percent decrease in short-term TANF benefits, and a 27 percent decrease in longer-term TANF benefits. This suggests that the NCP Choices program successfully led to decreased reliance on TANF benefits among custodial parents associated with NCP Choices participants, and that this reduced welfare dependency persisted for at least several years after the program.

**Table 25. NCP Choices Impact on Receipt of TANF and Food Stamps by Custodial Parent**

	<b>NCP Choices Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>Comparison Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>NCP Choices Impact</b>
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits, year 1	5.4%	6.8%	-1.4% **
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits, later years	4.0%	5.6%	-1.6% **
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s), year 1	\$11	\$14	-\$3 **
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s), later years	\$8	\$11	-\$3 **
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, year 1	68.0%	66.8%	1.2% **
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, later years	65.3%	62.8%	2.5% **
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s), year 1	\$391	\$370	\$21 **
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s), later years	\$375	\$348	\$27 **

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

Also shown in Table 25 are the estimated impacts of NCP Choices on Food Stamps (SNAP) benefit receipt. Interestingly, most of these estimated effects go in the opposite

direction of the TANF effects reported above. In the first year after the program, a 1.2 percentage-point increase in Food Stamps receipt was observed, relative to that of CPs associated with the comparison group. Food Stamp receipt is much more common among this population than is TANF receipt, with members of the comparison group receiving Food Stamps roughly two thirds of the time. Thus, this 1.2 percentage point impact represents only about a 1.8 percent relative increase in Food Stamps receipt, much smaller than the relative TANF effects. In later years the Food Stamps impact was 2.5 percentage points, representing about a four percent relative increase. Significant increases in the average dollar amount of Food Stamp benefits, by about \$21 per month in the short term and \$27 per month in the longer term, were also observed. This represents about a six and eight percent increase in Food Stamp benefits, respectively, for those CPs associated with NCP Choices clients.

Although it is not clear why the NCP Choices program should lead to increased Food Stamp reciprocity in the face of declining TANF receipt, it is worth noting that reducing or eliminating TANF benefits leads rather mechanically to an increased Food Stamp allotment. This is because eligibility for both programs is determined by the same workers using the same computer interface, so the reduced TANF benefit leads to reduced income in estimated household budgets, which directly increases the Food Stamp allotment for those determined to be eligible, or increases the chances of eligibility among those not yet eligible for Food Stamps. Whether or not this eligibility issue can fully account for the increases in Food Stamps remains to be determined. However, as noted in the next section, other factors help to explain the bump in Food Stamp receipt.

### ***Impacts under Differing Economic Conditions***

Tests for whether the NCP Choices program impact on these benefit receipt measures varied under differing economic conditions found only one significant interaction, although it is one that helps to explain the Food Stamps impacts discussed above. Apparently, as shown in Table 26, the increase in Food Stamps due to being ordered into NCP Choices was only observed under conditions of zero employment growth. Thus, when employment growth stagnated, NCP Choices was associated with a 2.8 percent increase in Food Stamps receipt, or a 4.2 percent relative increase. When employment growth was moderate, however, no significant change in Food Stamps receipt was seen, and in fact the tendency was in the other direction.

**Table 26. NCP Choices Impact on Food Stamps Receipt,  
under Varying Employment Growth Levels**

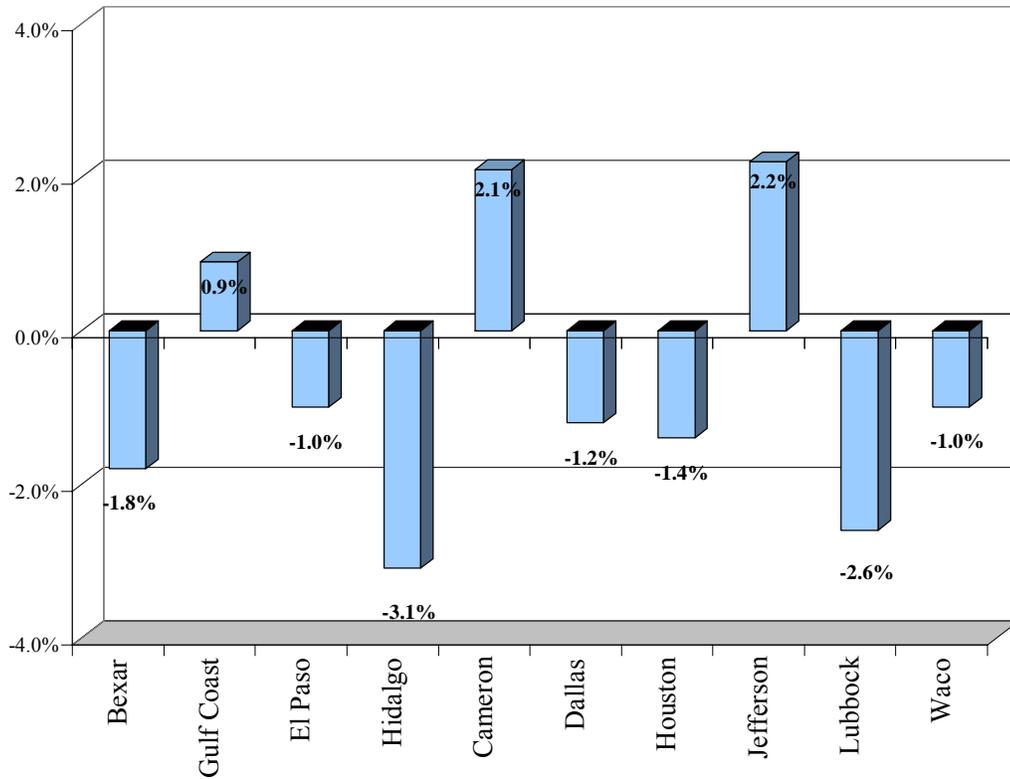
	<b>NCP Choices Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>Comparison Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>NCP Choices Impact</b>
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, year 1, zero employment growth	70.0%	67.2%	2.8% **
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, year 1, moderate employment growth	65.7%	66.3%	-.6%

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

***Impacts by Site***

The NCP Choices impact on TANF receipt by the custodial parent was found to vary significantly by site. As illustrated in Figure 10, the greatest short-term reduction in TANF receipt was found in the Hidalgo site. Lubbock also did well at reducing TANF receipt, as did the Bexar County site. Two new sites, Cameron County and Jefferson/Orange, actually showed increased TANF receipt. However, given that these two are expansion sites, their numbers of participants are relatively small, with 58 and 36 NCP Choices participants, respectively, after the caliper was applied. Thus they carried little weight in the overall TANF impact across sites, which still showed reduced TANF receipt.

**Figure 10. Short-term Impact on TANF Receipt, by Site**



Detailed impacts by site for these benefit receipt measures are shown in Table 27 for original sites and Table 28 for expansion sites. Average TANF benefit levels were found to decline the most in the Hidalgo, Dallas, and Bexar County sites. Lubbock also showed a decline in benefit levels, but most of the remaining sites found no significant impacts; Gulf Coast showed a rather puzzling long-term decline, although it found no short-term decline in average TANF benefit levels.

**Table 27. NCP Choices Impacts on Receipt of TANF and other Public Assistance by Custodial Parent, by Site, Original Sites**

	<b>Bexar</b>	<b>Gulf Coast</b>	<b>El Paso</b>	<b>Hidalgo</b>
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits, year 1	-1.8% **	.9%	-1.0% *	-3.1% **
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits, later years	-.9% *	-2.3% **	-.5%	-3.7% **
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s), year 1	-\$5 **	\$	-\$1	-\$7 **
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s), later years	-\$2	-\$7 **	\$	-\$6 **
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, year 1	1.2%	-.3%	3.9% **	-2.2% *
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, later years	-.3%	3.9% **	3.6% **	2.6% *
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s), year 1	\$25 **	\$25 **	\$25 **	-\$1
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s), later years	\$21 **	\$34 **	\$17 **	\$35 **

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

Only one site, Hidalgo County, showed a decline in frequency of Food Stamps (SNAP) receipt, although this effect did not persist into the longer term. Houston and El Paso showed increases in Food Stamps receipt. Most sites showed increased Food Stamps benefit levels, except for Lubbock, which showed a significant decline, and several others for whom no significant effect was seen.

**Table 28. NCP Choices Impacts on Receipt of TANF and other Public Assistance by Custodial Parent by Site, Expansion Sites**

	<b>Cameron</b>	<b>Dallas</b>	<b>Harris/ Houston</b>	<b>Jefferson/ Orange</b>	<b>Lubbock</b>	<b>Waco</b>
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits	2.1% **	-1.2%	-1.4% *	2.2% *	-2.6% **	-1.0%
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s)	\$3	-\$7 **	-\$3	\$4	-\$3 *	\$
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits	2.3%	2.5%	4.5% **	-8%	-3.0%	2.5%
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s)	\$19	\$45 **	\$57 **	-\$34	-\$43 **	\$6

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

While these patterns of NCP Choices site-level impacts on benefit receipt may seem rather chaotic, they were found to be highly correlated with several subscale scores, as shown in Appendix Table A-3. Impacts on both frequency of receipt and value of TANF benefits received were highly correlated with sites' scores on Partners Capable and Collaborating, with the direction of this effect being negative. In other words, sites that were rated higher on capable collaboration saw greater reductions in TANF receipt. Interestingly, the same basic pattern was found for Food Stamps receipt. Sites rated higher on Partners Capable and Collaborating had by far the greatest declines in frequency of Food Stamps receipt. In this case, the observed correlation of -0.80 indicates that a very impressive 64 percent of the variation in site-level impacts is explainable in terms of their scores on this subscale. The site level impacts on average Food Stamp benefits were also negatively correlated, but to approximately equal degrees with two of the subscales: Perceived Program Follow-through and Partners Capable and Collaborating. Thus, those sites rated higher on these scales tended to have greater declines in the value of Food Stamp benefits received. The pattern of these correlations tends to validate the program functions of collaboration among partners as well as the importance of following-through when ensuring NCP compliance with program expectations.

## Discussion

The estimated impacts of the NCP Choices program generally point to greater economic self-sufficiency on the part of both custodial and non-custodial parents. Results suggest that those ordered into the NCP Choices program displayed far greater participation in workforce development, in relation to comparison group members, whether measured as participation in Choices itself, or in any major workforce development program. This suggests a high degree of compliance with the judicial order to participate in NCP Choices. Those ordered into NCP Choices were subsequently more likely to pay their child support obligations, paid more of it, and paid it more consistently over time. The increased payment of child support even persisted two to four years after NCPs were ordered into the program. Those ordered into NCP Choices were subsequently employed at higher rates, and this effect also persisted at a high level two to four years after the program. Among those who were employed subsequent to the program, those ordered into NCP Choices had lesser average earnings. Although the positive employment gains persisted into the longer term, the earnings deficits among the employed did so as well, suggesting that many who may have initially taken entry-level jobs did not advance to better-paying positions as they increased their work experience. This finding stands in contrast to the long-term earnings impacts revealed in the prior version of this report (Schroeder & Chiarello, 2008), in which initial earnings declines were eliminated in the longer term.

Those ordered into NCP Choices were found to be less likely to file unemployment claims or to receive unemployment benefits, at least in the first year after the program. They were more likely to have stable earnings trajectories over time that would make them monetarily eligible for Unemployment Insurance, if they were to lose their jobs. So the reduced unemployment claims were not likely due to a lack of eligibility, but rather to a lack of need: those ordered into NCP Choices were apparently less likely to lose their jobs. Regarding public assistance, the custodial parents associated with NCP Choices participants showed lesser rates of TANF receipt subsequent to program entry, and this effect also persisted for at least two to four years after the program. Finally, these custodial parents showed *greater* receipt of Food Stamps (or SNAP) benefits subsequent to program entry, an effect which also persisted for several years after the program. While this last finding may seem to contradict the general pattern of the rest, it does appear to be well explained by a

combination of 1) eligibility tradeoffs arising from the TANF impacts, 2) declining economic conditions, and 3) site-level differences in program processes as revealed by the site survey.

In short, the NCP Choices program appears to have successfully achieved most of its program goals, with significant and dramatic positive impacts on most outcomes. The finding of reduced earnings levels among the employed is not a surprise in a program with documented impacts showing it moved large numbers of low-income individuals into jobs. In fact the same pattern of reduced earnings was observed for employed non-custodial parents engaged in workforce services in the Bootstrap Project (Schroeder et al, 2004). The work-first approach to workforce development is based in part on the assumption that many of those receiving these services should learn valuable work skills by simply getting and keeping a job. The hope is that after gaining such experience, they will either advance within their organizations or move on to better-paying jobs. It is not yet clear whether the local job markets can provide sufficient advancement opportunities to allow these NCPs to increase their earnings over time. The evidence from the longer-term outcomes in the present report indicates that two to four years after the program the earnings deficit that occurred in the short term has not been eliminated. This finding represents a change in the long-term earnings impacts revealed in the prior version of this report (Schroeder & Chiarello, 2008), in which initial short-term earnings declines were eliminated in the longer term. However, the longest-term outcomes in the present report, in the range of three to four years, primarily occurred during the worst economic recession in decades, so it is possible that NCPs' opportunities to advance under these conditions are more limited than usual. Indeed, as discussed below, the economy does appear to constrain the positive impacts observed due to NCP Choices, so it is possible that an economic rebound will see continuing advancement in long-term average earnings of those ordered into NCP Choices.

The finding of positive impacts on most outcome measures at all sites suggests that the NCP Choices program model is largely robust to local variation in implementation and environment. It is typical to see lesser statistical significance of impacts when estimated at the site level, due to reduced statistical power associated with smaller sample sizes at this level of analysis. That does not appear to have been true for NCP Choices, except in cases of several expansion sites who have served fewer clients to date, as the majority of local impacts tended to be fairly homogenous and statistically significant to a large degree. Even

in the handful of cases where program impacts went opposite the expected direction for several sites, evidence from the site survey helps to explain these aberrations in terms of local processes, as described below. This general robustness of findings across sites testifies to the strength of the NCP Choices program, and implies that the continuing expansion of NCP Choices to additional sites should be successful.

Notwithstanding the previous discussion, some trends in NCP Choices impacts among the sites did emerge, and these can be interpreted in light of the site differences in local process that were documented by the survey. To assist in making these comparisons visually, Appendix Table A-2 lays out graphical representations of survey subscale scores for each of the sites on the left pane, with selected impacts graphed on the right pane of the table.<sup>11</sup> From this comparison, it is apparent that the original sites of Gulf Coast and Hidalgo County showed generally the best impacts on most, but not all measures. Among expansion sites, the Jefferson/Orange County site did well on many measures, and Cameron County and Lubbock also did well, but surprisingly few of the sites did well on all outcomes.

More directly to the point of explaining site-level differences in program impacts, Appendix Table A-3 lists for numerous outcome measures the site-level correlations between program impacts and each of the four survey subscales. These correlations essentially quantify the degree of agreement between successive pairs of charts in Table A-2, but are done for additional measures as well. High positive correlations in Table A-3 show that sites that were rated high on a given subscale also tended to be the sites that had the largest positive impacts, while negative correlations showed the opposite effect.

Consider, for example, the case of site differences in impacts of NCP Choices on child support collections. Table A-2 shows that the Hidalgo County and Gulf Coast sites had the largest positive impacts on child support collection measures, among original sites, and Cameron County, Jefferson/Orange, and Lubbock did the best among expansion sites on these measures. In searching Table A-2 for clues as to why these sites did so well, one might note that all of them scored well in Perceived Program Follow-through, and all but Gulf Coast scored above the rest in Partners Capable and Collaborating. Consulting Table A-3, one finds high correlations (0.67 to 0.76) between child support collections impacts and

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<sup>11</sup> Note that all of the figures in Table A-2 appear elsewhere in the paper, so if one has difficulty reading them at this small scale, one can refer to the larger versions.

Partners Capable and Collaborating scores, as well as somewhat high correlations (0.50 to 0.67) with Perceived Program Follow-through scores. From this, one might conclude that these features – program follow-through and capable collaboration among partners -- are important in producing positive impacts on child support collections. If one were to stop here, one might miss another important finding, a tendency revealed in Table A-3 that did not readily emerge from a visual inspection of Table A-2: child support collections impacts also correlate moderately highly (0.58 to 0.64) with NCP Motivation scores. In fact, of the four subscales, only Adequate and Available Workforce Services did not correlate highly (0.20 to 0.25) with child support collections impacts. Thus, capable collaboration among partners, follow-through, and NCP motivation all appear to be critical to maximizing positive program impacts on child support collections.

The sites that yielded the most positive impacts on employment included Jefferson/Orange, with phenomenal employment gains around 29 percent, as well as Bexar County and Cameron County. Gulf Coast also had the best long-term employment impacts, though this site did not stand out in the short term. Correlations listed in Table A-3 suggest that sites rated highly on Adequate and Available Workforce Services are most responsible (0.60) for the positive employment impacts. Interestingly, impacts on employment were also found to be *negatively* correlated (-0.52) with NCP Motivation scores. Thus, adequacy and availability of workforce services could be important factors in producing positive employment impacts. However, there is some suggestion that sites in which NCPs are too motivated may not benefit from positive employment impacts.

Only one site, Lubbock, showed actual earnings gains among the employed, and this was a surprise because of the absence of a significant employment effect at this site. Visual inspection of Table A-2 revealed little to explain site-level earnings impacts. According to Table A-3, however, it was Perceived Program Follow-through that best predicted (0.40) earnings gains due to NCP Choices. This relationship was not as strong as with other categories of outcomes, so site-level differences in earnings gains continue to be something of an enigma.

Site-level variation in impacts on TANF receipt proved to be difficult to sort out based on Table A-2, but Table A-3 revealed a clear pattern of high negative correlations (-0.56 to -0.57) between Partners Capable and Collaborating scores and TANF impacts. Thus,

sites that scored well on capable collaboration among partners tended to show the greatest declines in TANF receipt due to NCP Choices.

Overall impacts of NCP Choices on Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits indicated that Food Stamp receipt among custodial parents actually increased, relative to the comparison group, in contrast to the general pattern on most outcome measures in which the program impacts tended toward greater self-sufficiency for clients. This puzzling impact could be explained in part by the reduction in TANF benefits causing the custodial parent households to become more eligible for greater Food Stamp benefits. It is also clear that increased Food Stamp receipt can in part be attributed to the faltering economy, as described below. Most interesting, perhaps, is the site-level explanation of Food Stamp impacts offered by Table A-3. A correlation of -0.80 between frequency of Food Stamp receipt and Partners Capable and Collaborating scores suggests that the biggest *increases* in Food Stamp receipt were seen in sites with the *lowest* scores on this subscale. The site level impacts on average Food Stamp benefit amounts were also negatively correlated (-0.42 and -0.41) with two of the subscales: Perceived Program Follow-through and Partners Capable and Collaborating. The pattern of these correlations suggests that by increasing collaboration among partners and following-through when ensuring NCP compliance, program staff might in the future be able eliminate the increase in Food Stamps that was observed in the present study.

Analyses of the extent to which program impacts varied under different economic conditions paint a clear picture of how the NCP Choices program interacts with the economy. Overall, NCPs ordered into the program participated in workforce development to a high degree, but they did so even more when the economy was growing, as indicated by moderate employment growth rates. The impacts of NCP Choices on child support collections frequency, average amount collected, and consistency of collections were all significantly higher under conditions of moderate employment growth. Program impacts on employment were greater when the local unemployment rate was low, or in other words when there was lesser competition for locally available jobs. And finally, the puzzling effect of increased Food Stamps receipt, noted above, was almost completely explained by economic conditions at the sites. NCP Choices was found to increase Food Stamp receipt under conditions of zero employment growth, but had no impact when employment growth was moderate. Taken

together, these findings suggest that overall economic conditions impact what outcomes are possible to achieve under a program like NCP Choices.

On the other hand, on most measures the NCP Choices program still showed positive impacts even under some of the worst economic conditions this country has seen in decades. Consider, for example, that the impact of NCP Choices on average child support collections was still an impressive \$42 per month, or a 40 percent relative increase, even under stifling economic conditions of zero employment growth! From this we may conclude that the program is robust enough to assist NCPs in gaining employment and meeting their obligations to their families under most conditions, but that it does so even better when economic conditions provide employment and advancement opportunities for the NCPs.

Although a formal cost-benefit analysis was not part of this report, it seems likely that the economic benefits that accrue to the state, to taxpayers, and to the NCP Choices participants and their families as a result of this program are potentially substantial. However, since some of the impacts were found to vary in important ways depending on the state of the economy, the level of financial benefits would likely depend on economic conditions as well. The costs of the NCP Choices program to date were relatively fixed, and consisted primarily of the workforce services delivered. All site-level staff members held positions that existed before the program, so the only additional staff needed were a couple of dedicated employees at the OAG state office who were responsible for coordinating the program. And the cost of the workforce services delivered to those NCP Choices participants included in this report was estimated to be around \$1.7 million<sup>12</sup>.

### **Caveats and Limitations of Analysis**

The utilization of a quasi-experimental comparison group design to estimate program impacts to some extent limits our ability to conclude that the effects observed were caused by the NCP Choices program. The results of a well done quasi-experiment can suggest but not prove a causal connection between the NCP Choices program and the outcomes observed. The strength of this conclusion depends on the ability of researchers to identify a comparison group that is as equivalent as possible to the NCP Choices group just before being ordered

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<sup>12</sup> Estimated cost of workforce services for 1875 participants, including those entering the program by November, 2008, minus those removed by the caliper match, was \$1,687,500. According to William Minor of TWC (personal communication, 8/10/2009), expenditures on workforce services to date averaged approximately \$900 per participant.

into the program. The NCP Choices and comparison groups appeared nearly identical on most of the measured dimensions, but only after the application of a caliper to ensure that only the best matches were included. This had the effect of improving confidence in the program impacts, but at the same time it somewhat limited the generalizability of the findings. At this point, we have less certainty what the program impacts would have been for the 421 participants who were omitted from the impact analysis due to poor matches. We do know, from Appendix Table A-4, that those who were omitted had very high projected arrears balances (around \$90,000), and high ongoing support obligations (\$1155), so the potential for increased collections is great, but so is the potential for failure with these difficult-to-serve clients.

Even with a well-matched comparison group, the possibility exists that the two groups differed on some *unmeasured* dimensions that could at least partially account for the impacts. Continuing to refine the comparison group selection would help to ensure the equivalence of the two groups before program entry, and thus add to our confidence that the NCP Choices program itself was solely responsible for the positive impacts.

It is important to emphasize, again, that to the extent that not everyone ordered into the program participates in NCP Choices, the design of this evaluation does *not* test for effects of the Choices program itself. Some who are ordered into the program will prefer to find a job on their own, or they may have already found one, while some will find the money to make a child support payment to avoid going to jail, and others may simply find jail to be the path of least resistance. Thus, instead of measuring the effects of the Choices program, this impact evaluation measures the effects of being given the chance to participate in the Choices program or make a payment, with the threat of jail time for non-compliance. Participation rates observed indicate that the threat of potential incarceration is clearly one of the most effective inducements to participation in workforce development among NCPs identified in the literature. However, with 82 percent participation among those ordered into the program, there is still a little room for improvement. The best we can conclude is that a portion of the measured program effect is due to Choices participation, and a portion is due to the motivating properties of the choice NCPs are given. The combination, however, clearly yields major outcomes on a scale that most child support enforcement entities could only dream about prior to this program.

## Next Steps

Several NCP Choices sites have begun operation since the ten sites included in this impact analysis did so, and more will likely continue to be added. This continuing expansion should add to the experience base and help to refine the program model so that it continues to be successful as it is scaled up. Should future evaluation efforts continue to estimate the program impacts for these new sites, it would add to our ability to discern which aspects of sites are responsible for the largely positive program impacts. Also, continuing refinement of the comparison group selection would further enhance confidence in the internal validity of this study, or in other words the ability to know with certainty that the program itself caused the impacts observed.

Currently in the planning stages in some Bexar County sites is a variation on the NCP Choices program that will serve *establishment* cases, or in other words, cases for which child support orders have not yet been established. This approach should allow workforce development services to be targeted on those NCPs likely to fall behind on their child support obligations, and should help to get them the assistance they need before they allow large child support arrears balances to accrue. This is certainly a logical extension of NCP Choices, however, one possible risk with this approach is that, without the possibility of throwing NCPs in jail for non-payment of child support, there may not be enough leverage to encourage the high rate of compliance seen in the current NCP Choices program. Whether this extension of the NCP Choices program is ultimately successful may depend on the creativity of the OAG and other partners' staff in designing the right incentives to get the targeted NCPs into workforce services that could benefit them. Preliminary program impacts will be estimated for this extension of the program in fiscal year 2009-2010.

Finally, given the high degree of success observed to date, the Texas Legislature should fund a statewide expansion of the NCP Choices program, and the federal government should design rules to make it easier for other states to develop similar programs. Based on the discussion above, statewide expansion of the NCP Choices program, assuming the economy begins to recover, would likely result in millions of dollars of savings. Meanwhile, non-custodial parents could get the assistance they need to enable them to work productively and meet their financial obligations to their children, and low-income families all over the state could benefit from this proven successful model.

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## Appendix Tables

## **Appendix A**

This appendix includes Table A-1, listing survey items from the program section, followed by a visual comparison of site-level survey results versus impacts, in Table A-2, as well as a statistical comparison of site-level survey results versus impacts, in Table A-3. Following that is Table A-4, showing a comparison of NCP Choices Clients kept against those dropped from further analysis by the caliper matching technique. Next are detailed results of the matching procedure, shown separately by site, in Tables A-5 to A-14, followed by detailed outcome results, also by site, in Tables A-15 to A-24. Note that in the tables in the two sections described above, sites are listed in the same order. However, the contents of the outcomes tables by site (A-15 to A-24) vary depending on whether the site is an original or expansion site. Table A-25 provides details on some rough calculations of cost savings attributable to NCP Choices, separately for conditions of zero employment growth and moderate employment growth. Finally, Table A-26 lists acronyms used throughout this report, along with brief explanations of their meaning.

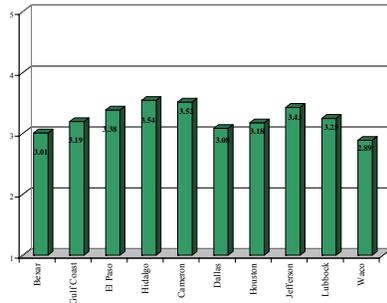
**Table A-1. Survey Questions from Program Section**

q1	Most NCPs ordered into the program would pay more child support if their earnings were higher.
q2	Some NCPs truly are deadbeats, and will do everything they can to avoid their responsibilities.
q3	There is adequate collaboration and communication among all partners on the NCP Choices team (OAG, judge, and workforce) for NCP Choices program success.
q4	Most NCPs ordered into the program take full advantage of the resources offered them.
q5	Communication among NCP Choices partners (OAG, Judge, Workforce Services) is sometimes weak and can impede program success.
q6	The partner(s) from the OAG do a good job performing their role to make the NCP Choices project a success.
q7	The courts are rarely lenient with NCPs ordered into the program who are non-compliant.
q8	There is always a workforce representative in court, or immediately available by phone, when NCPs are ordered into the NCP Choices program.
q9	The Workforce facility sometimes has too few staff available to meet the needs of the NCPs.
q10	The partner(s) from the workforce agency do a good job performing their role to make the NCP Choices program a success.
q11	Some NCPs are not ordered into the NCP Choices program because the services would be wasted on them.
q12	The judge and court do a good job performing their role to make the NCP Choices project a success.
q13	The workforce facility is very convenient to the courthouse.
q14	Many NCPs need more help gaining employment than the services typically provided through the NCP Choices program.
q15	Some NCPs get ordered into NCP Choices but fail to show up for followup appointments or otherwise slip through the cracks.
q16	Nearly all NCPs who fail to meet NCP Choices program requirements are sent to jail the next time they see the judge.
q17	All NCPs ordered into the NCP Choices program are later brought back before the judge to ensure their compliance with program requirements.
q18	Some NCPs would rather go to jail than to get a regular job or join NCP Choices.
q19	Most NCPs ordered into the program really want to earn money and support their children
q20	The workforce representative has adequate resources (workspace, technology, etc.) at the courthouse to effectively assist NCPs when they are initially ordered into NCP Choices.
q21	Some NCPs ordered into the NCP Choices program can go for months before being brought back before the judge, or are not brought back at all, for a compliance hearing.
q22	NCPs who are ordered into the program but are noncompliant are usually given a second chance by the judge.
q23	The workforce services offered to NCPs through the NCP Choices project are adequate to help them gain employment.
q24	One or more of the partners (OAG, Judge, Workforce Service) could do a better job collaborating in order to improve the success of the NCP Choices program.

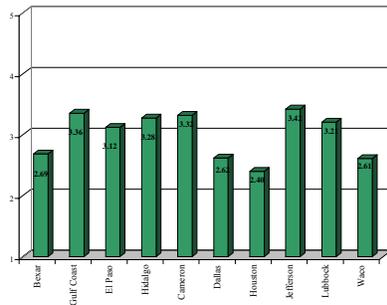
**Table A-2. NCP Choices Survey and Impacts Summary by Site**

NCP Motivation

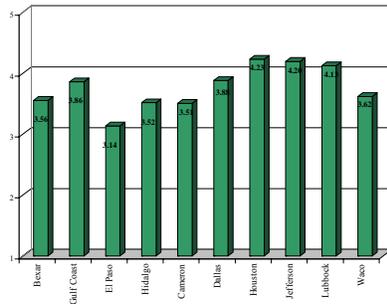
**Survey Subscales**



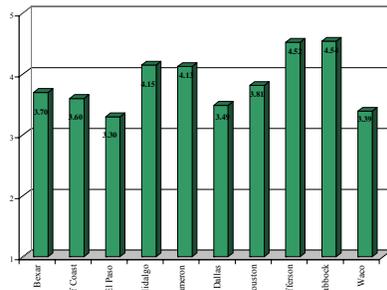
Perceived Program Follow-through



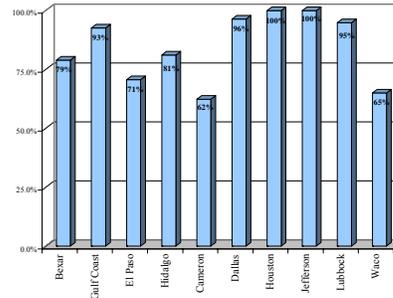
Adequate and Available Workforce Services



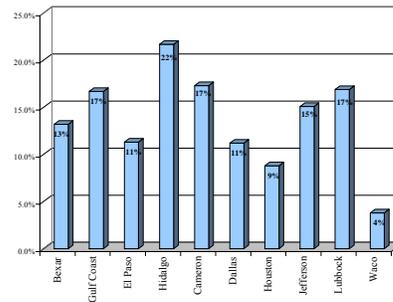
Partners Capable and Collaborating



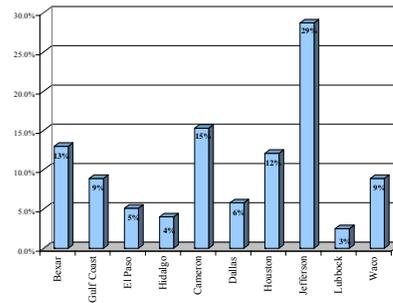
**Impacts**



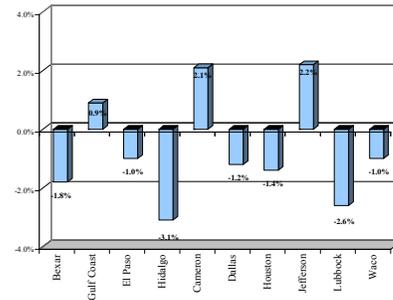
Impact on Any Choices Participation in Year 1



Short-term Impact on Child Support Collection Frequency



Short-term Impact on Employment Rates



Short-term Impact on TANF Receipt

**Table A-3. NCP Choices Survey and Impacts, Site-level Correlations**

	<b>NCP Motivation</b>	<b>Perceived Program Follow-through</b>	<b>Adequate and Available Workforce Services</b>	<b>Partners Capable and Collaborating</b>
Percent of time any child support collections made	0.62	0.67	0.24	0.75
Monthly average child support collections	0.58	0.50	0.20	0.67
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months	0.64	0.67	0.25	0.76
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits	-0.30	-0.08	-0.10	-0.57
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s)	-0.11	-0.08	-0.39	-0.56
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits	0.13	-0.06	-0.34	-0.80
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s)	-0.26	-0.42	0.15	-0.41
Percent of time NCP participating in NCP Choices program	-0.32	-0.59	0.73	0.33
Percent of time NCP participating in any workforce development program(s)	-0.32	-0.60	0.74	0.36
Percent of time NCP employed	-0.52	-0.33	0.60	0.23
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs	0.30	0.42	0.18	0.25
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims	-0.10	0.04	-0.36	-0.38
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits	-0.16	-0.18	-0.38	-0.21
Average monthly unemployment benefits received by NCP	-0.44	-0.56	-0.50	-0.40

Note: Highest absolute correlation for each measure highlighted in dark grey

**Table A-4. Comparison of NCP Choices Clients Kept against those Dropped from Analysis**

	<b>NCP Choices Kept</b>	<b>NCP Choices Dropped</b>
<b>All NCPs</b>	N=1,875	N=421
NCP age (years)	33.6	34.7
NCP male	95.9%	92.0%
NCP Hispanic	57.8%	40.1%
NCP black	32.1%	51.8%
NCP number of active CS cases	1.49	2.68
NCP number of dependents	4.52	14.94
Age of youngest dependent, years	6.69	5.89
Age of oldest dependent, years	10.47	12.43
Time since first observed NCP earnings (quarters)	24.7	25.8
NCP employed at program entry	42.1%	53.0%
Percent of time NCP employed over 4 years prior to program	39.5%	42.7%
NCP average quarterly earnings over 4 years prior to program	\$1,918	\$2,089
NCP experienced earnings dip of at least 20% within prior 2 years	47.2%	55.8%
Any Unemployment Insurance claims filed in year prior to program	5.2%	12.4%
Any Unemployment Insurance benefits received in year prior to program	2.7%	5.7%
Time since CS first collected on this case (months)	39.0	47.0
Time since CS last collected on this case (months)	7.7	8.6
Percent of time CS collection was made in prior year	21.1%	26.5%
Any CS collection made via federal offset in prior year	13.5%	11.9%
Percent of time TANF received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	11.8%	20.3%
Percent of time Food Stamps (SNAP) received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	67.9%	80.6%
Percent of time NCP responsible for carrying health insurance, prior year	34.0%	43.2%
Percent of time NCP responsible for medical support payments, prior year	11.6%	13.2%
Any low-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	8.2%	15.4%
Any high-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	.7%	1.9%
Capias issued for arrest of NCP in 6 months prior to program	16.0%	54.4%
Approximate arrears balance at program entry	\$23,827	\$90,641
Total current support obligation (PP1) at program entry	\$407	\$1,155
Total arrears obligation (PP2) at program entry	\$84	\$340
<b>Those experiencing an earnings dip</b>	<b>N=885</b>	<b>N=235</b>
Time since earnings dip occurred (quarters)	4.9	4.8
Percent of earnings which earnings dip represents	84.0%	78.6%

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

**Table A-5. Comparison of NCP Choices Clients with Selected Comparison Group, Bexar County**

	<b>NCP Choices</b>	<b>Comparison Group</b>
<b>All NCPs</b>	N=422	N=422
NCP age (years)	32.2	32.4
NCP male	96.4%	96.4%
NCP Hispanic	60.0%	61.8%
NCP black	30.3%	30.3%
NCP number of active CS cases	1.59	1.57
NCP number of dependents	5.27	5.06
Age of youngest dependent, years	5.83	5.81
Age of oldest dependent, years	9.88	9.80
Time since first observed NCP earnings (quarters)	24.3	25.0
NCP employed at program entry	45.5%	45.5%
Percent of time NCP employed over 4 years prior to program	42.8%	45.7%
NCP average quarterly earnings over 4 years prior to program	\$1,928	\$1,940
NCP experienced earnings dip of at least 20% within prior 2 years	50.7%	50.7%
Any Unemployment Insurance claims filed in year prior to program	4.3%	4.3%
Any Unemployment Insurance benefits received in year prior to program	1.2%	1.2%
Time since CS first collected on this case (months)	36.7	36.8
Time since CS last collected on this case (months)	7.1	7.5
Percent of time CS collection was made in prior year	21.0%	20.8%
Any CS collection made via federal offset in prior year	12.3%	9.5%
Percent of time TANF received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	12.8%	8.4% **
Percent of time Food Stamps (SNAP) received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	68.7%	68.3%
Percent of time NCP responsible for carrying health insurance, prior year	40.0%	40.6%
Percent of time NCP responsible for medical support payments, prior year	10.5%	8.2%
Any low-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	6.2%	1.7% **
Any high-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	.5%	.5%
Capias issued for arrest of NCP in 6 months prior to program	22.7%	22.7%
Approximate arrears balance at program entry	\$22,618	\$21,682
Total current support obligation (PP1) at program entry	\$409	\$417
Total arrears obligation (PP2) at program entry	\$73	\$74
<b>Those experiencing an earnings dip</b>	<b>N=214</b>	<b>N=214</b>
Time since earnings dip occurred (quarters)	4.6	4.8
Percent of earnings which earnings dip represents	85.0%	84.3%

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

**Table A-6. Comparison of NCP Choices Clients  
with Selected Comparison Group, Cameron County**

	<b>NCP Choices</b>	<b>Comparison Group</b>
<b>All NCPs</b>	<b>N=58</b>	<b>N=57</b>
NCP age (years)	33.6	33.6
NCP male	96.6%	98.2%
NCP Hispanic	91.4%	98.2%
NCP black	1.7%	.0%
NCP number of active CS cases	1.19	1.19
NCP number of dependents	2.90	2.88
Age of youngest dependent, years	6.00	6.13
Age of oldest dependent, years	9.38	9.66
Time since first observed NCP earnings (quarters)	27.9	27.9
NCP employed at program entry	46.6%	49.1%
Percent of time NCP employed over 4 years prior to program	51.4%	49.7%
NCP average quarterly earnings over 4 years prior to program	\$2,096	\$2,083
NCP experienced earnings dip of at least 20% within prior 2 years	49.2%	47.4%
Any Unemployment Insurance claims filed in year prior to program	6.9%	7.0%
Any Unemployment Insurance benefits received in year prior to program	6.9%	7.0%
Time since CS first collected on this case (months)	40.3	38.9
Time since CS last collected on this case (months)	5.4	5.2
Percent of time CS collection was made in prior year	25.9%	27.6%
Any CS collection made via federal offset in prior year	27.6%	28.1%
Percent of time TANF received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	2.9%	3.8%
Percent of time Food Stamps (SNAP) received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	72.2%	69.3%
Percent of time NCP responsible for carrying health insurance, prior year	12.2%	12.3%
Percent of time NCP responsible for medical support payments, prior year	3.6%	1.8%
Any low-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	8.6%	15.8%
Any high-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	.0%	.0%
Capias issued for arrest of NCP in 6 months prior to program	6.9%	7.0%
Approximate arrears balance at program entry	\$8,076	\$7,425
Total current support obligation (PP1) at program entry	\$282	\$244
Total arrears obligation (PP2) at program entry	\$21	\$39 *
<b>Those experiencing an earnings dip</b>	<b>N=28</b>	<b>N=27</b>
Time since earnings dip occurred (quarters)	4.9	4.6
Percent of earnings which earnings dip represents	79.6%	76.9%

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

**Table A-7. Comparison of NCP Choices Clients with Selected Comparison Group, Dallas County**

	<b>NCP Choices</b>	<b>Comparison Group</b>
<b>All NCPs</b>	N=126	N=127
NCP age (years)	33.9	32.9
NCP male	94.5%	94.5%
NCP Hispanic	14.2%	14.2%
NCP black	81.9%	81.9%
NCP number of active CS cases	1.69	1.50
NCP number of dependents	5.86	4.88
Age of youngest dependent, years	6.84	6.51
Age of oldest dependent, years	11.15	10.79
Time since first observed NCP earnings (quarters)	28.9	29.2
NCP employed at program entry	38.6%	38.6%
Percent of time NCP employed over 4 years prior to program	32.1%	35.0%
NCP average quarterly earnings over 4 years prior to program	\$1,562	\$1,597
NCP experienced earnings dip of at least 20% within prior 2 years	40.9%	40.9%
Any Unemployment Insurance claims filed in year prior to program	6.3%	5.5%
Any Unemployment Insurance benefits received in year prior to program	3.1%	3.1%
Time since CS first collected on this case (months)	40.7	40.9
Time since CS last collected on this case (months)	7.5	7.7
Percent of time CS collection was made in prior year	20.9%	20.2%
Any CS collection made via federal offset in prior year	6.3%	2.4%
Percent of time TANF received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	17.3%	13.6%
Percent of time Food Stamps (SNAP) received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	71.0%	70.1%
Percent of time NCP responsible for carrying health insurance, prior year	38.6%	44.0%
Percent of time NCP responsible for medical support payments, prior year	16.7%	8.7%
Any low-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	3.1%	1.6%
Any high-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	.8%	.8%
Capias issued for arrest of NCP in 6 months prior to program	26.0%	26.0%
Approximate arrears balance at program entry	\$41,637	\$31,294
Total current support obligation (PP1) at program entry	\$522	\$406
Total arrears obligation (PP2) at program entry	\$135	\$145
<b>Those experiencing an earnings dip</b>	<b>N=52</b>	<b>N=52</b>
Time since earnings dip occurred (quarters)	5.0	4.6
Percent of earnings which earnings dip represents	89.1%	87.6%

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

**Table A-8. Comparison of NCP Choices Clients  
with Selected Comparison Group, El Paso County**

	<b>NCP Choices</b>	<b>Comparison Group</b>
<b>All NCPs</b>	N=403	N=403
NCP age (years)	34.1	33.7
NCP male	97.0%	97.0%
NCP Hispanic	88.6%	93.1% *
NCP black	5.5%	3.7%
NCP number of active CS cases	1.37	1.37
NCP number of dependents	3.50	3.41
Age of youngest dependent, years	7.01	6.70
Age of oldest dependent, years	10.38	9.95
Time since first observed NCP earnings (quarters)	22.7	23.2
NCP employed at program entry	43.9%	43.9%
Percent of time NCP employed over 4 years prior to program	42.1%	40.5%
NCP average quarterly earnings over 4 years prior to program	\$1,791	\$1,768
NCP experienced earnings dip of at least 20% within prior 2 years	52.4%	52.4%
Any Unemployment Insurance claims filed in year prior to program	6.9%	6.9%
Any Unemployment Insurance benefits received in year prior to program	3.7%	3.2%
Time since CS first collected on this case (months)	35.8	35.6
Time since CS last collected on this case (months)	9.1	8.9
Percent of time CS collection was made in prior year	18.9%	19.1%
Any CS collection made via federal offset in prior year	15.9%	15.9%
Percent of time TANF received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	15.3%	12.4%
Percent of time Food Stamps (SNAP) received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	69.2%	69.1%
Percent of time NCP responsible for carrying health insurance, prior year	39.0%	40.1%
Percent of time NCP responsible for medical support payments, prior year	9.6%	10.7%
Any low-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	7.2%	5.2%
Any high-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	1.5%	.0% *
Capias issued for arrest of NCP in 6 months prior to program	11.4%	11.4%
Approximate arrears balance at program entry	\$17,612	\$15,103
Total current support obligation (PP1) at program entry	\$354	\$311
Total arrears obligation (PP2) at program entry	\$90	\$87
<b>Those experiencing an earnings dip</b>	<b>N=211</b>	<b>N=211</b>
Time since earnings dip occurred (quarters)	4.8	5.0
Percent of earnings which earnings dip represents	83.3%	83.2%

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

**Table A-9. Comparison of NCP Choices Clients  
with Selected Comparison Group, Gulf Coast**

	<b>NCP Choices</b>	<b>Comparison Group</b>
<b>All NCPs</b>	N=223	N=222
NCP age (years)	34.5	35.1
NCP male	92.6%	93.2%
NCP Hispanic	22.9%	17.6%
NCP black	46.2%	44.1%
NCP number of active CS cases	1.47	1.45
NCP number of dependents	4.48	3.97
Age of youngest dependent, years	7.38	7.16
Age of oldest dependent, years	11.17	10.81
Time since first observed NCP earnings (quarters)	23.5	24.0
NCP employed at program entry	35.4%	30.6%
Percent of time NCP employed over 4 years prior to program	37.5%	36.5%
NCP average quarterly earnings over 4 years prior to program	\$2,210	\$2,145
NCP experienced earnings dip of at least 20% within prior 2 years	49.1%	49.5%
Any Unemployment Insurance claims filed in year prior to program	6.3%	7.7%
Any Unemployment Insurance benefits received in year prior to program	3.6%	5.0%
Time since CS first collected on this case (months)	33.6	35.1
Time since CS last collected on this case (months)	8.5	8.6
Percent of time CS collection was made in prior year	16.7%	16.9%
Any CS collection made via federal offset in prior year	13.0%	9.0%
Percent of time TANF received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	9.2%	8.0%
Percent of time Food Stamps (SNAP) received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	59.3%	53.7%
Percent of time NCP responsible for carrying health insurance, prior year	32.1%	34.9%
Percent of time NCP responsible for medical support payments, prior year	12.6%	9.4%
Any low-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	11.2%	10.8%
Any high-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	.0%	.0%
Capias issued for arrest of NCP in 6 months prior to program	17.9%	18.0%
Approximate arrears balance at program entry	\$24,427	\$20,167
Total current support obligation (PP1) at program entry	\$421	\$363
Total arrears obligation (PP2) at program entry	\$98	\$114
<b>Those experiencing an earnings dip</b>	N=110	N=110
Time since earnings dip occurred (quarters)	5.0	5.0
Percent of earnings which earnings dip represents	85.2%	87.6%

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

**Table A-10. Comparison of NCP Choices Clients  
with Selected Comparison Group, Harris/Houston**

	<b>NCP Choices</b>	<b>Comparison Group</b>
<b>All NCPs</b>	N=176	N=176
NCP age (years)	36.3	36.5
NCP male	93.8%	93.8%
NCP Hispanic	13.1%	13.1%
NCP black	81.8%	81.8%
NCP number of active CS cases	1.74	1.73
NCP number of dependents	6.00	5.61
Age of youngest dependent, years	7.68	7.41
Age of oldest dependent, years	12.05	11.77
Time since first observed NCP earnings (quarters)	27.5	27.9
NCP employed at program entry	33.5%	31.3%
Percent of time NCP employed over 4 years prior to program	32.0%	31.7%
NCP average quarterly earnings over 4 years prior to program	\$2,074	\$1,979
NCP experienced earnings dip of at least 20% within prior 2 years	42.6%	42.6%
Any Unemployment Insurance claims filed in year prior to program	5.1%	6.3%
Any Unemployment Insurance benefits received in year prior to program	2.8%	3.4%
Time since CS first collected on this case (months)	48.2	48.0
Time since CS last collected on this case (months)	7.4	7.6
Percent of time CS collection was made in prior year	22.3%	23.3%
Any CS collection made via federal offset in prior year	10.2%	13.1%
Percent of time TANF received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	11.2%	9.3%
Percent of time Food Stamps (SNAP) received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	61.5%	62.0%
Percent of time NCP responsible for carrying health insurance, prior year	51.5%	50.5%
Percent of time NCP responsible for medical support payments, prior year	10.2%	10.2%
Any low-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	2.8%	.6%
Any high-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	.0%	.0%
Capias issued for arrest of NCP in 6 months prior to program	19.3%	19.3%
Approximate arrears balance at program entry	\$41,034	\$37,948
Total current support obligation (PP1) at program entry	\$583	\$534
Total arrears obligation (PP2) at program entry	\$150	\$158
<b>Those experiencing an earnings dip</b>	<b>N=75</b>	<b>N=75</b>
Time since earnings dip occurred (quarters)	5.3	5.3
Percent of earnings which earnings dip represents	83.5%	84.7%

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

**Table A-11. Comparison of NCP Choices Clients  
with Selected Comparison Group, Hidalgo County**

	<b>NCP Choices</b>	<b>Comparison Group</b>
<b>All NCPs</b>	N=272	N=272
NCP age (years)	34.4	33.9
NCP male	98.2%	98.2%
NCP Hispanic	98.5%	98.5%
NCP black	.0%	.0%
NCP number of active CS cases	1.33	1.33
NCP number of dependents	3.81	3.57
Age of youngest dependent, years	6.83	7.06
Age of oldest dependent, years	10.51	10.25
Time since first observed NCP earnings (quarters)	22.6	23.5
NCP employed at program entry	37.5%	37.9%
Percent of time NCP employed over 4 years prior to program	33.7%	34.5%
NCP average quarterly earnings over 4 years prior to program	\$2,028	\$1,854
NCP experienced earnings dip of at least 20% within prior 2 years	39.0%	39.0%
Any Unemployment Insurance claims filed in year prior to program	4.0%	3.3%
Any Unemployment Insurance benefits received in year prior to program	2.9%	2.6%
Time since CS first collected on this case (months)	41.2	41.5
Time since CS last collected on this case (months)	7.4	7.9
Percent of time CS collection was made in prior year	23.7%	23.9%
Any CS collection made via federal offset in prior year	16.2%	11.8%
Percent of time TANF received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	9.2%	8.9%
Percent of time Food Stamps (SNAP) received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	69.9%	69.5%
Percent of time NCP responsible for carrying health insurance, prior year	16.9%	12.4%
Percent of time NCP responsible for medical support payments, prior year	19.3%	19.7%
Any low-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	21.0%	21.0%
Any high-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	1.1%	2.2%
Capias issued for arrest of NCP in 6 months prior to program	9.9%	9.9%
Approximate arrears balance at program entry	\$17,482	\$14,465
Total current support obligation (PP1) at program entry	\$349	\$279 *
Total arrears obligation (PP2) at program entry	\$32	\$40
<b>Those experiencing an earnings dip</b>	<b>N=106</b>	<b>N=106</b>
Time since earnings dip occurred (quarters)	5.0	4.8
Percent of earnings which earnings dip represents	84.5%	82.7%

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

**Table A-12. Comparison of NCP Choices Clients  
with Selected Comparison Group, Jefferson/Orange**

	<b>NCP Choices</b>	<b>Comparison Group</b>
<b>All NCPs</b>	N=36	N=36
NCP age (years)	34.3	35.1
NCP male	100.0%	100.0%
NCP Hispanic	.0%	2.8%
NCP black	80.6%	77.8%
NCP number of active CS cases	1.67	1.72
NCP number of dependents	5.28	5.69
Age of youngest dependent, years	7.06	8.40
Age of oldest dependent, years	11.66	11.77
Time since first observed NCP earnings (quarters)	26.3	27.1
NCP employed at program entry	41.7%	41.7%
Percent of time NCP employed over 4 years prior to program	40.6%	44.4%
NCP average quarterly earnings over 4 years prior to program	\$2,329	\$2,365
NCP experienced earnings dip of at least 20% within prior 2 years	52.8%	52.8%
Any Unemployment Insurance claims filed in year prior to program	5.6%	2.8%
Any Unemployment Insurance benefits received in year prior to program	.0%	.0%
Time since CS first collected on this case (months)	53.8	54.3
Time since CS last collected on this case (months)	7.0	7.5
Percent of time CS collection was made in prior year	28.9%	27.3%
Any CS collection made via federal offset in prior year	13.9%	22.2%
Percent of time TANF received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	5.8%	1.7%
Percent of time Food Stamps (SNAP) received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	72.2%	70.4%
Percent of time NCP responsible for carrying health insurance, prior year	77.1%	71.5%
Percent of time NCP responsible for medical support payments, prior year	2.5%	.0%
Any low-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	2.8%	2.8%
Any high-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	.0%	.0%
Capias issued for arrest of NCP in 6 months prior to program	8.3%	8.3%
Approximate arrears balance at program entry	\$40,263	\$40,345
Total current support obligation (PP1) at program entry	\$582	\$588
Total arrears obligation (PP2) at program entry	\$114	\$129
<b>Those experiencing an earnings dip</b>	N=19	N=19
Time since earnings dip occurred (quarters)	5.0	4.9
Percent of earnings which earnings dip represents	86.8%	83.6%

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

**Table A-13. Comparison of NCP Choices Clients  
with Selected Comparison Group, Lubbock**

	<b>NCP Choices</b>	<b>Comparison Group</b>
<b>All NCPs</b>	N=81	N=81
NCP age (years)	33.1	34.7
NCP male	90.1%	90.1%
NCP Hispanic	55.6%	53.1%
NCP black	28.4%	28.4%
NCP number of active CS cases	1.51	1.33
NCP number of dependents	4.33	3.53
Age of youngest dependent, years	7.64	7.34
Age of oldest dependent, years	10.76	10.78
Time since first observed NCP earnings (quarters)	30.3	30.9
NCP employed at program entry	55.6%	55.6%
Percent of time NCP employed over 4 years prior to program	46.8%	47.0%
NCP average quarterly earnings over 4 years prior to program	\$1,603	\$1,609
NCP experienced earnings dip of at least 20% within prior 2 years	43.2%	43.2%
Any Unemployment Insurance claims filed in year prior to program	1.2%	.0%
Any Unemployment Insurance benefits received in year prior to program	1.2%	.0%
Time since CS first collected on this case (months)	49.2	48.0
Time since CS last collected on this case (months)	6.9	7.6
Percent of time CS collection was made in prior year	26.9%	28.0%
Any CS collection made via federal offset in prior year	11.1%	13.6%
Percent of time TANF received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	9.9%	5.6%
Percent of time Food Stamps (SNAP) received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	69.1%	68.8%
Percent of time NCP responsible for carrying health insurance, prior year	14.7%	14.8%
Percent of time NCP responsible for medical support payments, prior year	8.5%	7.4%
Any low-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	1.2%	1.2%
Any high-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	.0%	.0%
Capias issued for arrest of NCP in 6 months prior to program	2.5%	2.5%
Approximate arrears balance at program entry	\$23,824	\$15,408 *
Total current support obligation (PP1) at program entry	\$388	\$252 *
Total arrears obligation (PP2) at program entry	\$82	\$93
<b>Those experiencing an earnings dip</b>	<b>N=35</b>	<b>N=35</b>
Time since earnings dip occurred (quarters)	5.1	4.8
Percent of earnings which earnings dip represents	77.7%	74.7%

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

**Table A-14. Comparison of NCP Choices Clients  
with Selected Comparison Group, Waco**

	<b>NCP Choices</b>	<b>Comparison Group</b>
<b>All NCPs</b>	N=78	N=78
NCP age (years)	27.5	27.3
NCP male	98.7%	98.7%
NCP Hispanic	21.8%	21.8%
NCP black	61.5%	61.5%
NCP number of active CS cases	1.41	1.41
NCP number of dependents	3.82	3.88
Age of youngest dependent, years	4.14	4.28
Age of oldest dependent, years	7.36	7.05
Time since first observed NCP earnings (quarters)	26.3	25.0
NCP employed at program entry	56.4%	56.4%
Percent of time NCP employed over 4 years prior to program	45.0%	44.4%
NCP average quarterly earnings over 4 years prior to program	\$1,530	\$1,549
NCP experienced earnings dip of at least 20% within prior 2 years	44.9%	44.9%
Any Unemployment Insurance claims filed in year prior to program	3.8%	2.6%
Any Unemployment Insurance benefits received in year prior to program	1.3%	1.3%
Time since CS first collected on this case (months)	33.0	29.6
Time since CS last collected on this case (months)	5.1	5.4
Percent of time CS collection was made in prior year	20.9%	21.4%
Any CS collection made via federal offset in prior year	11.5%	3.8%
Percent of time TANF received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	9.8%	11.6%
Percent of time Food Stamps (SNAP) received by associated CP(s) in prior 2 years	76.3%	72.7%
Percent of time NCP responsible for carrying health insurance, prior year	11.1%	10.7%
Percent of time NCP responsible for medical support payments, prior year	6.2%	6.2%
Any low-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	.0%	.0%
Any high-intensity workforce development participation in year prior to program	1.3%	1.3%
Capias issued for arrest of NCP in 6 months prior to program	19.2%	19.2%
Approximate arrears balance at program entry	\$19,196	\$13,829
Total current support obligation (PP1) at program entry	\$290	\$294
Total arrears obligation (PP2) at program entry	\$55	\$63
<b>Those experiencing an earnings dip</b>	N=35	N=35
Time since earnings dip occurred (quarters)	4.7	4.9
Percent of earnings which earnings dip represents	79.9%	77.3%

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

**Table A-15. NCP Choices Impacts by Site, Original Sites, Bexar County**

	<b>NCP Choices Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>Comparison Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>NCP Choices Impact</b>	
Percent of time any child support collections made, year 1	40.0%	26.8%	13.2%	**
Percent of time any child support collections made, later years	37.4%	31.4%	6.0%	**
Monthly average child support collections, year 1	\$149	\$104	\$45	**
Monthly average child support collections, later years	\$128	\$127	\$1	
Any child support collection made within 1 year of program entry	84.0%	58.8%	25.2%	**
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months, year 1	38.8%	25.7%	13.1%	**
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months, later years	37.4%	31.8%	5.6%	**
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits, year 1	5.1%	6.9%	-1.8%	**
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits, later years	3.9%	4.8%	-.9%	*
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s), year 1	\$10	\$15	-\$5	**
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s), later years	\$7	\$9	-\$2	
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, year 1	69.7%	68.5%	1.2%	
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, later years	68.0%	68.3%	-.3%	
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s), year 1	\$404	\$379	\$25	**
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s), later years	\$425	\$404	\$21	**
Percent of time NCP participating in NCP Choices program, year 1	37.6%	.1%	37.5%	**
Any NCP Choices participation by NCP within 1 year of program entry	78.7%	-.3%	79.0%	**
Percent of time NCP participating in any workforce development program(s), year 1	38.2%	1.0%	37.2%	**
Any workforce development participation by NCPs within 1 year of program entry	79.8%	5.2%	74.6%	**
Capias issued for arrest of NCP, year 1	23.7%	13.9%	9.8%	**
Percent of time NCP employed, year 1	50.8%	37.8%	13.0%	**
Percent of time NCP employed, later years	43.1%	37.2%	5.9%	**
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs, year 1	\$2518	\$3136	-\$618	**
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs, later years	\$3124	\$4126	-\$1002	**
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims, year 1	1.0%	1.4%	-.4%	
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims, later years	1.8%	1.2%	.6%	
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits, year 1	.7%	.8%	-.1%	
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits, later years	1.4%	.8%	.6%	
Average monthly unemployment benefits received by NCP	\$36	\$19	\$17	
Percent of time monetarily eligible for UI based on earnings	39.4%	34.5%	4.9%	**

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

**Table A-16. NCP Choices Impacts by Site, Expansion Sites, Cameron County**

	NCP Choices Adjusted Mean	Comparison Adjusted Mean	NCP Choices Impact	
Percent of time any child support collections made	52.2%	34.9%	17.3%	**
Monthly average child support collections	\$165	\$118	\$47	**
Any child support collection made within 1 year of program entry	86.9%	60.5%	26.4%	
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months	53.0%	33.0%	20.0%	**
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits	2.4%	.3%	2.1%	**
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s)	\$4	\$1	\$3	
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits	74.8%	72.5%	2.3%	
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s)	\$354	\$335	\$19	
Percent of time NCP participating in NCP Choices program	40.9%	.0%	40.9%	**
Any NCP Choices participation by NCP within 1 year of program entry	62.8%	.4%	62.4%	**
Percent of time NCP participating in any workforce development program(s)	41.2%	2.2%	39.0%	**
Any workforce development participation by NCPs within 1 year of program entry	61.4%	7.0%	54.4%	**
Capias issued for arrest of NCP	10.6%	8.2%	2.4%	
Percent of time NCP employed	54.8%	39.5%	15.3%	*
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs	\$2552	\$3821	-\$1269	*
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims	3.4%	4.2%	-.8%	
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits	2.6%	2.4%	.2%	
Average monthly unemployment benefits received by NCP	\$46	\$78	-\$32	
Percent of time monetarily eligible for UI based on earnings	40.0%	41.2%	-1.2%	

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

**Table A-17. NCP Choices Impacts by Site, Expansion Sites, Dallas County**

	<b>NCP Choices Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>Comparison Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>NCP Choices Impact</b>	
Percent of time any child support collections made	35.5%	24.3%	11.2%	**
Monthly average child support collections	\$130	\$92	\$38	**
Any child support collection made within 1 year of program entry	74.6%	47.3%	27.3%	**
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months	35.1%	23.9%	11.2%	**
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits	6.6%	7.8%	-1.2%	
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s)	\$11	\$18	-\$7	**
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits	76.1%	73.6%	2.5%	
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s)	\$558	\$513	\$45	**
Percent of time NCP participating in NCP Choices program	46.7%	.4%	46.3%	**
Any NCP Choices participation by NCP within 1 year of program entry	96.7%	.3%	96.4%	**
Percent of time NCP participating in any workforce development program(s)	47.2%	1.9%	45.3%	**
Any workforce development participation by NCPs within 1 year of program entry	96.7%	4.9%	91.8%	**
Capias issued for arrest of NCP	27.2%	23.3%	3.9%	*
Percent of time NCP employed	37.6%	31.8%	5.8%	
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs	\$3030	\$4104	-\$1074	*
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims	1.2%	2.6%	-1.4%	
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits	.9%	1.6%	-.7%	
Average monthly unemployment benefits received by NCP	\$18	\$36	-\$18	
Percent of time monetarily eligible for UI based on earnings	26.6%	25.7%	.9%	

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

**Table A-18. NCP Choices Impacts by Site, Original Sites, El Paso County**

	NCP Choices Adjusted Mean	Comparison Adjusted Mean	NCP Choices Impact	
Percent of time any child support collections made, year 1	43.4%	32.1%	11.3%	**
Percent of time any child support collections made, later years	44.2%	35.7%	8.5%	**
Monthly average child support collections, year 1	\$140	\$117	\$23	**
Monthly average child support collections, later years	\$152	\$127	\$25	**
Any child support collection made within 1 year of program entry	78.5%	60.2%	18.3%	**
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months, year 1	43.3%	32.0%	11.3%	**
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months, later years	44.4%	35.9%	8.5%	**
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits, year 1	7.3%	8.3%	-1.0%	*
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits, later years	5.9%	6.4%	-.5%	
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s), year 1	\$15	\$16	-\$1	
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s), later years	\$12	\$12	\$	
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, year 1	68.4%	64.5%	3.9%	**
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, later years	65.1%	61.5%	3.6%	**
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s), year 1	\$341	\$316	\$25	**
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s), later years	\$330	\$313	\$17	**
Percent of time NCP participating in NCP Choices program, year 1	13.6%	.0%	13.6%	**
Any NCP Choices participation by NCP within 1 year of program entry	71.0%	.3%	70.7%	**
Percent of time NCP participating in any workforce development program(s), year 1	14.0%	1.5%	12.5%	**
Any workforce development participation by NCPs within 1 year of program entry	72.1%	5.3%	66.8%	**
Capias issued for arrest of NCP, year 1	12.4%	7.8%	4.6%	**
Percent of time NCP employed, year 1	47.2%	42.1%	5.1%	**
Percent of time NCP employed, later years	44.2%	41.5%	2.7%	
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs, year 1	\$2676	\$3320	-\$644	**
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs, later years	\$3222	\$3715	-\$493	**
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims, year 1	1.3%	1.6%	-.3%	
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims, later years	2.3%	1.7%	.6%	
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits, year 1	.6%	.8%	-.2%	
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits, later years	1.8%	1.2%	.6%	
Average monthly unemployment benefits received by NCP	\$28	\$28	\$	
Percent of time monetarily eligible for UI based on earnings	39.0%	38.4%	.6%	

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

**Table A-19. NCP Choices Impacts by Site, Original Sites, Gulf Coast**

	<b>NCP Choices Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>Comparison Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>NCP Choices Impact</b>	
Percent of time any child support collections made, year 1	45.2%	28.5%	16.7%	**
Percent of time any child support collections made, later years	42.5%	33.7%	8.8%	**
Monthly average child support collections, year 1	\$181	\$115	\$66	**
Monthly average child support collections, later years	\$178	\$133	\$45	**
Any child support collection made within 1 year of program entry	82.4%	58.7%	23.7%	**
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months, year 1	45.9%	28.8%	17.1%	**
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months, later years	43.3%	33.6%	9.7%	**
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits, year 1	5.5%	4.6%	.9%	
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits, later years	2.7%	5.0%	-2.3%	**
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s), year 1	\$9	\$9	\$	
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s), later years	\$5	\$12	-\$7	**
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, year 1	55.2%	55.5%	-.3%	
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, later years	57.6%	53.7%	3.9%	**
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s), year 1	\$318	\$293	\$25	**
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s), later years	\$348	\$314	\$34	**
Percent of time NCP participating in NCP Choices program, year 1	22.8%	.0%	22.8%	**
Any NCP Choices participation by NCP within 1 year of program entry	92.6%	.0%	92.6%	**
Percent of time NCP participating in any workforce development program(s), year 1	24.5%	2.1%	22.4%	**
Any workforce development participation by NCPs within 1 year of program entry	93.6%	7.6%	86.0%	**
Capias issued for arrest of NCP, year 1	19.3%	12.1%	7.2%	**
Percent of time NCP employed, year 1	44.9%	36.0%	8.9%	**
Percent of time NCP employed, later years	45.8%	36.1%	9.7%	**
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs, year 1	\$3809	\$4184	-\$375	
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs, later years	\$5490	\$5648	-\$158	
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims, year 1	2.1%	2.4%	-.3%	
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims, later years	3.5%	3.2%	.3%	
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits, year 1	1.1%	2.1%	-1.0%	
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits, later years	2.9%	2.6%	.3%	
Average monthly unemployment benefits received by NCP	\$54	\$94	-\$40	
Percent of time monetarily eligible for UI based on earnings	34.9%	29.5%	5.4%	**

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

**Table A-20. NCP Choices Impacts by Site, Expansion Sites, Harris/Houston**

	<b>NCP Choices Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>Comparison Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>NCP Choices Impact</b>	
Percent of time any child support collections made	37.9%	29.1%	8.8%	**
Monthly average child support collections	\$145	\$110	\$35	**
Any child support collection made within 1 year of program entry	85.8%	63.2%	22.6%	**
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months	37.1%	28.0%	9.1%	**
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits	4.3%	5.7%	-1.4%	*
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s)	\$9	\$12	-\$3	
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits	69.3%	64.8%	4.5%	**
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s)	\$528	\$471	\$57	**
Percent of time NCP participating in NCP Choices program	75.9%	-.1%	76.0%	**
Any NCP Choices participation by NCP within 1 year of program entry	100.0%	.0%	100.0%	**
Percent of time NCP participating in any workforce development program(s)	75.9%	.7%	75.2%	**
Any workforce development participation by NCPs within 1 year of program entry	100.1%	4.3%	95.8%	**
Capias issued for arrest of NCP	20.7%	14.0%	6.7%	**
Percent of time NCP employed	36.1%	24.0%	12.1%	**
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs	\$3285	\$3804	-\$519	
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims	1.7%	2.0%	-.3%	
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits	.6%	1.0%	-.4%	
Average monthly unemployment benefits received by NCP	\$4	\$33	-\$29	
Percent of time monetarily eligible for UI based on earnings	24.4%	21.6%	2.8%	

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

**Table A-21. NCP Choices Impacts by Site, Original Sites, Hidalgo**

	<b>NCP Choices Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>Comparison Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>NCP Choices Impact</b>	
Percent of time any child support collections made, year 1	54.1%	32.4%	21.7%	**
Percent of time any child support collections made, later years	44.8%	36.0%	8.8%	**
Monthly average child support collections, year 1	\$268	\$120	\$148	**
Monthly average child support collections, later years	\$202	\$126	\$76	**
Any child support collection made within 1 year of program entry	91.7%	66.7%	25.0%	**
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months, year 1	55.8%	31.0%	24.8%	**
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months, later years	44.7%	35.7%	9.0%	**
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits, year 1	4.0%	7.1%	-3.1%	**
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits, later years	2.0%	5.7%	-3.7%	**
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s), year 1	\$9	\$16	-\$7	**
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s), later years	\$5	\$11	-\$6	**
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, year 1	67.0%	69.2%	-2.2%	*
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, later years	66.8%	64.2%	2.6%	*
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s), year 1	\$343	\$344	-\$1	
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s), later years	\$386	\$351	\$35	**
Percent of time NCP participating in NCP Choices program, year 1	21.3%	.0%	21.3%	**
Any NCP Choices participation by NCP within 1 year of program entry	81.0%	-.1%	81.1%	**
Percent of time NCP participating in any workforce development program(s), year 1	25.5%	2.4%	23.1%	**
Any workforce development participation by NCPs within 1 year of program entry	86.2%	10.2%	76.0%	**
Capias issued for arrest of NCP, year 1	15.8%	7.4%	8.4%	**
Percent of time NCP employed, year 1	42.0%	38.0%	4.0%	*
Percent of time NCP employed, later years	38.4%	34.6%	3.8%	
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs, year 1	\$3331	\$3877	-\$546	**
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs, later years	\$3939	\$4381	-\$442	
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims, year 1	1.0%	1.9%	-.9%	
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims, later years	2.4%	2.5%	-.1%	
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits, year 1	.9%	1.3%	-.4%	
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits, later years	1.6%	2.1%	-.5%	
Average monthly unemployment benefits received by NCP	\$32	\$62	-\$30	
Percent of time monetarily eligible for UI based on earnings	32.1%	32.3%	-.2%	

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

**Table A-22. NCP Choices Impacts by Site, Expansion Sites, Jefferson/Orange**

	<b>NCP Choices Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>Comparison Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>NCP Choices Impact</b>	
Percent of time any child support collections made	44.5%	29.4%	15.1%	**
Monthly average child support collections	\$185	\$180	\$5	
Any child support collection made within 1 year of program entry	82.1%	54.2%	27.9%	*
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months	46.3%	29.6%	16.7%	**
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits	4.7%	2.5%	2.2%	*
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s)	\$8	\$4	\$4	
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits	76.6%	77.4%	-8%	
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s)	\$472	\$506	-\$34	
Percent of time NCP participating in NCP Choices program	63.5%	-.3%	63.8%	**
Any NCP Choices participation by NCP within 1 year of program entry	100.0%	.0%	100.0%	**
Percent of time NCP participating in any workforce development program(s)	63.5%	1.3%	62.2%	**
Any workforce development participation by NCPs within 1 year of program entry	101.0%	3.5%	97.5%	**
Capias issued for arrest of NCP	8.0%	5.7%	2.3%	
Percent of time NCP employed	54.9%	26.2%	28.7%	**
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs	\$3243	\$4701	-\$1458	
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims	2.7%	4.5%	-1.8%	
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits	1.5%	3.3%	-1.8%	
Average monthly unemployment benefits received by NCP	\$18	\$112	-\$94	
Percent of time monetarily eligible for UI based on earnings	19.4%	32.1%	-12.7%	*

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

**Table A-23. NCP Choices Impacts by Site, Expansion Sites, Lubbock**

	<b>NCP Choices Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>Comparison Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>NCP Choices Impact</b>	
Percent of time any child support collections made	53.0%	36.1%	16.9%	**
Monthly average child support collections	\$181	\$118	\$63	**
Any child support collection made within 1 year of program entry	85.6%	65.4%	20.2%	*
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months	54.4%	35.3%	19.1%	**
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits	3.4%	6.0%	-2.6%	**
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s)	\$6	\$9	-\$3	*
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits	66.6%	69.6%	-3.0%	
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s)	\$363	\$406	-\$43	**
Percent of time NCP participating in NCP Choices program	27.7%	.1%	27.6%	**
Any NCP Choices participation by NCP within 1 year of program entry	94.1%	-8%	94.9%	**
Percent of time NCP participating in any workforce development program(s)	28.3%	.6%	27.7%	**
Any workforce development participation by NCPs within 1 year of program entry	94.4%	1.2%	93.2%	**
Capias issued for arrest of NCP	2.3%	3.5%	-1.2%	
Percent of time NCP employed	59.6%	57.1%	2.5%	
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs	\$4054	\$2792	\$1262	**
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims	1.6%	.9%	.7%	
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits	1.6%	.4%	1.2%	
Average monthly unemployment benefits received by NCP	\$30	\$32	-\$2	
Percent of time monetarily eligible for UI based on earnings	41.6%	45.2%	-3.6%	

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

**Table A-24. NCP Choices Impacts by Site, Expansion Sites, Waco**

	<b>NCP Choices Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>Comparison Adjusted Mean</b>	<b>NCP Choices Impact</b>	
Percent of time any child support collections made	37.1%	33.3%	3.8%	
Monthly average child support collections	\$134	\$89	\$45	**
Any child support collection made within 1 year of program entry	82.9%	56.6%	26.3%	*
Consistent payment of child support, at least 2 out of 3 months	35.9%	32.8%	3.1%	
Percent of time CP(s) receiving TANF benefits	6.0%	7.0%	-1.0%	
Average monthly TANF benefits, CP(s)	\$12	\$12	\$	
Percent of time CP(s) receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits	78.8%	76.3%	2.5%	
Average monthly Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits, CP(s)	\$475	\$469	\$6	
Percent of time NCP participating in NCP Choices program	24.3%	.0%	24.3%	**
Any NCP Choices participation by NCP within 1 year of program entry	65.4%	.4%	65.0%	**
Percent of time NCP participating in any workforce development program(s)	24.6%	.3%	24.3%	**
Any workforce development participation by NCPs within 1 year of program entry	65.4%	.4%	65.0%	**
Capias issued for arrest of NCP	22.7%	17.0%	5.7%	**
Percent of time NCP employed	55.7%	46.8%	8.9%	
Average quarterly earnings, among employed NCPs	\$1956	\$3210	-\$1254	**
Percent of months in which NCPs filed unemployment claims	.1%	1.4%	-1.3%	
Percent of months in which NCP received unemployment benefits	.1%	1.4%	-1.3%	
Average monthly unemployment benefits received by NCP	\$3	\$23	-\$20	
Percent of time monetarily eligible for UI based on earnings	40.6%	41.1%	-.5%	

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

**Table A-25. Details on Cost Savings Estimation**

Cost category	Follow-up Interval	Zero employment growth		Moderate employment growth	
		Estimated Impact	Estimated Savings	Estimated Impact	Estimated Savings
Child support, short term (year1)	20,650 case-months	\$42.14 per month	\$870,191	\$74.95 per month	\$1,547,718
Child support, longer term (years 2-3)	16,418 case-months	\$23.88 per month	\$392,062	\$42.46 per month	\$697,108
Child support, total <sup>13</sup>			\$1,262,253		\$2,244,826
TANF, short term (year 1)	20,650 case-months	\$3.25 per month	\$67,113	\$3.25 per month	\$67,113
TANF, longer term (years 2-3)	16,418 case-months	\$3.46 per month	\$56,806	\$3.46 per month	\$56,806
TANF, total			\$123,919		\$123,919
SNAP (Food Stamps)	37,068 case-months	-\$16.52 per month	-\$612,363	\$3.17 per month	\$117,506
Unemployment Insurance benefits	10,026 case-quarters	\$12.22 per quarter	\$122,518	\$12.22 per quarter	\$122,518
<b>Overall savings, total</b>			<b>\$896,326</b>		<b>\$2,608,768</b>

<sup>13</sup> Note that the child support cost savings does not reflect total collection amounts from NCP Choices participants (which as of this writing were in the range of \$10 million), but rather the increase in collections beyond what would have been collected in the absence of the program.

**Table A-26. Common Acronyms and their Meanings**

CP	Custodial Parent
CSE	Child Support Enforcement
HHSC	Texas Health and Human Services Commission
IV-D	Refers to Courts that deal with Child Support Enforcement
NCP	Non-custodial Parent
OAG	Texas Office of the Attorney General
PRWORA	Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, responsible for Welfare Reform
RMC	Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, the University of Texas at Austin
SNAP	Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, formerly Food Stamps
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, formerly AFDC
TWC	Texas Workforce Commission
UI	Unemployment Insurance