



## Participation in Programs Designed to Improve Employment Outcomes for Persons with Psychiatric Disabilities: Evidence from the New York WORKS Demonstration Project

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### Abstract

The New York WORKS demonstration project was designed to improve employment outcomes for persons with psychiatric disabilities receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability payments. This article shows how the individual characteristics of participants were related to outcomes at each stage of the multistage recruitment process used in the project and how those characteristics contributed to enrollment. The findings are important to program administrators who are interested in ensuring that SSI recipients receive equal access to employment-related services and who want to improve recruitment strategies for future demonstration projects. The New York WORKS recruitment process used administrative records from the Social Security Administration (SSA) to identify the population of over 68,000 SSI recipients with a diagnosis of a psychiatric disability in Erie County and New York City. Staff involved in the project documented the results of each stage of the recruitment process.

The New York WORKS project included four stages: (1) the provision of information (sending a letter and information packet); (2) demonstrated awareness of the project (response to a letter containing an overview of the project); (3) expression of interest (indication of interest in the project, using a postmarked form returned to New York WORKS project staff); and (4) participation (actual enrollment in the program). The project staff members were also able to identify data from administrative records that described the characteristics of the population, including age, sex, type of psychiatric diagnosis, the number of months that the person collected benefits before the recruitment process, employment experience before the recruitment process, and annual earnings in the year before the recruitment process.

The data on outcomes at each stage of the recruitment process and the characteristics of SSI recipients were analyzed using an empirical method recently suggested by Heckman and Smith. The analysis identified the relationship between the characteristics of SSI recipients and the outcomes at each stage of the recruitment process and demonstrated how those characteristics contributed to the overall likelihood of enrollment.

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