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Press Release

April 16, 2002, Contact: [Laura Paskin](#)

Real Work, a Paycheck, and Education Lead to Success for Welfare Parents

Washington's Community Jobs program to be showcased in Washington D.C., as Congress takes up welfare reform legislation

The first of its kind in the nation, Community Jobs is a state-run program that links paid work, education, training, and support to help welfare mothers find and keep a job. In an independent assessment released today, the Economic Opportunity Institute found that Community Jobs participants find jobs and their income increases by 150% after they leave the program. The average wage of a former Community Jobs participant reaches \$16,220 after two years.

In related events, on April 17, 2002, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., is holding a briefing for legislative aides in Washington, D.C. on transitional programs around the country, including Community Jobs. Senator Bingaman is also introducing federal legislation to encourage states to pursue transitional jobs models like Community Jobs.

"What makes our findings so important is that Community Jobs is particularly designed for parents who lacked the education, skills, and work history to get even a basic, minimum wage job," said [Erin Burchfield](#), policy associate at the Economic Opportunity Institute.

The Community Jobs program, provides 20 hours a week of paid work at minimum wage at a public, nonprofit, or tribal organization and an additional 20 hours of training, education, and support services. Participants can stay in the program for up to 9 months, but many leave sooner because they find gainful employment at a higher wage. According to Ms. Burchfield, not only do people leave for better jobs, but their income goes up steadily as they gain experience and responsibility. "This data holds true throughout the state--in rural, urban, and suburban Washington, as well as in areas with high and low unemployment."

The data was collected for the five areas in the initial pilot program begun in 1998. In 1999 the program went statewide. "Because the program takes up to nine months, we have long-term wage data only for the initial group of participants," Ms. Burchfield explained. More than 1,000 people are included in the analysis. To date, more than 7,200 people who have participated in the program.

"Community Jobs offers hope, opportunity, and economic security for people who had no place to turn," Ms. Burchfield emphasized. "It's a great a model for communities throughout the country."



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