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Research on Social Work Practice 2002; 12; 222

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School Attendance Demonstration Project: An Evaluation of a Program to Motivate Public Assistance Teens to Attend and Complete School in an Urban School District

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Objective: This article reports on the evaluation of The School Attendance Demonstration Project (SADP). SADP is an intervention aimed at improving the school attendance rates of 16- to 18-year-olds receiving public assistance. Method: Experimental group students attending school less than 80% of the time received a notice to attend an orientation for services. Students who continued to attend school less than 80%, did not attend the orientation, and could not show good cause for attendance were sanctioned. The study used a control group with random assignment. Results: Data show that in any month, more experimental group students met the attendance rule than did control group students. Logistic regression predicted that females, Hispanics, students from single-parent families, and those attending alternative schools had difficulty meeting attendance requirements. Conclusions: The findings suggest that at-risk teens need alternative strategies from sanctions to encourage school attendance.

The School Attendance Demonstration Project (SADP) was authorized by the California Department of Social Services under a federal waiver and implemented by the San Diego County Department of Social Services (DSS) in collaboration with the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD). The project required that 16- to 18-year-old Aid for Dependent Children (AFDC) recipients attend school on a full-time basis as a condition of public

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Research on Social Work Practice, Vol. 12 No. 2, March 2002 222-237
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assistance (now TANF) eligibility. This “social contract” approach defines public assistance not as a one-way relationship but as an exchange in which the recipient has responsibilities to fulfill as a condition of eligibility. Adult welfare recipients are required to cooperate with employment and training programs as a condition of receiving assistance. This approach is consistent with the policy principle that the receipt of public assistance requires that recipients work on establishing their own independence. It is believed that such requirements will result in higher work levels among public assistance recipients (Mead, 1998). However, questions have been raised about whether this approach improves the financial circumstances of welfare recipients. The equivalent social exchange for teens is that they complete their secondary educational program while receiving benefits. One avenue available to encourage welfare-dependent students to finish high school is to use public assistance payments as an incentive. This mandate provides a financial incentive for parents to place a priority on their teens securing an education. In addition to the financial incentive, SADP attempts to help teens and their families reach independence through a multifaceted service delivery approach. The financial incentive is assumed to give an immediate tangible reward for school attendance. The services are supposed to address issues that prevent school attendance. This article is a report of an evaluation of that program.

The elimination of welfare dependency has been a major concern of public policy. Welfare reform ideology supports the idea that an increased level of education among public assistance recipients will lead to higher levels of employment and lower levels of dependence on public income maintenance programs. The consensus among labor market analysts is that completion of secondary education is the minimum credential needed to ensure that citizens can provide for themselves and their families (Mishel & Bernstein, 1991; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1997).

Some research suggests that welfare receipt is negatively associated with high school graduation (Brooks-Gunn, Guo, & Furstenberg, 1993; Stafford, 1986; Zill, 1991). Poorly educated teens are likely to be caught in a cycle of welfare dependency. The changes that the economy has undergone in the last two decades have virtually eliminated jobs for people not finishing high school (Reich, 1991). The completion of high school is also a necessity to pursue other levels of education.

Considerable data exist that give evidence to the notion that high school graduates have higher rates of labor force participation, lower unemployment rates, and higher yearly incomes than nongraduates. U.S. Department of Labor Statistics (1997) reports that among adults older than 25, the rate of labor force participation was 62.1% versus 41.1% for non-high school

graduates. The reported unemployment rate among the same age group in November 2001 among high school graduates was 3.5%, and 6.6% among non-high school graduates.

Considerable income differences were also found according to whether one finished high school or not. Median annual income of year-round full-time workers 25 years old and older in 2000 who had finished high school was \$29,510. The comparable figure for high school dropouts, age 25 and older, was \$22,185. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Review of Past School Attendance and Welfare Reform Projects

SADP builds on other efforts to encourage school attendance in AFDC teens such as Wisconsin's pioneering Learnfare Program. Learnfare provided a sanction in which students who had more than 2 or 3 unexcused absences in a month were deleted from their parents' AFDC grant (Pawasarat & Quinn, 1990). All AFDC teens ($N = 56,000$) in six Wisconsin counties took part in the evaluation. Counties were chosen to represent an urban, suburban, and rural mix. The entire eligible teen population was subjected to the attendance requirement. The sample was followed for 6 years to ascertain changes in attendance patterns. Cohort survival analysis was conducted to describe the impact of the program on continued enrollment over time. This nonexperimental study did not increase most students' days in school attendance or improve the likelihood of graduation. Learnfare had been plagued by implementation problems that limited its effectiveness and the ability to evaluate the program (Etheridge & Percy, 1993). SADP differed from Learnfare by providing services to students with attendance problems.

LEAP, a school attendance program, targeted all eligible AFDC teen mothers ($N = 4,151$) in 12 Ohio counties. The counties selected to participate were those judged to have the highest proportion of AFDC recipients in the state. This evaluation used a control group and random assignment. The evaluator, the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, suggested that the program increased the number of days of school attended by teenage parents but did not affect graduation or dropout rates. The LEAP program differed from Learnfare by providing both supportive services aimed at keeping the teen in school and a monthly bonus of \$62 to students who maintained good attendance (Bols & Fellerath, 1997). SADP did not provide a financial incentive to increase attendance but reduced a family's public assistance grant if their child did not attend school.

The other major test of a mandatory education program for welfare recipients was the Teenage Parent Demonstration (TPD), which operated from

1987 to 1991 at three sites in New Jersey and Illinois. TPD used randomization in assigning the target population of 6,000 teenage mothers to equal-sized control and experimental groups. This TPD used a financial sanction and case management. The teen's case manager developed a self-sufficiency plan, provided needed services, and monitored progress in required educational and job activities. The evaluators reported an increase in the number of days of school attendance, job training, employment, and lower rates of dependence on public assistance. However, there was little or no measurable change in the economic well being of participants, and no reductions occurred in subsequent pregnancies (Maynard, 1993). SADP differed from LEAP and TPD by aiming its services not at teenage mothers but at the broader populations of teens. The distinctiveness of the SADP evaluation is that it is an experiment that tests the utility of sanctions with a general teenage population and not just teenage mothers.

Whereas two of the three demonstrations reported an increase in school attendance, none of the studies reported an increase in graduations or an increase in family income. Also, these programs focused on teenagers. Effective programs might have targeted younger students before patterns of poor attendance were set. SADP took the same approach of focusing on older students. The lesson of all three programs is that it is feasible to design a program to increase attendance. However, the target group has many needs beyond school attendance that programs struggle to meet.

METHOD

Study Design

The study used a two-group design (experimental and control group) with random assignment. Participants' daily school attendance patterns were followed for up to 19 months. Graduation status was also assessed. The experimental group was subject to a sanction if they did not attend school at least 80% of the time. They were also eligible to receive social services to assist them with school. All students in both study groups were eligible to receive school services, but only the experimental group were eligible to receive social services from the SADP services unit.

Participants

The SADP target population was all 16- to 18-year-old public assistance recipients residing in San Diego. The attendance of eligible students was

tracked from January 1996 until March 1998. Teens were eligible for inclusion in the study when they (a) received public assistance and (b) were attending the SDUSD school. The following types of welfare teen recipients were excluded from the study: (a) teens who were pregnant or parenting (pregnant teens participated in CALEARN, a similar program developed for their needs), (b) teens in foster care, (c) teens attending private schools, (d) teens who had graduated from high school or received a GED, and (e) teens who were engaged in TANF work activities as an alternative to schooling.

Assignment to study group was based on the last digit in their social security number and completed electronically by the data management unit at the DSS. DSS is the public agency charged with administering the public assistance program in San Diego. At the start of each month, all San Diego County welfare recipients were examined for eligibility and, if eligible, were randomly assigned to a study group. The difference in the number of observations between the experimental group and the control group was a magnitude of two on average for the monthly time periods. Differing size in study groups was requested by DSS who wished to see as many students as possible participate in the program. The difference was controlled for in reporting the model estimates. The control group remains large enough to analyze. There are no differences in variances on critical variables. A total of 4,849 students were in the experimental group, and there were 2,398 students in the control group. Because of sample flux, not all study group students were in the sample in any one month.

The experimental group participants were subject to a sanction consisting of a financial penalty if their attendance fell below the 80% minimum requirement for 2 consecutive months and they did not attend an orientation for services. The control group was not subjected to the penalty or receive services. Participants were tracked by study group status at monthly intervals from February 1996 through March 1998. Attendance data were reported to the evaluators at a lag of 1 month.

SADP Program

Data from SDUSD were matched monthly to track public assistance status and school attendance. Students whose attendance was less than 80% received a notice to attend an orientation meeting. Students may have begun to access SADP services at this point. Attendance at an orientation could also bring a student into compliance by agreeing to participate in the SADP service program. Failure to attend the orientation could result in a

discontinuance from public assistance if the student's attendance was still less than 80%.

If the students' attendance was still less than 80% after 2 months, and they did not attend an orientation, they could receive a financial penalty notice. The financial penalty could occur in the next month. To avoid the penalty, the student had to present 4 weeks' verification of attendance of at least 80%, attend the orientation, or provide verification of good cause for nonattendance. The penalty consisted of the teen being deleted from their parents' public assistance grant. The amount would vary according to family size because public assistance grants were computed on the number of eligible people in a household. SADP's designers believe this approach gives a financial incentive for parents to place a priority on their teen attending school.

Teens were assessed for service needs at the orientation, and if appropriate, they were assigned a case manager. The case manager acted as a service broker, advocate, and attendance monitor. The service approach is family-centered and used individual and group intervention, combined with community resources, to address reasons why teens may not be attending school.

Most teens requested services at the orientation. If the social worker determined that the need indicated by the student warranted it, a psychosocial assessment was completed with the teen. Seventy percent of teens received the assessment. The assessment involves data collection from family members, school personnel, and other individuals who interact with the student. The assessment was supposed to help identify service needs. Some students had more limited needs, such as obtaining a bus pass, and did not receive the extensive assessment. The assessment is supposed to help identify service needs and result in the development of a service plan. The service plan outlines the expectations of the student, social worker, and other relevant individuals. A key part of the plan is a contract with the teen. The contract specifies the school attendance criteria and consequences that could be a sanction.

Most face-to-face contacts with teens occurred at their school or at their home. This form of outreach increased the likelihood of service delivery and reduced the disruption that intervention might cause in a student's normal routine. SADP workers also worked closely with the teen's parent to resolve problems that might be preventing attendance.

At SADP's peak in the fall of 1998, 14 workers provided services for SADP. The SADP service unit included one MSW level supervisor, eight case managers, two income maintenance technicians, one undergraduate BSW intern, one graduate MSW intern, and a unit clerk. Five of the case

managers had master's degrees in the helping professions. Case managers carried a caseload of between 50 and 100 cases. A full description of the service project is contained in the *Report of the Process Study of SADP* (Jones & Finnegan, 1999).

Participants exited or discontinued SADP for a variety of reasons: (a) graduation from secondary school or its equivalent, (b) pregnancy, (c) transfer to a private school, (d) receipt of foster care, (e) dropping out of school, or (f) transferring to a school district that had not implemented SADP.

Data Collection

The SADP impact study data were provided by DSS staff to the evaluation team at monthly intervals. The evaluation team conducted a secondary analysis of the study data. These data came from the SDUSD (attendance data, graduation status, type of school attended) and from DSS (income maintenance data such as benefit amounts, sanctions, and basic demographics). Because of programming difficulties, DSS was not able to provide demographic information for every month, but the income maintenance data were complete. The evaluators also did data matches to determine if the teen or a family member had an active case with the Children's Services Bureau (CSB) and San Diego Juvenile Probation. The CSB is the public agency charged with delivering child protective services in San Diego. A match indicated that either the teen or a sibling had an active child protective service case. It is believed that CSB status captures presenting problems within the family that could inhibit school attendance and learning. The evaluators hypothesized that probation involvement would indicate the presence of behavioral problems that could interfere with school attendance. Data from these various sources were merged to create the data file for analysis. The data collection procedures were approved by the San Diego State University's Internal Review Board.

Hypotheses

The impact of SADP is measured by comparing the entire research sample on the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Students in the experimental group will attend school according to the SADP attendance rule in greater numbers than students in the control group.

Hypothesis 2: Students in the experimental group will graduate from secondary school at a higher rate than students in the control group.

TABLE 1: Student Demographic Characteristics: Mean and Percentages Reported for February 1998

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Experimental (N = 1807)</i>	<i>Control (N = 973)</i>
Mean age	17.09 (<i>sd</i> = .69)	17.1 (<i>sd</i> = .068)
16 years (%)	46.3	47.1
17 years (%)	42.3	41.1
18 years (%)	11.3	11.8
Female (%)	50.1	49.2
Student ethnicity (%)		
White	10.3	10.9
African American	29.1	31.3
Hispanic	23.1	22.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	37.5	35.5
American Indian	.1	.0

RESULTS

Demographics

Table 1 provides a demographic description of the sample in March 1998, the last month in which attendance data were collected. The demographics reported are consistent with other months. Significant differences were not observed on demographic variables at baseline, which validates the randomization procedure. The gender of students was evenly split between male and female for the study groups. The average age of students in the San Diego Unified School District is 17.09 for the experimental group and 17.1 for the control group. Thus, demographics are stable between groups.

The largest ethnic group in the sample was Asian and Pacific Islander students. Native Americans and Whites made up the smallest groups by ethnicity in the sample.

Attendance

Hypothesis 1 states that students in the experimental group will attend school according to the SADP attendance rule in greater numbers than students in the control group. School attendance was measured as a dichotomous dependent variable. Students were classified into two groups based on whether or not they met the 80% attendance requirement. Figure 1 reports the percentage of teens by study group who are attending school according to SADP rules.

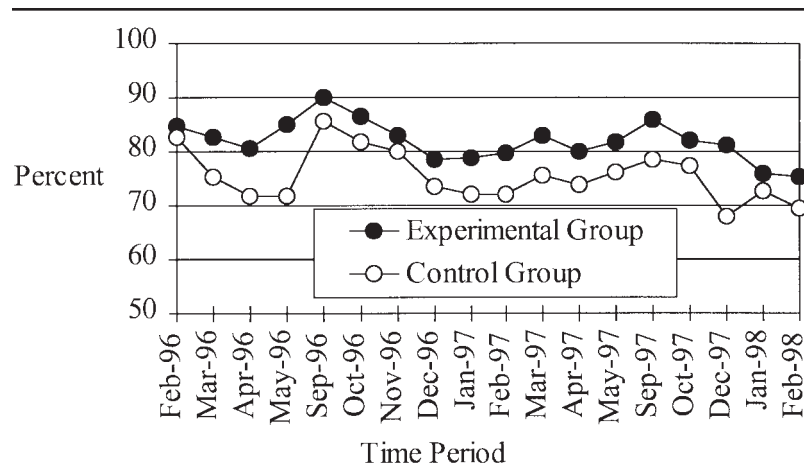


Figure 1: Percentage of students according to SADP attendance rules by study group.

Logistic regression was a test of Hypothesis 1. Only selected months are reported because of space considerations (see Figure 1 and Table 2). The criterion for accepting (or rejecting) hypotheses is a significance level of .05 or less. No estimate of the autocorrelated error in the dependent variable was required. The algorithm excludes missing data. The results reveal that the treatment group meets the 80% attendance rule, whereas the control group does not. The complete list of logits (B) are not shown for brevity but were all positive and often significant under the Wald statistic in all months after baseline ($p \leq .05$). Valid probabilities that the treatment group meets the 80% attendance rule range between 0 and 1 inclusive. The highest probability of meeting the 80% attendance rule is 1 and the lowest probability of meeting the 80% attendance rule is 0. The estimated impact is the difference between the probability that the experimental group meets the 80% rule minus the probability that the control group meets the 80% rule. The mean ($\sim .67$) probabilities are near .8 because the logistic model estimates became biased by the 2:1 ratio of study group assignments.

The impact is lowest in February 1996, the baseline month before treatment, and highest in May 1996. In February 1996, the probability of the experimental group meeting the 80% rule was 2% higher than the control group (difference not significant). A year later (in February 1997), the probability of the experimental group meeting the 80% rule was 8% higher than the control group. This is a 6% increase over February 1996.

TABLE 2: Logistic Regression of Study Group on Attendance

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
February 1996 (<i>N</i> = 2,192)							
Group	.140	.122	1.31	1	.253	.000	1.50
Constant	1.57	.010	253.312	1	.0001		
February 1997 (<i>N</i> = 2,477)							
Group	.416	.098	17.964	1	.0001	.0774	1.516
Constant	.953	.076	155.853	1	.0001		
February 1998 (<i>N</i> = 2,486)							
Group	.300	.094	10.079	1	.002	.0530	1.350
Constant	.821	.075	118.734	1	.000		

NOTE: Cox & Snell R^2 = .004; Nagelkerke R^2 = .006; Percentage predicted = 73.4.

The random assignment of students to the experimental group and the control group is a significant predictor that students meet the 80% minimum attendance requirement in all bivariate models, except for the baseline as expected. The percentage of cases for February 1998 correctly predicted by the model is 73.4. Pseudo R^2 statistics (Cox & Snell = .004, Nagelkerke = .006) show the amount of variance explained in these models.

The dynamic nature of the sample is evident in the fluctuating sample size. The flux in the sample means some students may have relatively brief exposures to SADP, or others exit but later reenter the sample. Data were collected across time at monthly periods, except for summer months when the students were not attending school. School attendance is inherently a dynamic process in which students transition through schools at higher and lower rates through the academic calendar. The same is true for public assistance beneficiaries. The patterns of school attendance do not fluctuate widely for welfare beneficiaries. To verify, frequencies for "student meets the attendance requirement" by study group were examined over time and were found to be consistent. The frequencies for February 1998 report that the experimental group ($n = 1,655$) had a mean of .75 and a standard deviation of .43, whereas the control group ($n = 831$) had a mean of .69 and a standard deviation of .46. Variances are similar, despite the observed differences in the number of observations.

SADP Services

Cases on average remained open for approximately 6 1/2 months (mean of 197 days, $SD = 147.38$). Teens received services for a longer period of time than initially intended by program design. Service providers thought that a

shorter period of time would be needed to stabilize a teen's situation. However, workers found the teen's service needs to be somewhat greater than first expected. SADP staff had a mean of 13.11 ($SD = 12.52$) contacts per student.

Students were discontinued from assistance if they failed to attend an orientation or did not show good cause for school absence. Teens with attendance problems were more likely not to attend an orientation than to attend. Five hundred ninety-six teens attended an orientation. One thousand thirty-one teens ignored the orientation notice, did not improve their attendance, and were discontinued from public assistance. Another 61 teens were discontinued after attending the orientation for failure to improve school attendance. This finding does not mean that all other orientation attenders improved their attendance. SADP case managers could decide that their nonattendance was for good cause and waive the penalty. Workers did this quite often. For example, one worker said she had a suicidal client who needed mental health services before it was reasonable to expect the client to attend school. Another worker said she had a teen client who avoided school due to safety considerations growing out of a fear of gangs. In each case, workers asserted that attending school may have placed them at risk. A limitation of the research design was that no such waivers were given to controls.

Four hundred twelve of the teens (69% of total) requested academic assistance at the orientation. The most common request for academic service was to see a school counselor (45%), followed by a request for math assistance (41%). The most frequent social service request was for transportation (52%), followed by requests for financial assistance (19%), employment help (11%), and medical services (4%). Transportation services involved such activities as providing a bus pass to help a student attend school. Financial assistance entailed helping a family with an income maintenance problem. School placement facilitation provided to 29% of the teens may be an indication that many students had inappropriate educational placement prior to SADP intervention.

SADP workers saw the initial request for services as a way to initiate a relationship with the child and family and perhaps help with other difficulties that the family was having. The SADP social workers acted as advocates for teens and families as necessary. SADP workers reported that the parents of the teens were largely minorities, with significant numbers of them being immigrants. Many of these parents did not know how to deal with the school system. Workers felt their job was to empower the parents by helping them learn how to negotiate the school bureaucracy. After the SADP worker terminated services, the parent could use these new skills on behalf of their children.

The "experiment" consisted of the notification of the minimum attendance requirement and possibility of financial penalty for failure to comply

given only to students assigned to the experimental group. This notification was withheld from students assigned to the control group. To measure whether or not students received the program services, a proxy variable on "orientation" was constructed. Experimental group students were required to attend orientation when they failed to comply with the attendance requirement. An analysis of the database indicates that 12.3% of experimental group students attended orientation once and .3% of experimental group students attended orientation twice. The orientation signifies only that services were requested, but not how many or of what type.

Graduation

Hypothesis 2 states that teens in the experimental group will graduate from secondary school at a higher rate than teens in the control group.

Data are only available for teens who graduated in June 1998. These teens could have participated in SADP for up to 18 months so they do provide a test of SADP abilities to increase graduation rates. The attendance data provided information on how many teens received a graduation certificate. A graduation certificate is provided to teens in their senior year of high school who are eligible for graduation. Some students may skip this option and choose to seek a GED or equivalency. The data do not permit the identification of these teens. The significance was tested with logistic regression. Of the experimental group, 57.5% and 55.4% of the control group had graduation certificates. The difference is not statistically significant.

Multivariate Analysis of Attendance

To determine what might explain meeting the attendance rule, a multivariate model was estimated using logistic regression to predict graduation by (a) study group, (b) gender, (c) Hispanic ethnicity, (d) age, (e) number of parents, (f) household size, (g) Children's Services Bureau status, (h) Juvenile Probation status, (i) alternative educational program, and (j) attended orientation.

CSB involvement is coded as equal to 1, and noninvolvement is coded as equal to 0. Study group status is also included in each model. The experimental group is coded as 1, and control group participants are coded as 0. A match was also conducted with the Probation Department to identify those teens with active probation cases. Two parents in the home (called "Parent" in the model) are coded as 1, and one parent in the home is coded as 0. Household size is the total number of individuals living in the teen's household. Alternative educational programs for students in the SDUSD might affect meeting

TABLE 3: Logistic Regression of Social Variables on Meeting the Attendance Rule: San Diego Unified School District, February 1998

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Group	.357	.119	9.053	1	.003	1.429
Gender	-.070	.113	.384	1	.535	.932
Ethnicity (Hispanic)	-.296	.126	5.549	1	.018	.744
Age	.179	.086	4.305	1	.038	1.196
Parents	.792	.162	23.939	1	.000	2.207
Household size	-.023	.032	.505	1	.477	.978
Children's Services Bureau	-.817	.362	5.079	1	.024	.442
Juvenile probation	.095	.426	.050	1	.823	1.100
Alternative education	-2.292	.164	196.160	1	.000	.101
Attended orientation	-.857	.236	13.228	1	.000	.424
Constant	-1.899	1.483	1.640	1	.200	.150

NOTE: $N = 1,945$; Cox & Snell $R^2 = .164$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = .236$; Percentage predicted = 78.3.

the 80% attendance rule. The type of school is defined as either comprehensive (coded as 0) or alternative (coded as 1). Alternative schools serve students who have trouble with attending the mainstream comprehensive schools. To measure whether students received social services from SADP, a proxy variable, "attended orientation," was coded (1 = Yes, 0 = No).

The results are shown for February 1998 (see Table 3). Other months are not shown because of space concerns. Experimental group students were required to attend orientation when they failed to comply with attendance requirements. The signs on gender are always negative, but the logits are not always significant. Nevertheless, females are less likely to meet the 80% rule than males. The signs on ethnicity are always negative and usually significant. Thus, Hispanics were less likely to meet the 80% rule than other race/ethnic subgroups. The signs on age were usually negative but were not always significant. Younger students may be less likely to meet the 80% rule than may older students. The number of parents in the household sign is always positive and significant. The signs of the coefficients for CSB, Juvenile Probation, Alternative Education, and Attended Orientation are always negative and usually significant. This is not surprising to the extent that presenting problems are associated with students' ability to attend school. The results on "attended orientation" suggests services were not sufficient to reverse attendance difficulties.

Students usually enter into alternative schools after presenting problems at a comprehensive school. What is interesting from a programmatic viewpoint is the much larger magnitude school type has on meeting the 80% attendance rule than does a study group assignment. School type is more influ-

ential on attendance than study group. Age predicts graduation, but this could be an artifact of "grade appropriateness." Number of parents and household size have reverse signs. This means that the students with two parents were more likely to graduate than students with one parent, whereas students from larger sized households were less likely to graduate than students from smaller sized households. This finding confirmed our intuition on resources.

DISCUSSION AND APPLICATIONS TO SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

This research was conducted at a single site. Generalizing the findings to other sites should be done with caution. Moreover, the two experimental conditions were tested together, which may mean they confound one another. Getting a clear picture of the exact contributions of either the penalty or services to school attendance was difficult. The hypothesis on increasing school attendance was supported by study data. Data show that in any month after baseline, 3% to 9% more experimental group students met the attendance rule than did students in the control group. The hypothesis on increasing graduations was not supported by study data. The findings in these tables seem to indicate that at-risk teens from single-parent families have ongoing problems with securing an education that are difficult to correct with SADP services and sanctions. SADP seems to appear to work well with teens from two-parent families who have relatively few risk factors.

School type is more influential than study group in predicting outcome. Alternative school students had poorer attendance than comprehensive school students. To the extent that school type (education program) represents unmet social problems that may need prevention and intervention, the program needs strengthening to address them.

The major benefit of SADP should be found in increased graduations, because that would suggest improved employability and/or enhanced likelihood of moving up to the next level of education. Therefore, the evaluators cannot say that SADP accomplished one of its goals of moving teens toward self-sufficiency or reduced family poverty. As suggested by some critics of Learnfare, the assumption that parents of teens receiving public assistance are aware of their teen's school problems and have control over those problems may be unwarranted (Etheridge & Percy, 1993). Students from single-parent families appeared to be less likely to meet the attendance rule and graduate than students from two-parent families. Students having two caretakers in the household were more likely to meet the 80% rule than students with one caretaker.

Having two parents should mean more support for students, whether financial or emotional. Coming from a larger sized household should mean less support for students. Students in single-parent families and in larger sized households probably work inside or outside of the home, which can negatively affect school attendance and graduation rates. Household size is unrelated to students meeting the school attendance requirement. This finding probably captures the difficulties that single parents have in supervising their teens. The LEAP program tried to motivate the teen directly by providing a bonus payment directly to the teen. Theoretically, the student would have an incentive to change their behavior. However, the incentive was relatively small (\$62 a month). The LEAP program was no more successful than SADP in increasing graduations. Students receiving public assistance are likely to reside in single-parent households that are mired in poverty and may be suffering from a variety of psychosocial difficulties. These problems may make it more difficult for teens to attend school and for parents to monitor their activities. A work requirement may reduce the parents' ability to monitor their children, which could increase attendance problems.

The findings on attendance and graduations were all similar to LEAP. It may also be unfair to have held SADP or LEAP accountable for graduations. Both programs were able to increase attendance, but the school district is responsible for the quality of education that would increase graduations. There are systemic issues that need to be addressed. The educational system is designed for those who work and value education as a means to self-sufficiency or upward mobility. The LEAP evaluators suggest the lack of success in graduations they found may be related to the teen perceptions of their own future economic prospects. Student participants were not optimistic about their future economic prospects, which they did not see as improved with a diploma (Bols & Fellerath, 1997). Also, these families in many instances do not have a history of work or educational engagement. This history may make them less likely than middle class families to encourage schooling. Changing those perceptions may be a precondition to changing attendance behavior.

Only a small proportion of students responded to the orientation for services. The challenge of future interventions is to reach teens who have attendance problems and who also do not respond to an offer of assistance. One improvement that could be made to a school attendance program would be to provide intervention at earlier ages than adolescence. Student attendance patterns had been set long before the demonstration and were difficult to change. Problems with schools might be reduced with earlier intervention.

Additional incentives that are more substantial than LEAP's for school completion might be considered. Making a much more visible link from graduation to work might help. Public and private partnerships that guaranteed jobs or future educational prospects for graduates would be that visible link. These partnerships would include closer cooperation between higher education and secondary education to increase the notion that the diploma provides a payoff. SADP appeared to improve attendance with teens with relatively few risks. Students from single-parent families, Hispanic students, females, students in alternative schools, teens from families receiving child protective services, and probationers all had difficulty meeting the attendance requirement. Education and public assistance policy makers need to look more closely at these populations and their educational needs—at their earliest possible point.

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