



New Moms' Job Training Intervention

Summary

New Moms is a nonprofit organization offering job training, housing, and family support interventions to pregnant and parenting young women. For all three interventions, the organization uses a family-centered executive skills coaching approach, developed from research on executive functioning. This case study focuses on the job training intervention. In the job training intervention, pregnant and parenting women ages 16 to 24 with low income strengthen personal and professional skills, prepare for competitive employment, and participate in a combination of paid employment experience in New Moms' social enterprise candle company and paid classroom-based trainings.

Funding source



New Moms' funding sources for the job training intervention include government contracts as well as grants and support from foundations and corporations. Key government sources include funding from the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and a Community Development Block Grant from the City of Chicago. New Moms received a five-year portfolio grant from The Roberts Enterprise Development Fund in 2016, which continues to support New Moms' social enterprise candle company, Bright Endeavors. Revenue from Bright Endeavors covers the direct costs of business operation and materials, plus some indirect costs.

Intervention description



New Moms is a nonprofit organization that offers a job training intervention, as well as wraparound supports, for young pregnant and parenting women with low income and their children. The intervention provides work readiness training; employment experience at its social enterprise candle company, Bright Endeavors; and support to participants in working toward their self-determined personal and professional goals. New Moms also offers housing and family support interventions that provide

Services provided



Case management; Financial education; Financial incentives; Soft skills training; Supportive services; Training (*Occupational or sectoral training*); Work and work-based learning (*Work experience*); Work readiness activities (*Employment coaching; Job search assistance; Job development/job placement*)

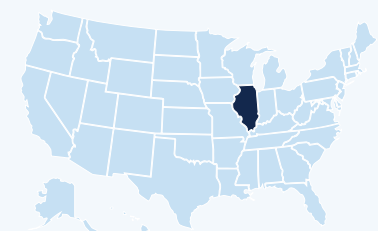
Populations served



New Moms' job training intervention focuses on serving pregnant and parenting women ages 16 to 24 with income below 200 percent of the federal poverty line and who are disconnected from school and jobs. Most participants are from the west side of Chicago, although some job training participants travel from the south side of Chicago and suburbs. Participants learn about the intervention primarily through organizational outreach on social media and word-of-mouth.

Setting

Implemented in multiple settings (urban and rural) Chicago, IL, and its close western suburbs



Year first implemented

1996 (ongoing at the time of data collection)

What are case studies?

Case studies provide practitioners with information about innovative interventions that states, counties, community-based organizations, or other entities are undertaking to improve employment outcomes for TANF participants and other individuals with low incomes, especially public assistance recipients. **Case studies cover interventions not included elsewhere in the Clearinghouse because they have not yet been rigorously evaluated.**

supportive transitional and permanent housing, doula services to support women through pregnancy and childbirth, and home visiting services to support child development for children up to 5 years old. Participants can engage in one or more of New Moms’ interventions, in any combination and any order.

New Moms uses an executive skills coaching approach, adapted from an approach created by Dawson and Guare (2009) and grounded in the science of executive functioning, as a core organizational strategy for the services it provides. Executive skills—like those involved in time management and working memory—are related to how people plan, how they react to things, and how they achieve objectives. The New Moms executive skills coaching approach is family-centered and supports participants as they make progress towards their personal and family goals by raising their awareness of their executive skill strengths and struggles. The components of executive skills coaching emphasize a strengths-based perspective, identifying and tracking progress toward short- and long-term goals, using incentives to celebrate goal achievement, building participants’ knowledge about executive skills, and implementing environmental modifications to support goal achievement. New Moms began supporting its participants in the job training intervention using the executive skills coaching approach in 2016.

New Moms trains all staff on evidence-based practices such as trauma-informed care and a strengths-based mindset along with its executive skills coaching approach. The job training intervention is led by a director and staffed by three coaches and two other coaching and training staff located at Bright Endeavors. The operations staff act as supervisors and provide technical instruction for intervention participants on candle production at Bright Endeavors. Two coaches lead classroom activities and work with participants to navigate personal barriers, develop goals, and manage crises. One coach facilitates job readiness training in the classroom, builds relationships with employers as part of job development, and tracks the employment status of intervention graduates. The coaching and training staff act as supervisors and provide technical instruction on candle production. When hiring staff, New Moms prioritizes relevant work experience, a commitment to a strengths-based coaching mindset, and racial equity; there are no strict education or training requirements for coaches.

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Participants in the job training intervention progress through a sequenced 16-week intervention in cohorts of 8 or 9 participants that begin every 5 weeks. Starting in the second week, participants are paid \$14 an hour, the minimum wage in Chicago in 2020, for both their classroom and Bright Endeavors time. Components of the intervention include the following:

Cohort orientation. During the first week of the intervention, participants familiarize themselves with the environments and activities in the classroom and at Bright Endeavors. Participants build general knowledge about executive skills through team-building activities that define skills and encourage participants’ reflection on their own skills.

Classroom training. Aimed at building work readiness skills, classroom instruction begins in week 2 of the intervention and occurs every Monday and Friday throughout the intervention. Coaches meet with participants in groups to set “SMART” goals—that is, goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely—throughout the intervention. In week 2, participants complete a self-report on their executive skills to identify their related “strengths and struggles.” In weeks 2 through 8, training focuses on parenting skills on Mondays and financial literacy on Fridays. In weeks 9 through 16, classroom training on both instructional days focuses on job search assistance, such as conducting mock interviews and filling out job applications.

Employment experience. Participants work in teams to produce candles at Bright Endeavors on Tuesday through Thursday in weeks 2 through 16. Participants create posters for the walls of Bright Endeavors that display their executive skills, which help build collective knowledge about these skills. A pre-shift meeting occurs every morning during which participants share what executive skills they

will focus on during the day and set individual short-term goals. In post-shift meetings, participants discuss whether they met their goals. During the shift, participants pour candle wax, conduct quality checks, label candles, produce candles for external businesses, and prepare and package candles for shipment to customers. Many of these light manufacturing skills are transferable to entry-level jobs in other industries such as customer service, hospitality, and retail. Participants receive a performance review in week 5 and may be promoted to a team lead position as an incentive for high quality work. Team leads supervise the work of their peers, wear a different colored uniform, and have opportunities for paid sales work outside of regular classroom or Bright Endeavors hours. Participants also receive performance reviews in week 11.

Financial incentives. New Moms provides participants with incentives for achieving targeted outcomes. When they get a job outside of Bright Endeavors, participants receive a gift card to celebrate their progress, as well as gas cards or bus passes to alleviate transportation challenges before they receive their first paycheck from that job. New Moms also gives gift cards to intervention graduates if they provide information about their job retention once they have left the intervention.

Other services. As needed, New Moms connects participants with wraparound services through formal agreements with a domestic violence advocacy agency, mental health provider, and child care centers that hold spots for participants. Other wraparound services include transportation assistance such as gas cards and a New Moms emergency pantry that is stocked with diapers and other basic supplies.

Post-intervention services. If participants have not obtained employment, coaches contact intervention graduates at least once a month to provide coaching support on navigating barriers, developing goals, and managing crises. Staff reported that participants often get a job between weeks 12 and 14 and graduate from the intervention early. The job training intervention hosts alumnae events to foster a sense of community.

Intervention costs. According to program staff, the intervention costs about \$11,300 (in 2020 dollars) per participant to operate (Putnam and Rodler 2021).

Research on intervention to date



This intervention has not been rigorously evaluated for effectiveness. No evaluations of the impacts of New Moms' job training intervention have taken place. New Moms tracks data on key performance indicators that show that New Moms served 125 mothers in the job training intervention in fiscal year 2019 (Putnam and Rodler 2021).

A 2018 white paper described the pilot implementation of the executive skills coaching approach as it was being implemented in the job training intervention in 2016–2017. The paper reported that participants and coaches responded enthusiastically to the coaching approach (Dechausay 2018).

The job training intervention was also selected as one of nine innovative interventions supporting the employment of people with low income. These interventions are described in a series of in-depth, descriptive case studies as part of the [State Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Case Studies](#) project, funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. The case study for that project documented information on the interventions New Moms offers, including populations served; funding; measurements of participant progress; as well as promising practices, challenges, and lessons learned. This information was obtained through a site visit, including interviews with participants, staff, and leadership and observations of program activities; document reviews; and a follow-up telephone call about how the program responded to the COVID-19 public health emergency (Putnam and Rodler 2021).

Case study information sources

The primary sources of information for this case study were the State Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Case Studies report described earlier, which collected information via a site visit in January 2020 and a telephone call in July 2020, as well as documents that informed that report. The Pathways Clearinghouse shared a near-finalized draft of the case study with New Moms and incorporated revisions for accuracy and completeness. For more information about the methods for selecting and developing the case studies, please see the Protocol for Pathways Clearinghouse Case Studies on the [Pathways Clearinghouse project page](#).

More information



More information on this intervention is available from the following resources:

New Moms website: <https://newmoms.org>.

Dawson, Peg, and Richard Guare (2009). *Smart but scattered: The revolutionary 'executive skills' approach to helping kids reach their potential*, New York: The Guilford Press.

Dechausay, Nadine (2018). *The future of executive-skills coaching and behavioral science in programs that serve teens and young adults*, New York: MDRC. Available at https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/Casey_White_Paper_Final.pdf.

Global Learning Partners and New Moms (2019). *New Moms: Implementing an executive skills approach*, Montpelier, VT: Global Learning Partners and Chicago, IL: New Moms. Available at <https://newmoms.org/wp-content/uploads/new-moms-es-case-study.pdf>.

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Kaplan, Callie (2018). *The social return on investment for New Moms*, IL: Social IMPACT Research Center. Available at https://newmoms.org/wp-content/uploads/final_new_moms_sroi_report.pdf.

Putnam, M., and L. Rodler (2021). *Case study of a program offering job training, housing, and family support for young mothers*, Washington, DC: Mathematica. Available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/case-study-job-training-housing-and-family-support-program-young-mothers-new-moms>.

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