

# Executive Summary

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## **Overview**

**Turning HOPE into Opportunity, Volume II**, continues where Volume I left off by studying the characteristics and outcomes of clients who enrolled in The HOPE Program between 2006 and 2007.

Factors that most affected outcomes were gender, education and literacy level. Because gender played a role in almost all outcomes, the report looked at men and women separately and found that education, literacy, job history, total number of employment barriers and age affected outcomes more for women than for men.

## **Outcomes and Significant Findings**

This report summarizes the characteristics and outcomes of 364 clients who enrolled in The HOPE Program during 2006 and 2007. A previous report analyzed clients who enrolled in HOPE between 2002 and 2005.

The outcomes measured were program completion, job placement and job retention. Gender and education were the client characteristics that were most often associated with significant findings.

Program Completion: Sixty-seven percent of HOPE clients completed the classroom training portion of the program in 2006-2007.

- A higher percentage of males than females completed the program (75% vs. 60%).
- The odds of completing the program for men were twice as high as for women.
- Those who completed the training tended to be slightly older than those who did not complete.
- Not surprisingly, the odds of completing the program for clients with a high school diploma, a GED or some college education were twice as high as the odds for clients without these credentials. The odds of completion for females with these credentials were four times the odds of those without them.
- For female clients, higher scores on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) were associated with successful program completion.
- For HOPE clients, having children under 14 living with them decreased the odds of completion by half.
- While the number of barriers to employment did not significantly impact completion rates for the population as a whole, in the case of women, each additional barrier to employment decreased the odds of completion by 20%.
- For HOPE clients with Axis II psychiatric diagnoses (also referred to as Personality Disorders), the odds of completion were twice as high as for clients without these diagnoses.
- Interestingly, there were no appreciable differences in completion status by substance use or conviction history.
- There was no significant relationship between time since last employment and program completion.

Job Placement: Seventy percent of graduates found jobs, with 63% of graduates being placed within one year of enrollment.

- A higher percentage of males than females were placed (76% vs. 64%).
- In general, the odds of a man being placed were twice as high as the odds of a woman.
- Approximately the same percentages of enrollees from each age group were placed.
- While educational level did not have an impact on job placement, having a TABE math score at or above the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level doubled the odds of placement.
- For HOPE clients, having worked in the two years preceding enrollment doubled the odds of being placed. Women who had worked within two years of enrollment had three times higher odds of placement compared to women who had not.
- For women, each additional barrier to employment decreased the odds of job placement by 23%.
- While there was no significant difference in job placement rates between clients with and without psychiatric diagnoses in general, having an Axis II diagnosis (also referred to as a Personality Disorder) decreased the odds of being placed by 56%. For women, having an Axis II diagnosis decreased the odds of placement by 60%.
- Interestingly, there were no significant differences in placement by conviction history, substance use history and housing arrangement.

Hourly Pay: The average hourly pay at the client's first job was \$10.38. Although unrelated to job placement rates, educational level was associated with entry level salaries. Clients with a high school diploma or a GED earned approximately one dollar more in hourly wage compared to those who had dropped out of high school.

Job Retention: Eighty-nine percent of those placed were able to retain their jobs for at least 90 days, and 70% were still working after one year.

- Unlike program completion and job placement, job retention for women was somewhat better than for men. Ninety-two percent of female clients were able to retain a job for 90 days compared to 87% for male clients.
- Clients that retained a job for 90 days were younger than those who did not. Each five-year increase in age decreased the odds of 90-day job retention by 20%. Age had an even bigger impact on job retention for men – each five-year increase in age decreased the odds of 90-day retention by 34%.
- A history of substance abuse decreased the odds of 90-day job retention by 81%.
- In general, 90-day retention was not impacted by conviction history, but the odds of 90-day job retention for women without conviction histories were 16 times the odds for women with conviction histories.
- The number of barriers significantly predicted 90-day retention and was particularly impactful for women. Each additional barrier to employment decreased the odds of 90-day retention by 35%. For women, each additional barrier to employment decreased the odds of 90-day retention by 79%.
- All clients who had children under 14 living with them who were placed in jobs retained their jobs for 90 days compared to 87% of those who did not. Although not statistically significant, these

results are interesting because they are not in line with the findings for program completion and job placement where the presence of children under 14 was found to have a significant negative impact.

- For women, having a permanent housing increased the odds of 90-day retention nine times.
- Job retention at 90 days was highest for those in customer service/retail and health/social service positions and lowest for those in manual-specialized and office-specialized positions.

## **Profile of Clients**

The HOPE Program enrolled 364 clients between 2006 and 2009. The clients' average age was 37 and two-thirds of them had never been married. The enrollees had a balanced gender composition and blacks represented the predominant racial group, accounting for 70% of HOPE clients. Nineteen percent of the clients had childcare needs as defined as having children under the age of 14 living with them. As many as 40% of HOPE's clients lived in transitional housing (including drug treatment programs and halfway houses).

The percentage of enrollees without a high school diploma or GED averaged 48%. At intake, the average enrollee tested at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level in reading and at the 6<sup>th</sup> grade level in math. Sixty-four percent of clients had a history of substance use. Fifty-two percent of clients had past convictions and approximately 65% of the convictions were drug-related. While there was a higher percentage of males with conviction histories compared to females, the percentage of females with convictions increased markedly since the 2002-2005 study. Sixteen percent of clients had never worked and 46% had not worked in the two years preceding enrollment. Eighty-five percent of enrollees received government assistance, with 81% of them having received assistance for 6 months or longer.

All clients undergo psychological assessments intake, which are aimed to determine their level of functioning and any potential barriers to employment. For the purposes of this report, psychiatric diagnoses do not include substance abuse disorder. Fifty-three percent of clients enrolled between July 2006 and December 2007 had a psychiatric diagnosis. Gender composition was relatively balanced, with 55% of the females and 50% of the males having a diagnosis.

Clients had an average of four barriers to employment, with 44% of clients having five or more barriers. In the prior study, clients averaged three employment barriers.

## **The HOPE Program**

Founded in 1984, The HOPE Program helps New Yorkers transcend poverty and prepares them to find, keep and grow careers. By blending vocational, educational and social services with a lifelong commitment to a person's growth, HOPE demonstrates that poor New Yorkers can create better lives for themselves and their families. HOPE's mission is two-fold: to help individuals living in extreme poverty achieve economic self-sufficiency and to inform practices by sharing its research and solutions.