Using Administrative Records and Survey Data to Study the Effectiveness of Self-Sufficiency Interventions for Housing-Assisted Families: Observations from the NYC Work Rewards Demonstration

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Using Administrative Data for Program Evaluation and Research: Recent Successes and Next Steps

United States Department of Agriculture
Economic Research Service

mdrc

United States Census Bureau
- Not-for-profit social policy research organization
- Mission: Build evidence to improve the lives of low-income families
- Rigorously evaluates (and sometimes helps design) innovative social policies
- Pioneered large-scale random assignment evaluations of social programs
- Extensive experiences acquiring, managing, and analyzing administrative records from state and local agencies for sample members.
Presentation Overview

• This presentation:
  – Focuses on New York City’s Work Rewards demonstration (targeting housing-assisted families)
  – Highlights MDRC’s successful use of administrative records, survey, and program MIS for the evaluation
  – Illustrates particular opportunities and considerations for comprehensive evaluations
Sponsor: NYC Center for Economic Opportunity

Random assignment evaluation

– Effectiveness of FSS program alone
– Effectiveness of FSS + more immediate work incentives
– Effectiveness of work incentives alone

Target group:

– Voucher-holders (Section 8)
– Family income ≤ 130% of federal poverty line
Policy Context for Work Rewards

- Federal housing assistance helps about 5 million households (not an entitlement).
- Housing subsidies can take a few forms – vouchers (47%); public housing (23%); other (30%).
- Work is not uncommon – in 2014, 71 percent of workable households had worked recently, or were subject to work requirements.
- Many work part-time – work is typically low-wage and inconsistent.
- Efforts to boost household earnings are vital.
Policy Context for Work Rewards

- Families contribute 30 percent of adjusted income toward rent and utilities – government pays rest

- As income falls, families pay less

- As income grows, 30 percent “tax” on extra income – in the form of a reduced housing subsidy

- Other means-tested benefits also affected – government benefits will fall to zero when income exceeds certain thresholds
Case management, 5-year contract

• Referrals to supportive services

Employment and training services

• Job readiness, resume prep, job development and referrals, and referrals to training programs

Asset building: Rent increases due to work are saved in escrow accounts

• Family must reach goals of 5-year contract
• Can’t claim escrow funds if receiving cash welfare
• Interim disbursements (e.g., for ed./training, pay debt)
• Final disbursements have no limitations on use
FSS + workforce incentives

- Cash rewards for:
  - Sustained full-time work: $150/month
  - Completed education/training

- Paid every 2 months over 2 years
Types of Research Questions Examined

• Are program participants graduating from FSS and receiving escrow disbursement \((\text{PHA data})\)?

• Does FSS increase work, earnings, other outcomes (vs. control group) – \((\text{UI, survey, TANF/SNAP data})\)?

• Do more immediate work incentives “add value” to effects of FSS alone \((\text{PHA, UI, survey data})\)?

• Do impacts on employment/earnings lead to changes in public benefit and housing voucher receipt? \((\text{PHA, UI, TANF, SNAP data})\)?

• Do program impacts vary for subgroups?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Key measures</th>
<th>Follow-up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>NY Department of Labor UI data/respondent survey</td>
<td>Employment, earnings, job characteristics/benefits</td>
<td>24 quarters (UI) and 42-month survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Benefits</td>
<td>NYC Human Resources Administration /respondent survey</td>
<td>TANF/SNA &amp; SNAP receipt and dollar value</td>
<td>24 quarters (HRA) and 42-month survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>NYC HPD PIC and MIS</td>
<td>HCV receipt, subsidy value, escrow credits, graduation</td>
<td>24 quarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material hardship, finances, education</td>
<td>Respondent survey</td>
<td>Degree conferral, savings, debt, poverty</td>
<td>42-month survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey vs. Administrative Records

Administrative data
- Longitudinal data, time-series
- Full sample (all beneficiaries, for example)
- Data collection driven by administrative needs
- Important to understand data release requirements

Survey data
- Point-in-time, snapshots, multiple waves
- Potentially broader coverage of topics
- Recall issues (esp. long-term)
- Non-response bias
- Response rates and loss of statistical precision
- Cost considerations
Survey vs. Administrative Records: Employment Outcomes

State UI:

- Earnings in person-quarter units aggregated across employers (some studies may have access to employer level data)
- Does not cover: self-employment, informal employment, federal/military or out-of-state jobs
- Does not cover: job characteristics (hourly wage, benefits, or schedule)

Survey:

- Can provide information on all types of employment and job characteristics
- Reference-frame alignment
Using Baseline Survey Data to Understand Who Enrolled
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/non-Hispanic</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack HS diploma or GED</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed at baseline</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working full-time at baseline</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving SNAP (household)</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving TANF (household)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessing FSS Graduation Rates and Escrow Disbursements with PHA data
The Opportunity NYC Demonstration: Work Rewards

Percentage of Households Receiving Escrow Credit, by Month Since Random Assignment, FSS Study, Core Sample

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using administrative records data from the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD).

NOTES: The core sample includes housing voucher recipients who were randomly assigned.
Impacts on Employment and Earnings
Tracking UI earnings for the full sample
FSS Study

Impacts on UI employment, Years 1-6

Ever Employed (%)

- FSS Only: 75.6%
- FSS + Incent.: 75.6%
- Control: 74.1%

Average / Quarter (%)

- Control: 45.2%
- FSS + Incent.: 45.6%
- FSS Only: 42.8%

Diff: 1.5 (ns) Ever Employed
Diff: 2.4 pp (ns) Average / Quarter
### Survey Shows Large Employment Impacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Control Group Average</th>
<th>FSS + Incentives vs. Control Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed at the time of the survey (%)</td>
<td>44.39</td>
<td>10.67***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked at least 30 hours per week (%)</td>
<td>28.46</td>
<td>8.77***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer-provided benefits (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid sick days</td>
<td>18.22</td>
<td>4.61*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid vacation days</td>
<td>20.61</td>
<td>6.19**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid holidays</td>
<td>22.26</td>
<td>5.37*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A health or medical insurance plan</td>
<td>17.43</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why This Difference?

• Differences between UI and survey driven in part by gains in employment in the types of work that are not covered in UI

• Survey non-response bias analysis: likelihood of responding to survey was highly correlated with likelihood of receiving a financial incentive for work-related activities

• Hard to disentangle relative contributions: caution advised in interpreting impact
Subgroup Impacts
Subgroup impacts on earnings

Subgroup: *Not working* at baseline

- **FSS + Incentives**
- **FSS-Only**
- **Control group**

Incentives end

Q2 Q6 Q10 Q14 Q18 Q22
### TANF/SNA (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Program Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
<th>Difference (Impact)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ever received, Years 1-6</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received in avg. quarter, Year 6</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SNAP (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Program Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
<th>Difference (Impact)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ever received, Years 1-6</td>
<td>94.5</td>
<td>93.2</td>
<td>+1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received in avg. quarter, Year 6</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>-4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Section 8 Housing (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Program Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
<th>Difference (Impact)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Received voucher in Year 6</td>
<td>85.3</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

• Combination of administrative and survey data allowed fuller investigation into program impacts on multiple domains

• Administrative records allowed investigation of longitudinal impacts (including post-program period)

• Linked data show graduation, employment/earnings impacts did not lead to changes in housing/other public benefits

• Follow-up surveys can be used to capture important outcomes but survey response bias analysis is crucial
For more information:

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**Building Self-Sufficiency for Housing Voucher Recipients: Interim Findings from the Work Rewards Demonstration in New York City** 2015. Stephen Nuñez, Nandita Verma, Edith Yang
Extra
Survey vs. Administrative Records (Cont.)

• BIF
  • Source of important model covariates and sample descriptive statistics: richer than 50058 administrative data

  • Can also be used to designate subgroups for differential impact analysis

  • Recall issues and confusion can undermine subgroup analysis

• Work Rewards Analysis:
  • Self-reported baseline and UI employment line up well. Differential impact findings for employment status subgroups are robust to data source

• Self-reported SNAP receipt DOES NOT line up well with administrative records (false positives and false negatives). Consistent with previous literature (e.g. Czajka et al., 2012)
### The Opportunity NYC Demonstration: Work Rewards

#### 6 Year Impacts on FSS Graduation and Disbursements, FSS Study, Core Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>FSS+ Incentives</th>
<th>FSS- Only</th>
<th>Difference (Impact)</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduated (%)</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total amount disbursed ($)</td>
<td>3,887</td>
<td>2,759</td>
<td>1,128 **</td>
<td>0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total amount disbursed (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$0</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>-5.9</td>
<td>0.156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1 to $2,000</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>5.2 *</td>
<td>0.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,001 to $4,000</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>-2.9</td>
<td>0.303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$4,001 to $10,000</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>-5.3 *</td>
<td>0.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more than $10,000</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>8.9 ***</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total amount disbursed, among FSS graduates ($)</td>
<td>5,919</td>
<td>4,211</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample size (total = 579) 282 297