Working after Welfare

Seefeldt, Kristin S.

Published by W.E. Upjohn Institute

Seefeldt, Kristin S.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/17386.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/17386

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=573231
# Contents

Acknowledgments xi

1 Moving from Welfare to Work 1
   A Brief Overview of the Welfare System 4
   The Role of Education in the Welfare System 7
   Employment Assistance under Welfare Reform 9
   After Work First: Career Advancement 12

2 Six Years Later, How Are Former Welfare Recipients Faring in the Labor Market? 15
   Overview of the Women’s Employment Study 15
   Welfare Use and Unemployment Rates 17
   Employment Challenges 19
   Employment and Earnings 24

3 Up the Ladder, Down the Ladder, or Stuck on the Same Rung? 33
   Wage Growth during the Study 34
   Employment Transitions 38
   Personal Characteristics and the Relationship to Employment Transitions 42
   Employment Transitions from Poverty-Wage Jobs 48
   Employment Transitions from Above-Poverty-Wage Jobs 53
   Summary of Findings 59

4 Peeking inside the “Black Box” of Employment Transitions 65
   The WES Qualitative Supplement 66
   What Can We Learn from Women’s Employment Experiences? 70

5 What Working Mothers Want 81
   What Makes a Job Good? 81
   “My Boss, She Has These Mood Swings” 85
   Why Work in a Low-Wage Job? The Meaning of Helping 90
   Working, with Children 95
   Do Women Have “Good” Jobs? 98
6 Challenges to Advancement among Former Welfare Recipients
   Opportunities for Advancement 101
   Further Education and Training 102
   Choices about Advancement and the Role of Motherhood 106
   Aspirations for Advancement and Hopes for Hanging on 113
7 Policies to Bring Work and Family Back into Balance 118
   Current Employment Advancement Policies 123
   Toward a New Vision: Changing the Way We Support Workers 124
Appendix A: Chapter 3 Regression Results 129
Appendix B: Qualitative Data Methods 135
References 149
The Author 155
Index 163
About the Institute 165
Figures

1.1 Welfare Cases and Female-Headed Households in Poverty, 1959–2003 6

2.1 Percent of WES Sample Working, Receiving Welfare (FIP) and Food Assistance, by Month, February 1997–August 2004 18

2.2 Median Hourly Wage among WES Workers 25

2.3 Number of Months Worked among WES Workers 28

2.4 Proportion of WES Respondents with Household Income below the Poverty Line, 1997–2003 29

3.1 Predicted Probabilities of Ending in an Above-Poverty-Wage Job among WES Respondents Starting in a Poverty-Wage Job, Significant Factors 49

3.2 Predicted Probabilities of Ending in a Poverty-Wage Job among WES Respondents Starting in a Poverty-Wage Job, Significant Factors 50

3.3 Predicted Probabilities of Becoming Unemployed among WES Respondents Starting in a Poverty-Wage Job, Significant Factors 53

3.4 Predicted Probabilities of Ending in a Poverty-Wage Job among WES Respondents Starting in an Above-Poverty-Wage Job, Significant Factors 54

3.5 Predicted Probabilities of Remaining in an Above-Poverty-Wage Job among WES Respondents Starting in an Above-Poverty-Wage Job, Significant Factors 56

3.6 Predicted Probabilities of Becoming Unemployed among WES Respondents Starting in an Above-Poverty-Wage Job, Significant Factors 57

4.1 Number of Months Worked per Year, WES Sample and Qualitative Sample 68

4.2 Median Hourly Wage Rates, WES Sample and Qualitative Sample 69
Tables

2.1 WES Sample Characteristics 16
2.2 Human Capital Deficits for the WES Sample as Measured in 1997 20
2.3 Employment Challenges for the WES Sample as Measured in 1997 23
2.4 Proportion of Working WES Respondents in Jobs with Various Characteristics 27

3.1 Characteristics of Initial and Ending Job for Those with Valid Starting and Ending Wages 36
3.2 Wage Growth Patterns, 1997/1998, for Those with Valid Starting and Ending Wages 37
3.3 Employment Transitions, 1997/1998 to 2003, for Workers with Valid Starting Wages 42
3.4 Variables Used in Multivariate Analyses 46

4.1 Employment Barriers, Qualitative and Rest-of-WES Sample, as Measured in 1997 67
4.2 Employment Transitions, 1997/1998 to 2003, for Qualitative Sample Members 71

5.1 Experiences of Prior Discrimination among WES Respondents, as Measured in 1997–2003 88
5.2 Violations of Work Norms among WES Respondents on Current or Most Recent Job as Measured in 1999 95

6.1 Participation in Education and Training, 1997–2003 107

A.1 Descriptive Statistics, WES Workers Starting in a Poverty-Wage Job Means and Standard Deviations 136
A.2 Descriptive Statistics, Workers Starting in an Above-Poverty-Wage Job 139
A.3 Multinomial Regression Results for WES Workers, for Those Starting in Poverty-Wage Jobs, Relative to Those Ending Unemployed 145
A.4 Multinomial Regression Results for Those Starting in Above-Poverty-Wage Jobs, Relative to Those Ending Unemployed 147

B.1 Demographic, Human Capital, and Employment Barriers, Qualitative and Rest of WES Sample 153