



PROGRAM SNAPSHOT: LIFT

By Kristen Joyce and Sheena McConnell

Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations

To learn more about the potential of coaching to help Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other low-income people reach economic security, OPRE awarded a contract to Mathematica Policy Research and Abt Associates to conduct an evaluation of employment coaching interventions. The evaluation will use an experimental research design to examine the effectiveness of coaching interventions that aim to help low-income individuals succeed in the labor market. It will also examine the implementation of the coaching interventions, the impact of coaching on self-regulation skills, and the role of self-regulation skills in generating any impacts on employment outcomes. Descriptive findings will be available in fall/winter 2019 and impact findings will be available beginning in 2021.

For more information visit the project's [web page](#) or [email](#) us about receiving regular updates on the project.



[LIFT](#) is part of a select group of employment coaching interventions being evaluated under the Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations, funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE), within the Administration for Children and Families.

How does LIFT implement employment coaching?

LIFT is a non-profit organization that provides career and financial coaching, financial support, employment and financial management workshops, and social activities to parents and caregivers of young children. LIFT's goal is to help participants find a path toward goal achievement and financial security by matching them with coaches.

Assessment. LIFT coaches use assessments to learn about participants' aspirations in several areas in their life (for example, their career and asset-building), and to help participants identify resources and action steps to achieve their goals.

What is employment coaching?

Coaching involves a trained staff person or coach working with a participant to set personalized goals, as well as supporting, motivating, and providing feedback over time to the participant as he or she pursues those goals. The coach is not directive but works collaboratively with the participant.

- **Goal setting.** Coaches work with participants to set short- and long-term goals and create action plans to achieve those goals. Participants often start with a long-term financial goal such as purchasing a home, saving for their child's college, or increasing their income. Coaches then work with participants to identify milestones to reach the long-term goal and then short-term tasks to work on between sessions. The LIFT coaching approach is nondirective and allows participants to choose the goals and milestones they want to work on. LIFT conducts a formal review of progress toward goals every three months. During the progress review, participants reassess their goals and determine if ongoing coaching is still a priority.
- **Coaching frequency.** Generally, coaches meet with participants twice during the first month and monthly after that. Coaching sessions typically last about 60 minutes. Coaches also check in with participants between sessions by phone, text message, or email.
- **Coach characteristics.** LIFT coaches are primarily student volunteers pursuing master's degrees in social work from area colleges. Most volunteers are required by their master's program to work on average 21 hours per week, typically as a practicum.
- **Other services.** In addition to coaching, LIFT offers participants financial payments when they make progress toward meeting their goals. The payments, which are \$150 each and can total up to \$1,000 over two years, also serve as incentives to participate and share career and financial progress updates. The program also offers a variety of workshops on topics such as financial health and job readiness, as well as social activities to strengthen peer networks.

How is LIFT funded and whom does it serve?

LIFT is funded by grants from foundations and other organizations as well as individual donations. The program is targeted to parents, expectant parents, and caregivers of children ages 8 and younger. Participants must have stable housing, be employed at least part time or enrolled in school, and be ready and able to focus on their long-term goals.

Where and when is LIFT being evaluated?

LIFT operates in four cities: Washington, DC; New York, New York; Chicago, Illinois; and Los Angeles, California. The Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York locations are participating in the evaluation. Study enrollment began in September 2018 and will continue for about 12 months.

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