Some Things DO Make a Difference for Youth

Job Corps

A Summary of:


Overview

Job Corps is a 33 year-old national training and employment program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor (hereafter DOL) and delivered primarily through residential settings to economically disadvantaged young people 16-to-24-years old. Enrollment in Job Corps is voluntary, and programs are open-entry, open-exit and self-paced. The average length of stay in 1977 was 6 months and nearly 7 1/2 months from 1991 to 1995. Eighty-two Job Corps centers are managed by major corporations and nonprofit organizations under contract to DOL. Another 29 centers are operated by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Interior under interagency agreements with DOL.

Evidence of Effectiveness

The 1982 evaluation showed that, relative to a comparison group, Job Corps participants experienced the following annual gains, averaged over a four-year post-program observation period:

- three weeks more employment per year
- $655 more earnings (over a 15 percent annual increase in then current dollars)
- five times greater probability of earning a high school diploma or GED (25 vs. 5 percent)
- nearly one week more college attendance (nearly double that of comparison group members)
- one less week of serious health problems

“Job Corps is an economically efficient use of public resources in the sense that the program provides greater value to society than the value of the resources it uses up.”

Mathematica

Population

In 1977, there were approximately 22,000 Job Corps slots (increasing to 41,000 by 1982). Seventy percent of Corpsmembers were male, over 75 percent were minorities (59 percent African American, 11 percent Hispanic, 5 percent American Indian, and less than 1 percent Asian or Pacific Islander), nearly 90 percent of new entrants had not completed high school, over one-third had never held at least a 20-hour per week job and over 90 percent had incomes below the poverty line or were receiving welfare. In Program Year 1995, 60,757 students “terminated” (a DOL term for leaving) from Job Corps centers. Sixty percent of these participants were male, reading on average at the 8th grade level, 29 percent were white and 71 percent were minorities (49 percent African American, 16 percent Hispanic, 4 percent Native American and 2 percent Asian-Pacific Islanders), 78 percent were high school dropouts, only 36 percent had ever held a full-time job and 40 percent of their families were receiving public assistance.
two fewer weeks of welfare receipt (a 50 percent reduction)

- nearly one week less of Unemployment Insurance receipt (a 50 percent reduction)

- a significant shift in criminal activity to committing less serious crimes (a reduced incidence of felonies, less theft and more traffic violations)

Gains were directly related to the program. Participants who stayed in the program longer had higher gains than participants who stayed for shorter periods. Relative to similar comparison group members:

- Completers had the highest gains, far above the program average, partial completers had some gains and early dropouts experienced little or no gains.

Outcomes were also different for men, women with children and women without children. Relative to similar comparison group members:

- Women who had children before or after Job Corps participation showed little gain.

- Women without children tended to have larger gains in earnings, education and health, and reduction in welfare.

- Men were more likely to join the military and have a reduction in unemployment benefits.

These effects persisted throughout the four years of post-program observation. Researchers estimated that the benefits to society from the Job Corps program were about 45 percent greater than program costs. Benefits exceeded program cost by over $2,300 per corpsmember in 1977 ($3,500 in 1982 dollars). The economic benefits included the increased value of output from corps members, reduced government assistance, increased earnings and decreased criminal activity.

The Job Corps Annual Report for Program Year (PY) 1995 reported the following outcomes for Job Corps participants:

- 75 percent found jobs or returned to higher education after leaving Job Corps

- for those placed in employment, average hourly wages were $5.98 and 46 percent found jobs which matched the training received in Job Corps

- placement rates were significantly higher for GED recipients and vocational training completers than for those participants who did not obtain a GED or complete vocational training

Job Corps had an early dropout rate of 31.4 percent from PY ’91-94, as a result of implementing the Zero Tolerance for Violence and Drugs policy in 1994, the dropout rate rose to 37.7 percent

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### Key Components

Job Corps was designed to address the multiple barriers to employment faced by disadvantaged youth throughout the United States through a comprehensive mix of services delivered in an integrated and coordinated manner in one facility. The array of services provided by Job Corps, as of 1995, included:

- entry diagnostic testing of reading and math levels

- occupational exploration programs and world of work training

- a comprehensive basic education program, including reading, math, GED, health education, parenting, introduction to computers and driver education

- competency-based vocational education

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“We analysis has shown that Job Corps had a larger impact on earnings than did other training programs available to our sample, and that it was an efficient social investment.”

**Mathematica**

- zero tolerance for violence and drugs

- intergroup relations/cultural awareness programs

- social skills training

- counseling and related support services

- regular student progress reviews

- student government and leadership programs

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American Youth Policy Forum
- community service through volunteer and vocational skills training programs
- work experience programs
- health care
- recreation programs and avocational activities
- meals, lodging and clothing
- incentive-based allowances
- child care support
- post-program placement and support

**Contributing Factors**

**Comprehensive Services**
Job Corps programs provide intensive, comprehensive services encompassing all aspects of a participant’s life. Researchers found that the more services received, the more positive impacts were recorded over the duration of the study.

**Residential Living**
Residential living provides an opportunity to address and correct a range of problems experienced by disadvantaged youth in a structured setting that they generally lack in their own homes and neighborhoods. Participants receive supervision, work on bonding and relationships with adults and peers, are given responsibility for activities that benefit the group as a whole and have leadership opportunities. This 24-hour a day reinforcement of positive social values contributes greatly to the long-term positive impact of Job Corps.

**Investments in Human Capital**
Because Job Corps programs do not provide one-time only benefits, but rather contribute to an individual’s overall level of human capital, the effects persist over time. Investments in education, job training, health and employment history become part of an individual’s permanent store of assets.

**STUDY METHODOLOGY**
Baseline interviews of 5,200 Job Corps participants and comparison group members in 1977 detailed demographic, socio-economic, work history and related activities. Follow-up interviews at 9, 24 and 54 months focused on work history. DOL implemented a new longitudinal study in PY 1994 which will follow-up and compare the experiences of a sample of Job Corps students with a randomly selected control group over a four-year period following enrollment. Preliminary results will be available in Program Year 1997 and impact results in 1999.

**EVALUATION FUNDING**
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