

A Three Mode Pilot Test to Interview Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Leavers in Colorado

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Shelley N. Osborn, ICF
Rebecca Eaton, ICF





Presentation Agenda



- Target Population and Project Goals
- Methodology
- Findings
- Conclusions and Future Implications



Target Population and Project Background



Target Population – TANF Leavers

- TANF helps low-income families increase self-sufficiency
- Administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance
- TANF is often referred to as welfare
- States receive block grants to administer TANF

Challenges to Learning About TANF Leavers

- **Highly stressed and vulnerable population with multiple barriers**
 - Low income, with children involved
 - Housing instability, making them hard to locate
 - Variable levels of literacy
 - Lack of or unreliable access to Internet
 - Mistrust of the state funding agency
 - Mistrust of research team

Be sensitive to population's needs and challenges by making survey participation easy



Benefits of Learning About TANF Leavers



- Contributes to body of research about experience and outcomes of former TANF participants
- Fills gaps in previously conducted studies
 - Conducted years ago, when survey options were more limited
 - Relied on databases
 - Longer time between data collection and departure from TANF
 - Did not include zero-parent households (non-parent relatives or other guardians are head of household)

TANF in Colorado

- In Colorado, TANF is state-supervised and county-administered
- Serves 17,000 families per month, providing financial assistance and supportive services
- Colorado's 64 counties administer TANF via the **Colorado Works** program
 - No mechanism to follow-up with the ~1,500 families who leave Colorado Works each month to evaluate their experiences, understand why they exited the program, or determine how the program contributed to the family's self-sufficiency goals

Project Goals

- **CDHS hired ICF in 2016 to conduct a multi-year study to better understand former Colorado Works participants' experiences.**
- **Analysis will inform program evaluation and policy change and development.**
- **Focus areas include:**
 - Reasons for leaving Colorado Works
 - Experiences and satisfaction with Colorado Works
 - Perceived goal(s) of Colorado Works
 - How participating in Colorado Works contributed to the family's self-sufficiency goals
 - Current employment status and wage rate

This unique project is a multi-mode real-time survey of TANF Leavers from ALL household types - zero parent, one parent and two parent

Methodology





Pre-Fielding Activities

- **Survey development with input from client, subject matter experts, and review of existing surveys**
- **Two rounds of cognitive testing (English, and then English and Spanish)**



Pilot Test

■ **Three Modes (N=150 each, \$20 incentive)**

1. Mail Push-to-Web + Mail Survey

- Letter with URL for the web-based survey
- Reminder letter
- Hardcopy survey questionnaire

2. Email and Text Link to Web (text thought to be best)

- Email with URL for the web-based survey (<25% email addresses)
- Reminder email
- Text with link to survey
- Reminder text

3. Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI)

Findings



Surveys by Contact Mode and Case Level

	Mail P2W with Mail Follow-up	CATI Only	Email/Text to Web	Total
Zero Parent	15 (42%)	12 (39%)	15 (32%)	42 (37%)
One Parent	8 (22%)	10 (32%)	16 (34%)	34 (30%)
Two Parent	13 (36%)	9 (29%)	16 (34%)	38 (33%)
Total	36 (100%)	31 (100%)	47 (100%)	114 (100%)



How Well did Mail Push-to-Web Work?

- **150 Mailed Invitation Letters Sent**
 - 13 (9%) returned invitation letters
 - Of 137
 - 26 (19%) completed on web
- **140 surveys mailed**
 - 10 (7%) returned

Is there a Mode Preference by Case Level?

	Zero Parent	One Parent	Two Parents
Web	22 (52%)	23 (68%)	28 (74%)
Phone	12 (29%)	10 (29%)	9 (24%)
Mail	8 (19%)	1 (3%)	1 (2%)
Total	42 (100%)	34 (100%)	38 (100.0%)

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Survey Length by Device and Case Level

	Zero Parent	One Parent	Two Parents
Desktop	15.9 min	22.0 min	16.7 min
Mobile	13.0 min	31.8 min	16.4 min
Tablet	--	--	17.5 min



Data Quality and Nonresponse

- **Web**
 - 12 left survey at landing page
 - 11 left at Q3 ““First, what did you hope Colorado Works would do for you and/or your family? What needs did you hope Colorado Works would meet?”
 - 6 left when we requested their first name to send gift code
- **CATI**
 - 5 left at first question
 - 3 left at Q3

- **Overall high data quality, with good open-ended data, very few missing responses on web or don’t know/refused on CATI**

* N=149; prior to data collection, deleted one record that was included in cognitive testing phase





Conclusions & Future Implications



Conclusion Highlights

- **Main data collection does not need to continue in all modes to capture quality responses**
 - But shouldn't rely just on email/text
- **Largest proportion of respondents in zero, one, and two parent households completed on web mode**
- **Zero parent (child only) households participated in data collection...and we believed they would continue to do so**

Thank you

Shelley Osborn, PhD

Shelley.Osborn@ICF.com

(415) 677-7199



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