

What Works Clearinghouse



Job Corps

Program description *Job Corps*, a federally funded education and job training program for economically disadvantaged youth, offers remedial education, GED (General Educational Development) preparation, vocational training, job placement assistance, and other supports. *Job Corps* participants typically reside in a *Job Corps* center while enrolled in the program and can remain in the program for up to two years.¹

Research One study of *Job Corps* met What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards. This randomized controlled trial was based on a nationally representative sample of all eligible applicants who applied for *Job Corps* in late 1994 and 1995. The study sample included 11,313 students from more than 100 *Job Corps* centers nationwide. Based on this one study, the WWC considers the extent of evidence for *Job Corps* to be small for the progressing in school and completing school domains. This study did not examine the effectiveness of *Job Corps* in the staying in school domain.²

Effectiveness *Job Corps* was found to have no discernible effects on progressing in school and potentially positive effects on completing school.

	<i>Staying in school</i>	<i>Progressing in school</i>	<i>Completing school</i>
Rating of effectiveness	na	No discernible effects	Potentially positive
Improvement index³	na	Average: -3 percentile points	Average: +13 percentile points

na = not applicable

1. The WWC dropout prevention review includes interventions designed to encourage students who drop out to return to school and earn a high school diploma or GED certificate, as well as interventions designed to prevent initially enrolled students from dropping out. For more details, see the [WWC dropout prevention review protocol](#).
2. The evidence in this report is based on available research. Findings and conclusions may change as new research becomes available.
3. These numbers show the average improvement index for all findings across the study.

Absence of conflict of interest

The *Job Corps* study summarized in this intervention report was prepared by staff of Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR). Because the principal investigator for the WWC dropout prevention review is also an MPR staff member, the study was rated

by staff members from ICF International, who also prepared the intervention report. The report was then reviewed by the principal investigator, the WWC Technical Review Team, and an external peer reviewer.

Additional program information

Developer and contact

Job Corps was created by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The federally funded program currently operates under the provisions of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Job Corps. Information on the program's history and resources for program implementation are available from the Department of Labor website at <http://jobcorps.dol.gov/about.htm>.

Scope of use

Job Corps serves about 62,000 young adults each year. Since it began in 1964, the program has enrolled more than 2 million youth. There are currently 122 *Job Corps* centers located in 48 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

Description of intervention

Job Corps is a federally funded education and vocational training program for disadvantaged youth. The program serves young people, ages 16 to 24, most of whom lack a high school diploma or GED certificate. Participation is voluntary. *Job Corps*' core services—academic instruction, vocational training, and residential living services—are provided through its centers. It operates on an open-entry and open-exit basis, with individualized and self-paced training and program services. Thus, enrollment in *Job Corps* does not have a fixed duration. The average *Job Corps* participant spends about eight months in the program and receives more than 1,000 hours of education and training.

After two to four weeks of orientation and skill and interest assessment, participants receive an individualized mix of vocational and academic instruction. Many participants enter *Job Corps* with poor literacy and numeracy skills. To address these deficits, *Job Corps* offers remedial education that emphasizes reading and math. In addition, academically qualified participants who lack a high school diploma are offered GED preparation classes. *Job Corps*' vocational training prepares youth for work or further training, emphasizing the skills necessary to work in specific trades. The type and number of vocational training opportunities vary across *Job Corps* centers. A typical center offers specialized training for about 10 trades, preparing students for work as carpenters, masons, welders, electricians, mechanics, food and health service workers, and other professions. Upon completion of their education and training, *Job Corps* provides participants with job placement assistance.

Residential living services are a distinctive feature of *Job Corps*. Resident participants are housed in dormitories at the *Job Corps* center. In addition to room and board, these participants are offered counseling, health services, social-skills training, recreational activities, and a biweekly living allowance. Some centers offer a nonresidential version of the program in which participants receive all *Job Corps* services and supports but do not reside at the center.

Cost

According to study authors, *Job Corps* costs about \$19,500 per participant.⁴

4. See McConnell and Glazerman (2001). The WWC converted costs to 2007 dollars using the consumer price index.

Research The WWC reviewed two studies on the effectiveness of *Job Corps*. One study (Schochet, Burghardt, & Glazerman, 2001) was a randomized controlled trial that met WWC evidence standards. The other study did not meet WWC evidence standards.

The Schochet, Burghardt, and Glazerman (2001) study used a nationally representative sample of *Job Corps* applicants. The sample was selected from those who applied to *Job Corps* for the first time between November 16, 1994, and December 17, 1995. During this period, 80,883 applicants were eligible for the program. From this group, 9,409 applicants were randomly assigned to the intervention group that was offered *Job Corps* services, and 5,977 applicants were randomly assigned to the control group that was not. The results here are based on data for the 6,828 *Job Corps* youth and 4,485 control group youth who responded to the 48-month follow-up survey. The study

authors restricted the analysis of *Job Corps*' effect on completing school to the 77% of survey respondents who entered the study without a high school diploma or GED certificate.

Extent of evidence

The WWC categorizes the extent of evidence in each domain as small or moderate to large (see the [What Works Clearinghouse Extent of Evidence Categorization Scheme](#)). The extent of evidence takes into account the number of studies and the total sample size across studies that met WWC evidence standards with or without reservations.⁵

The WWC considers the extent of evidence for *Job Corps* to be small for progressing in school and completing school. The one *Job Corps* study that met WWC evidence standards did not address *Job Corps*' effectiveness in the staying in school domain.

Effectiveness Findings

The WWC review of interventions for dropout prevention addresses student outcomes in three domains: staying in school, progressing in school, and completing school. The Schochet et al. (2001) study examined outcomes in the progressing in school and completing school domains.

Progressing in school. At the end of the 48-month follow-up period, Schochet et al. (2001) found no statistically significant difference between *Job Corps* and control group youth in their self-reported years of regular schooling completed. In addition, the effect size for this outcome was not large enough (at least 0.25) to be considered substantively important, according to the WWC criteria.

Completing school. Schochet et al. (2001) found that, among those who entered the program without a high school diploma or

GED certificate, 43% of *Job Corps* students earned one by the end of the 48-month follow-up period, compared with 26% of control group students. This difference was both statistically significant and substantively important by WWC standards. *Job Corps*' effect on completion came entirely from its positive and statistically significant effect on the likelihood of receiving a GED certificate. *Job Corps* was found to have a small, but statistically significant, negative effect on the likelihood of earning a high school diploma.⁶

Rating of effectiveness

The WWC rates the effects of an intervention in a given outcome domain as positive, potentially positive, mixed, no discernible effects, potentially negative, or negative. The rating of effectiveness takes into account four factors: the quality of the research

5. The Extent of Evidence Categorization was developed to tell readers how much evidence was used to determine the intervention rating, focusing on the number and size of studies. Additional factors associated with a related concept, external validity—such as students' demographics and types of settings in which studies took place—are not taken into account for the categorization. Information about how the extent of evidence rating was determined for *Job Corps* is in Appendix A6.
6. As in other WWC dropout prevention reviews, the combined effect of *Job Corps* on receiving a high school diploma or a GED certificate was used to determine the effectiveness rating. These results are in Appendix A3. The separate effects of *Job Corps* on receiving a high school diploma or a GED certificate are in Appendix A4.2. At the end of the follow-up period, the percentage of youth who earned a high school diploma was small for both *Job Corps* and control group youth, 5.3% and 7.5% respectively.

Effectiveness *(continued)*

The WWC found *Job Corps* to have no discernible effects on progressing in school and potentially positive effects on completing school

design, the statistical significance of the findings, the size of the difference between participants in the intervention and the

comparison conditions, and the consistency in findings across studies (see the [WWC Intervention Rating Scheme](#)).⁷

Improvement index

The WWC computes an improvement index for each individual finding. In addition, within each outcome domain, the WWC computes an average improvement index for each study as well as an average improvement index across studies (see [Technical Details of WWC-Conducted Computations](#)). The improvement index represents the difference between the percentile rank of the average student in the intervention condition and that of the average student in the comparison condition. Unlike the rating of effectiveness, the improvement index is based entirely on the size of the effect, regardless of the statistical significance of the effect, the study design, or the analyses. The improvement index can take on values between -50 and +50, with positive numbers denoting results favorable to the intervention group.

Based on the one study of *Job Corps* that met evidence standards, the average improvement index for progressing in school is -3 percentile points and the average improvement index for completing school +13 percentile points.

Summary

The WWC reviewed two studies on *Job Corps*. One study met WWC evidence standards; the other study did not meet WWC evidence screens. Based on results from the one qualifying study, the WWC found no discernible effects on progressing in school and potentially positive effects on completing school. The conclusions presented in this report may change as new research emerges.

References

Met WWC evidence standards

Schochet, P. Z., Burghardt, J., & Glazerman, S. (2001). *National Job Corps Study: The impacts of Job Corps on participants' employment and related outcomes*. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Additional sources

Burghardt, J., McConnell, S., Meckstroth A., Schochet, P. Z., Johnson T., & Homrighausen J. (1999). *National Job Corps Study: Report on study implementation*. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

McConnell, S., & Glazerman, S. (2001). *National Job Corps Study: The benefits and costs of Job Corps*. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Did not meet WWC evidence standards

Lin, C. W. (1999). *Affective work competencies: Evaluation of work-related attitude change in a Job Corps residential center*. (Doctoral dissertation, Kansas State University, 1999). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 60 (5-A), 1463.⁸

For more information about specific studies and WWC calculations, please see the [WWC Job Corps Technical Appendices](#).

7. The level of statistical significance was reported by the study authors, or where necessary, calculated by the WWC to correct for clustering within classrooms or schools and for multiple comparisons. For an explanation, see the [WWC Tutorial on Mismatch](#). For the formulas the WWC used to calculate statistical significance, see [Technical Details of WWC-Conducted Computations](#). For the *Job Corps* study summarized here, no corrections for clustering or multiple comparisons were needed.
8. The outcome measures are not relevant to this review.