

CRIMINAL HISTORY AS AN EMPLOYMENT BARRIER FOR TANF RECIPIENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years there have been increasing efforts to understand and to mitigate the long-lingering, negative effects that possession of a criminal record often has on an individual's employment, earnings, and ability to pay court-ordered child support (Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2003; Ovwigho, Saunders, & Born, 2005; Pager, 2004). Understandably, the lion's share of attention in this area has focused on men. Less well understood, by far, is the role criminal history plays in the lives of women, especially those who receive cash welfare. In fact, while the research literature documenting the prevalence of a multitude of employment barriers among Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) recipients is vast, there is very little discussion and empirical evidence about perhaps one of the most consequential: a criminal background.

Our lack of knowledge about the extent of criminal records among adult TANF recipients has practical, programmatic, real-time implications for our state's welfare-to-work efforts and outcomes. The importance of these implications is exacerbated, of course, by the current economic climate, consistent incremental upticks in the TANF caseload and the more stringent and prescriptive federal welfare-to-work rules and performance requirements now in effect. Thus, the purpose of today's study is to begin to fill the information gap for Maryland on the heretofore unexamined, but consequential topic of criminal history among women heading TANF cases in our state.

Specifically, the study explores the extent to which Maryland welfare recipients have a criminal history and how that may relate to their employment prospects. Unlike other research in this area, this report does not focus narrowly on those recipients who have been previously incarcerated, which ignores the variation and the often dynamic nature of criminal justice system involvement. Rather, we employ a broader definition of criminal history relying on self-report data regarding criminal history. We then use a unique combination of survey and administrative data to examine the extent to which other employment barriers co-occur with criminal history and whether the long-term employment and welfare outcomes of those with a criminal history differ from those of welfare recipients who do not have such a record.

Key findings include the following:

- ❖ **Overall, we find that for a sizeable minority of female welfare recipients (13.1%), a criminal background was reported, a relatively high prevalence rate compared to other localities.**

Though there is evidence of a growing overlap between the female correctional caseload and state welfare caseloads, accurate prevalence rates are difficult to obtain and often vary widely across caseloads (Butcher & LaLonde, 2006). In each of the six state caseload studies funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), for instance, prevalence rates of a criminal record among current TANF recipients varied from as low as 7% in DC to as high as 17% in Colorado. Maryland, with 13.1% of female caseheads indicating prior criminal involvement, has a relatively high prevalence rate compared to the other localities included in the federal study.

- ❖ **In terms of demographic characteristics, reporters and non-reporters were quite similar in terms of racial/ethnic background and marital status, yet differed regarding age and educational attainment. The majorities of both groups were African American and had never been married. However, women who self-report a criminal history tend to be older and have significantly lower levels of education compared to non-reporters.**

The typical female Maryland TCA casehead in our sample was African American (86.4%), approximately 30 years of age, and had never been married (71.4%). Women who self-report having a criminal record tend to be older, with a median age of 30.9 years compared to 27.9 years among non-reporters. Clients acknowledging a criminal history also have significantly lower levels of education than their counterparts who do not report such a history. Well over half (54.2%) of reporters fail to complete high school, compared to two-fifths (40.1%) of other recipients. This finding is especially worrisome given the poor labor market outcomes associated with limited educational attainment.

- ❖ **Women who reported having a criminal record appear to be at higher risk of reaching the TANF 60-month time limit, compared to women who report no criminal background.**

At the time of our survey, reporters had used up a bit more than half of their available federally funded cash assistance months (33.5), on average. In contrast, the average for non-reporters was 7.1 fewer countable months (26.4) and the difference was statistically significant. Half of all reporters had used up roughly three years of the available five (median=34 months) compared to a median or midpoint of roughly two years (22 months) among non-reporters. This finding suggests that women with a criminal background face any number of struggles in attempting to rebuild their lives and are at greater risk of hitting the five-year wall. In terms of welfare reliance, at least some previous research has suggested that female offenders typically do have higher rates of welfare utilization than other women but the extent of their usage has not been reported (Butcher & LaLonde, 2006).

- ❖ **Past UI-covered employment reveals that women with a criminal history are as likely to be employed as those without such a history. However, that work appears to be more unstable with more frequent job changes and lower quarterly earnings.**

The vast majority of non-reporters (92.6%) and reporters (95.6%) were employed in a Maryland job covered by the Unemployment Insurance (UI) system at some point prior to the survey date. Despite the similar rates of employment and average quarters worked, we do find significant differences between the two groups in terms of average quarterly earnings and mean number of UI-jobs held in the two years prior to the survey. Though reporters hold significantly more jobs on average, they receive significantly less (\$1,322.55) than non-reporters (\$1,715.75) in average quarterly earnings in the two years prior to the survey. These employment patterns persisted one year before the survey as well as the quarter of the survey.

- ❖ **Our analysis of employment barriers reveals that women with a criminal record do appear particularly disadvantaged in many ways. They are significantly more likely to face certain challenges including: low levels of education, limited work experience, having disabled child/family member, chemical dependence diagnosis, domestic violence, learning disabilities, housing instability and problematic neighborhoods.**

The research literature and front-line experience have consistently documented challenges welfare recipients face in areas ranging from their physical and mental health issues and domestic violence to human capital deficits such as limited work experience and low educational attainment as well as situational or logistical challenges such as housing and transportation. In this report, we examined thirteen potential barriers (three human capital barriers, six personal and family issues, and four variables measuring common situational/logistical challenges) and how TANF women with and without a criminal record differ on these measures.

Regarding human capital barriers, reporters are significantly less likely to have a high school diploma or a GED compared to other clients (40.1% vs. 54.2%). Women with a criminal record also have relatively little work experience, with over one-quarter (26.4%) saying they have worked less than half the time since turning 18 compared to about one-fifth (20.4%) of non-reporters. In addition, more than one in three (35.6%) of women with a criminal record had not regularly performed four or more basic job tasks such as talking to customers face-to-face or on the phone, filling out forms, or working with a computer; among women with no criminal record the comparable percentage was 24.7%.

In terms of personal and family issues facing the women in our study, we find that women with a criminal record were significantly more likely to have a child or family member with health or special need, to have been diagnosed with a substance abuse problem, to have experienced severe domestic violence in the past year, and to have a possible learning disability. Specifically, 44.5% of women who had self-reported a criminal record reported that they were caring for a special needs child or elderly, disabled, or sick family member requiring additional care compared to 32.0% of non-reporters. We also found that fully one of every five (20.2%) of women with a criminal background had been diagnosed with a substance abuse problem prior to the survey, compared to only 5.4% of those with no criminal record.

Female TANF recipients with a criminal record were significantly more likely to experience severe physical abuse within the past year: 20.8% compared to 13.9% for women with no reported criminal record. Finally, using a standardized measure, we found that almost one-fifth (17.2%) of women who report a criminal history have a potential learning disability; the rate among non-reporters is nearly half that (9.2%).

In addition to human capital barriers and personal and family issues, our report also examines situation and logistical challenges among our sampled women. We found that women with a criminal record were significantly more likely to experience three barriers, transportation problems, housing instability and problematic neighborhoods, compared to non-reporters. One-third (34.7%) of women with a criminal record had a transportation problem, compared to one-fourth (24.7%) of their peers without such a

record. Those with a criminal background were almost twice as likely as other women to experience housing instability. Fully one-third (34.9%) of reporters said they had been evicted or moved two or more times within the past year compared to 18.3% of non-reporters. Among all women in our study sample, the incidence of at least one major community or neighborhood problem was very high, but was significantly higher among women with a criminal record (67.9%) than among those with none (54.6%).

- ❖ **In addition to the type of barriers faced by women heading a TCA case, we also examined the number of potential barriers present in the case. Women with a criminal background face significantly more barriers at a given point in time compared to women who did not report a criminal history.**

The *type* of barrier faced by a woman trying to leave welfare for work is certainly important to assess in front-line welfare practice and to take into account when devising training or work plans for the individual. It is equally important to be aware of and give practical consideration to the *number* of potential barriers present in the case for this, too, could affect the woman's ability to work consistently.

Our analyses reveal that female welfare recipients with a criminal history face significantly more barriers than their peers without such a history. Compared to women without a record, women with a criminal background are more likely to have two or more human capital deficits (37.0% vs. 25.2%), two or more logistical/situational challenges (59.6% vs. 40.2%), and to have more potential barriers overall (mean=4.3 vs. 3.3 per case).

For policy makers, program managers, and front-line caseworkers, these results are sobering if perhaps not totally surprising. Overall, they point out that in the caseload in general, there are a not inconsequential number of women who face one or more, not always obvious or asked-about, potential barriers to independence. It seems likely that, in at least some cases, it is these barriers that, despite the worker's and agency's best efforts, may cause welfare-to-work plans or activities to be less than optimally successful. For women with criminal records – and their caseworkers – the data suggest that challenges could be even more daunting; the majority will have other and multiple challenges on the path to independence. As these women in particular attempt to rebuild their lives, the data suggest that a thorough assessment of strengths and needs, as well as effective, tailored case management is needed to help them overcome the challenges and barriers they confront.

- ❖ **Compared to women without a criminal history, women with such a history appear to have a more difficult time making a permanent transition off the welfare rolls. During our study's four-year follow-up period, not only were reporters more likely to receive cash assistance throughout the period, they also received assistance for significantly more months than those without such a record.**

In the first year after the survey, almost all reporters (96.1%) and non-reporters (93.6%) received TCA. In the second follow-up year, we find that reporters are significantly more likely to receive TCA compared to non-reporters. Specifically, two-thirds (66.1%)

of reporters and a little over half (52.7%) of non-reporters received TCA at some point in that year. This pattern continues through the third year, with over half of reporters (53.9%) receiving TCA compared to only 38.3% of non-reporters. Yet, by the fourth follow-up year, we find that the differences between non-reporters and reporters are no longer statistically significant and only one-third (33.0%) of reporters and 29.7% of non-reporters received TCA during that year.

In addition to examining overall welfare participation rates, we also examine the number of months of assistance families received, among those with any participation in that period. In the first follow-up year, those with no criminal record averaged eight (8.01) months of TCA receipt while those with a record averaged roughly nine (8.6) months of receipt. In subsequent years, both groups received TCA for an average of seven months. However, considering the entire follow up period, women with a criminal record received assistance for significantly more months than those without such a record. Over the entire period, reporters received cash assistance for over a year and a half (19.4 months) with half receiving TCA longer (median = 19.0). Non-reporters averaged less than a year and a half, or 16.8 months, of TCA receipt during the follow-period, with a median of 15 months.

To some extent, these differences in welfare utilization are not surprising, given that women with a criminal history report significantly more barriers to employment, have higher prevalence rates of several different types of barriers, have longer welfare histories initially, and have more unstable employment histories. It is impossible with these data to establish a causal link among these variables. However, whatever the causal relationships, these data suggest that welfare recipients with a criminal history are having more difficulty making a permanent transition off the assistance rolls.

- ❖ **Surprisingly, we find no statistically significant differences between those with a criminal record and those without in employment outcomes as measured by employment rates, number of quarters employed, and average quarterly earnings. The majority of reporters and non-reporters had Maryland UI-employment at some point during the four-year follow-up period.**

Regardless of their criminal history, TANF recipients worked in an average of nine of the 16 follow up quarters, or a little more than half the time. Total UI earnings for the four year period averaged around \$25,000 with a mean of \$24,974.03 for women with a criminal record and \$24,651.07 for women without such a record.

In terms of employment outcomes, we find only one statistically significant difference between reporters and non-reporters. On average, welfare recipients who reported having a criminal history had significantly more jobs (mean = 4.3) than their counterparts who did not report such a history (mean = 3.9). Although the difference is fairly small, it is consistent with the patterns observed in terms of recipients' employment history and may reflect continuing challenges to maintaining employment for those with a criminal record.

For policy makers and program managers, these findings suggest that it is important to consider program strategies specifically geared towards the subgroup of welfare recipients with a criminal history. Ideally, agencies should provide an in-depth individualized assessment that would provide caseworkers with information on all of the client's barriers to employment, including a criminal record. Case managers' ability to obtain appropriate work activities and employment prospects will be enhanced if they are aware of a client's history and of the types of positions open or closed to someone with such a history. At a minimum, clients should be asked if they have a criminal history and an affirmative response should be a "red flag" to case managers about other possible barriers, especially domestic violence.

This study is unique in that we track TANF recipients' welfare and employment outcomes over an extended period of time. Our findings indicate that, in the current TANF environment, women with a criminal record appear to be having a harder time leaving the rolls. Although they have similar employment rates and earnings to their counterparts without such a record, they tend to have more jobs and receive more months of cash assistance. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine whether these differences in outcomes result from other differences between the two groups, such as the fact that women with a criminal history tend to have more employment barriers in general. Regardless of the reason for these outcome differences, their presence alone raises concerns. In the current TANF environment with strict time limits and work requirements, women with a criminal history can not afford to remain on the rolls longer than necessary. Indeed, it would behoove policy makers and program managers to develop program strategies to meet the unique needs of this vulnerable population.

This is admittedly not an easy task, especially in today's difficult economy when public resources are stretched thin, unemployment rates continue to rise, and assistance caseloads are increasing. Nonetheless, the reality is that a significant minority of female TANF caseheads does have a criminal record and this fact almost certainly affect the ease, speed, and/or success of efforts to help them move from welfare to work. Even with the additional barrier of prior criminal involvement, however, study findings about employment and earnings over our four year follow-up period suggest that positive outcomes, in the long-term, may be achievable for many of these women.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there have been increasing efforts to understand and to mitigate the long-lingering, negative effects that possession of a criminal record often has on an individual's employment, earnings, and ability to pay court-ordered child support (Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2003; Ovwigho, Saunders, & Born, 2005; Pager, 2004). Understandably, the lion's share of attention in this area has focused on men. Less well understood, by far, is the extent of criminal history among women, especially those who receive TANF. Although the research literature documenting the prevalence of a multitude of other employment barriers among welfare recipients is vast (see Ovwigho, Saunders & Born, 2008 for a review), there is very little empirical evidence about perhaps one of the most consequential: a criminal background. This gap in the literature is significant given the growing rate of incarceration among women, data suggesting a degree of overlap between the female correctional caseload and the nation's welfare caseload, and evidence that employers are reluctant to hire those with a criminal background, even relative to other disadvantaged workers (Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2003b, 2004; Pager, 2004).

What is known about this phenomenon should be cause for concern on many fronts. First, it is clear that women's involvement with the criminal justice system has increased dramatically in recent years. Nationally, the number of women under correctional supervision – in jails or prisons, on parole or probation – doubled between 1990 and 2007 (Glaze & Bonczar, 2008; U. S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997). In Maryland, over the past 30 years the incarceration rate among female offenders increased by 356% (Livers & Hiers, 2007). However, this statistic, while sobering, grossly understates how many women come in contact with the criminal justice system in our state because it only reflects those who were actually incarcerated. We also know that more than three-fifths of female prisoners are parents, that women involved in the criminal justice system are twice as likely as their male counterparts to be the primary caregiver of their children at the time of their arrest, and that many are not strangers to poverty or the public welfare system (Covington, 2002; Greenfeld & Snell, 1999). To date, however, there are no reliable estimates of the prevalence of a criminal record among today's adult cash assistance (TANF) recipients.

Our lack of knowledge about the extent of criminal records among adult TANF recipients has practical, programmatic, real-time implications for our state's welfare-to-work efforts and outcomes. The importance of these implications is exacerbated, of course, by the current economic climate, consistent incremental upticks in the TANF caseload and the more stringent and prescriptive federal welfare-to-work rules and performance requirements now in effect. Thus, the purpose of today's study is to begin to fill the information gap for Maryland on the heretofore unexamined, but consequential topic of criminal history among women heading TANF cases in our state. Specifically, the study compares welfare usage, employment, and other employment barriers of female caseheads who report having a criminal record and those who disavow having such a record. Combining survey and administrative data sources, we address the following main research questions:

1. How many women receiving Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA; Maryland's TANF program) report having a criminal history?
2. What are the demographic and case characteristics of female caseheads with a reported criminal background? How do they compare to other female caseheads?
3. What are the reported barriers to employment among welfare recipients with a criminal background and how do they compare to those reported by other female caseheads?
4. What are the historic welfare participation and employment patterns among women with a reported criminal background? How do they compare to other female caseheads?
5. What the welfare and employment outcomes over a four-year period for women with a criminal history? How do these outcomes compare to those of other female caseheads?

BACKGROUND

Since the mid-1990s, much of the debate has focused on the extent to which recipients facing barriers to work can obtain sufficient employment to meet specified work requirements and ultimately leave the welfare rolls. These discussions were rekindled during debates about TANF reauthorization and after passage of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA).

The reality continues to be that welfare recipients face a variety of challenges that “one size fits all” program strategies will likely not be effective in addressing. Thus, tailoring program services to meet the diverse needs of welfare recipients remains a key strategy to helping recipients achieve economic self-sufficiency. To understand those needs, it is important to have empirical data on the characteristics and circumstances of today’s recipients. Though there is a significant body of research documenting the prevalence of employment barriers among welfare recipients, there remains little empirical evidence regarding one of the most consequential: a criminal background. To that end, we examine the prevalence and correlates of a criminal history among female TCA recipients in Maryland. To help provide a context for our findings, this section provides an overview of the hard-to-employ population and the employment barriers they may face. We also specifically examine the literature surrounding the employment consequences of a criminal history as well as the characteristics of female offenders.

Barriers to Employment

Many characteristics and circumstances are thought to reduce welfare recipients’ odds of securing employment and/or leaving welfare. These employment barriers, as they are often called, include personal challenges such as physical or mental health issues and substance abuse; human capital deficits, such as low educational attainment and limited work experience; situational and logistical challenges, such as housing instability and problematic transportation; and family challenges such as caring for a family member or child with special needs. A significant body of literature documents the prevalence of these employment barriers among the welfare population. Poor physical health problems, mental health problems, or disabilities that limit work are among the most commonly-reported barriers (Danziger & Seefeldt, 2002b; Moffitt, Cherlin, Burton, King, & Roff, 2002; Zedlewski, 2003). It is also not uncommon for parents to have a chronically ill or disabled child and for that situation to prevent or limit their ability to work (Acs & Loprest, 2007; Zedlewski, 2003; Zedlewski, Holcomb, & Loprest, 2007). Estimates of the prevalence of these barriers range widely depending on how they are measured. For example, the percentage of welfare recipients with a health problem ranges from 10.6% to 35.7%, while estimates of the percentage with a disabled or special needs child range from 5.7% to 36.0% (see Ovwigho, et al., 2008 for a summary).

However, it is important to note that the presence of a barrier does not mean that a recipient will *not* make the successful transition from welfare to work. In fact, many recipients succeed in the labor market despite facing employment barriers; the relationship between barriers and work is a complex one – affected by factors such as

the type of barrier and the number of barriers the individual faces in addition to the number of assets and supports an individual has to counterbalance his/her liabilities.

Criminal Record as a Barrier to Employment

Surprisingly, the barrier literature is virtually silent concerning the possibility that welfare recipients' criminal histories may impede their journey from welfare to work. It has been shown that employers are generally cautious, if not reluctant, to hire a person with a criminal background regardless of the nature of the crime (Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2004). Individuals with criminal records often have spotty work histories, low levels of education, and little work experience. In addition, they may face other issues related to their criminal history, such as legal issues, substance abuse, or mental health problems that may make sustaining employment in the long-run difficult.

In addition, for those incarcerated for a period of time, there is an interruption of accumulating employment experience. The degree of this interruption depends on the length of their incarceration spell. Given that, typically, female offenders are relatively young (with more than half under the age of 35) the inability to accumulate sustained employment early on can present a significant barrier to employment once released (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999; Holzer et al., 2003).

The problems created by interruptions in employment and reluctance among employers to hire individuals with a criminal background are compounded by restrictions in some industries. Under state and federal law, certain occupations are closed to offenders depending on the committed crime, and in rare cases, employers can be held liable for the criminal actions of their employees. Consequently, employers tend to "screen" those with a criminal record out of the pool of job applicants. In fact, over 60% of employers surveyed acknowledged that they would "definitely not" or "probably not" hire those with criminal records (Pager, 2004). Another study examining the hiring practices of employers found that job applicants with a criminal record were half as likely to be called back for an interview compared to otherwise similar applicants (Pager, 2004).

Despite the difficult labor market consequences associated with criminal records, there are constructive implications that should also be considered. Criminal records are a relatively straightforward employment barrier to assess and address compared to other barriers, such as domestic violence and mental health problems. Depending on the severity of the offense, for example, options such as expungement and bonding programs for employers who do hire ex-offenders are available. We can see through various programs that work with ex-offenders, such as Baltimore City's One-Stop-Shop, that individuals with a criminal record can succeed in the labor market. Nonetheless, for this particular group, employment is vital not only to achieve greater economic self-sufficiency, but because it significantly reduces the likelihood of re-offending.

Female Offenders

The vast majority of research studying the ex-offender population, especially studies examining employment outcomes, focuses solely on the male ex-offender population. Little is known about the extent to which criminal involvement affects the employment experiences of female offenders. Yet, we do know that female offenders represent a

particularly vulnerable group relative to male offenders (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999; Snell, 1994).

Female offenders are more likely to have significant barriers to work compared to their male counterparts and, at the time of their offense, face more difficult economic circumstances. Only two in five (40%) female offenders were working full-time when they were arrested compared to three-fifths (60%) of male offenders (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999). In addition, 30% of incarcerated females reported receiving welfare assistance prior to the arrest that led to their incarceration (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999).

Beyond the tough economic circumstances of female offenders, they are also more likely to face serious personal challenges. Substance abuse is a widespread problem among female offenders with half of incarcerated women using alcohol, drugs, or both at the time of their offense that brought them into prison. Among these women, drug use was cited more often than alcohol use in contrast to the pattern found among incarcerated males (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999). Additionally, one-third (33%) of incarcerated women reported that the offense which resulted in their current sentence had been in order to obtain money to support their substance abuse habit (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999).

In addition to widespread rates of chemical dependence, female offenders also have high rates of mental health problems with almost one-fourth (23%) receiving medication for an emotional disorder. The pervasiveness of physical or sexual abuse among female offenders is startling; three in five (60%) incarcerated women reported that they had been physically or sexually assaulted at some point during their lives, with 69% reporting that the abuse occurred as minors (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999). Incarcerated women are also substantially more likely to be victims of domestic violence, with over one-third reporting being abused by an intimate partner and just under a quarter citing abuse by a family member (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999).

The high prevalence rates of chemical dependence, mental health problems, and other serious personal challenges, in addition to their limited employment assets (i.e. low levels of education, limited work experience), may make it more difficult for female offenders to gain employment and work toward greater economic self-sufficiency. Because of the substantial growth in the number of female offenders over the past decade, the employment prospects of women offenders are becoming increasingly important, especially in light of the number of offenders coming in contact with the public welfare system (Butcher & LaLonde, 2006; Cho & LaLonde, 2005).

For Maryland, female offenders may represent a growing sub-group of the hard-to-employ that policy makers and program managers should consider in their management of the TANF program. Yet, it is important to point out that for these particular women turning to the welfare program for assistance is arguably a positive indicator of their reentry. Specifically, for those women in our sample who were previously incarcerated, they have reached a successful point in their reintegration – they have at least one child in their care and are receiving assistance to help in their transition toward greater economic sufficiency. In other words, for these women the safety net was able to catch them.

The Present Study

The purpose of today's report is to explore the extent to which Maryland welfare recipients have a criminal history and how that may relate to their employment prospects. Unlike other research in this area, this report does not focus narrowly on those recipients who have been previously incarcerated, which ignores the variation and the often dynamic nature of criminal justice system involvement. Rather, we employ a broader definition of criminal history relying on self-report data regarding criminal history. We then use a unique combination of survey and administrative data to examine the extent to which other employment barriers co-occur with criminal history and whether the employment and welfare outcomes of those who report a criminal history differ from those of welfare recipients who do not report such a record. Our findings provide important information for policy makers and program managers in terms of the role criminal history plays in the welfare-to-work transition and what program strategies may be needed to help this particular sub-group.

METHODS

This chapter presents a description of the sample and data sources used in this study.

Sample

The report's sample originated from a project examining employment barriers among the TANF caseload sponsored by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Owigho, Born, Ferrero, & Palazzo, 2004). The project's sample was randomly selected from the universe of single-parent Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA, Maryland's TANF program) cases active in June 2002 (n=15,867). In order to be included in the sample, cases must have had one adult grantee and at least one child included on the grant. In other words, child-only cases and cases with more than one adult receiving assistance were excluded from the sample. This yielded an initial sample of 1,146 cases.

The payees of the 1,146 cases were then approached to participate in the Maryland TANF Caseload Survey, a telephone survey designed by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. for studies sponsored by the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Department of Health and Human Services (ASPE), and conducted between August 19, 2002 and October 31, 2002. A response rate of 71.5% percent was achieved, resulting in a final survey sample of 819 cases.

For this analysis, the sample was further limited to include only those cases headed by a female, which yielded a final sample size of 791 cases. This was done for a variety of reasons; chief among them was the strong evidence detailed in the Background section of this report, which indicates that female offenders typically face more difficult economic circumstances at the time of their arrest compared to their male counterparts. Additionally, there is a dearth of research examining the impact of a criminal record on employment for women; nearly all of the research in this area focuses solely on males who have previously been incarcerated. Finally, we chose to focus on women because single mothers are the primary focus of welfare to work efforts.

The original study sample was also stratified on jurisdiction so that comparisons could be made between Baltimore City cases and those in the remainder of the state. For this report, the data are weighted in all analyses to correct for the stratification and so that the proportion of Baltimore City cases in the sample is equal to the proportion of Baltimore City cases in TCA single-parent universe.

For the purposes of the present analysis and report, the 791 weighted cases were separated into two groups based upon responses to the following question: "[Do you] have a past criminal record?" Respondents who answered no to the question were classified as "No Report" (n=687), while those who replied "yes" were classified as "Report" (n=104).

There are limitations to relying on self-reported data to measure criminal involvement, namely we do not know the extent and nature of the involvement and therefore cannot

determine the differential impacts of arrest, conviction, and incarceration. However, this does not discount the validity or accuracy of our self-report measure in capturing the occurrence of criminal involvement among our sample. Research in this area has shown that survey responses and official administrative records are generally aligned with each other and produce consistent results when examining the relationship between criminal involvement and other correlates such as age and school performance (Kurlychek, Brame, & Bushway, 2007; Maxfield, Weiler, & Widom, 2000; Weis, 1986). In fact, some research has shown self-report measures often produce higher estimates of criminal involvement compared to official records (Maxfield et al., 2000). By employing a self-report measure, we are able to describe and analyze a much larger population in which a criminal record may pose a barrier to employment compared to studies that focus on those previously-incarcerated.

Our self-reported measure of criminal involvement, despite its limitations, also has an important positive feature. That is, it includes involvement that did not necessarily result in a conviction or a jail sentence. In general, state-level correctional/ incarceration data do not generally account for individuals arrested, those individuals jailed in county facilities, or those on probation yet still under the supervision of the criminal justice system. These are huge omissions. To illustrate, it is estimated that at any given time, there are approximately six times more adults on probation than adults housed in local jails and three times as many persons on probation as there are state and federal prisoners (Olson, Lurigio, & Seng, 2000).

Data Sources

In this study, we combine data from a variety of sources. Information concerning family characteristics and employment barriers is drawn from the Maryland TANF Caseload Survey. State administrative systems provide data regarding welfare participation patterns and employment and earnings. The following sections describe each of the data sources in further detail.

Survey Data

To obtain detailed data on family characteristics and barriers to employment, telephone surveys were conducted using the TANF Caseload Survey instrument, developed by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) with input from the six grantee states participating in the original ASPE-funded study. The instrument was designed to assess current TANF families' key barriers to employment, including family composition, employment history, job training, education, earnings, childcare, physical and mental health, chemical dependence, domestic violence, transportation, and neighborhood characteristics. The University of Maryland School of Social Work (SSW) also contracted with MPR to administer the survey instrument in our state. The survey was completed via computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) and averaged 35 minutes in length. All surveys were conducted in English, and no proxies were used.

Administrative Data

Findings related to welfare utilization and employment are based on administrative data retrieved and analyzed by the authors from several computerized management information systems maintained by the State. Specifically, demographic and program participation data were extracted from the Client Automated Resource and Eligibility System (CARES) and its predecessor, the Automated Information Management System/Automated Master File (AIMS/AMF). Employment data are drawn from the Maryland Automated Benefits System (MABS) and supplemented with data from the Unemployment Insurance (UI) data systems of the states bordering Maryland.

CARES

CARES became the statewide automated data system for certain DHR programs in March 1998. Similar to its predecessor AIMS/AMF, CARES provides individual and case level program participation data for cash assistance (AFDC or TCA), Food Stamps, Medical Assistance and Social Services. Demographic data are provided, as well as information about the type of program, application and disposition (denial or closure) date for each service episode, and codes indicating the relationship of each individual to the head of the assistance unit.

MABS

The Maryland Automated Benefits System (MABS) contains employment and earnings data on all jobs within the state that are covered by the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program. Roughly 93% of all in-state jobs are covered. However, notable exclusions in the administrative employment records are federal government employees (civilian and military), independent contractors, commission-only salespersons, most religious organization employees, some student interns, self-employed persons with no paid staff, and farm workers. "Off the books" or "under the table" employment and jobs located outside of Maryland are not included.

The lack of administrative data on jobs in other states and federal jobs is particularly important. According to the 2000 census, the rate of out-of-state employment among Maryland residents (17.4%) was nearly five times greater than that of the nation as a whole (3.6%).¹ Moreover, jurisdictions vary significantly in their rates of out-of-state employment. In certain populous counties with sizable TANF caseloads (Prince George's and Montgomery), one-third or more of employed residents work outside Maryland; in contrast, only 2.3% of Baltimore City residents do so. Thus, our lack of access to employment data from the states that border Maryland understates true rates of employment. Also, there are more than 100,000 federal jobs in Maryland and the majority of state residents live within commuting distance of Washington, D.C., where federal jobs are even more numerous.²

¹ Data were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau web-site <http://www.factfinder.census.gov> using the Census 2000 Summary File 3 Sample Data table QT-P25: Class of Worker by Sex, Place of Work, and Veteran Status: 2000.

² Data obtained from the Bureau of Labor and Statistics website: <http://data.bls.gov> through a public data query from the Current Employment Statistics Survey.

It is also important to note that earnings from UI-covered jobs in Maryland are reported on an aggregated quarterly basis. Thus, we do not know, in any given quarter, how much of that quarter (i.e., how many hours in a month or months in the quarter) the individual worked. It is impossible to compute hourly wage, or weekly or monthly salary, from these administrative data. Readers are reminded also that these data do not necessarily equate to total household income because we have no information about other income sources available to the casehead or about earnings or income of other adult household members. It is important to bear these data limitations in mind when examining and interpreting employment and earnings findings.

Variables

Table 1 summarizes the types of variables analyzed in this study and their sources (i.e. administrative data, survey data, or both). Variables are grouped into five broad categories: (1) payee characteristics; (2) case characteristics (3) welfare participation; (4) employment; (5) barriers to employment.

Table 1. Variable Categories and Data Sources

Variable Category	Data Source
Payee Characteristics	
Age	Administrative
Racial/Ethnic Background	Survey
Marital Status	Survey
Highest Education Completed	Survey
Region	Administrative
Case Characteristics	
Household Composition	Administrative
Welfare Participation	
Welfare Utilization History	Administrative
Welfare Utilization Follow-Up	Administrative
Employment	
Employment & Earnings History	Administrative
Employment & Earnings Follow-Up	Administrative
Barriers to Employment	
Human Capital Deficits	Survey
Logistic and Situational Challenges	Survey
Personal and Family Health Challenges	Survey

The reported barriers are grouped into three categories: (1) human capital deficits, including education, work experience, and job skills; (2) personal and family challenges, including physical and mental health, learning disabilities, criminal records, language barriers, chemical dependence, and domestic violence; and (3) logistical and situational challenges, which include transportation, child care, unstable housing, and neighborhood characteristics. Specific scales used to measure certain barriers are described in Appendix A.

Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Specifically, frequency tables were created to summarize payee information and measures of central tendency (mean, median, and mode) were used to describe sample members' characteristics and trends. Chi-Square and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests were used to test for differences between the two groups (non-reporters and reporters). The next three chapters present our findings.

FINDINGS: DEMOGRAPHICS, WELFARE PARTICIPATION, & WORK HISTORY

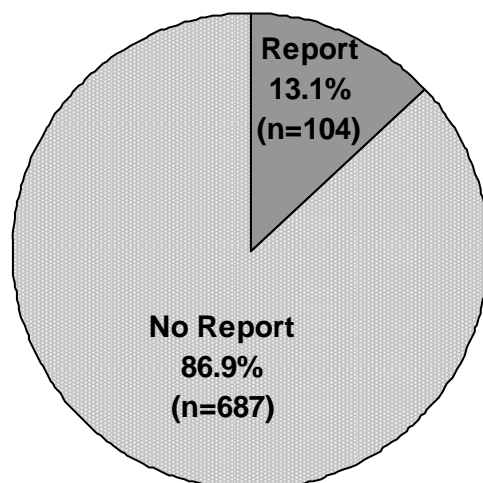
In this chapter, we begin to explore the characteristics of welfare recipients who, in a research interview, report having a criminal history. In all tables, findings are presented in three columns. The first data column describes survey respondents who indicated no criminal history, while the second reports data for those who did indicate prior criminal history. The final column presents findings for the entire sample.

What Proportion of Maryland's Caseload Reports a Criminal Background?

To answer the study's first question concerning the prevalence of a criminal history among Maryland's TCA caseload, Figure 1 illustrates the proportion of female caseheads who indicated that they had a criminal history. As previously discussed, our self-report measure employs a much broader definition compared to other studies that focus solely on previous incarceration. We find that for a sizeable minority of female welfare recipients (13.1%), a criminal background, admittedly of unknown severity, type, or duration, was acknowledged.

Though there is evidence of a growing overlap between the female correctional caseload and state welfare caseloads, accurate prevalence rates are difficult to obtain and often vary widely across caseloads (Butcher & LaLonde, 2006). In each of the six state caseload studies funded through ASPE, for instance, self-reported prevalence rates of a criminal record among current recipients varied from as low as 7% in DC to as high as 17% in Colorado. Maryland, with 13.1% of female caseheads indicating prior criminal involvement, has a relatively high prevalence rate compared to the other localities included in the federal study.

Figure 1: Prevalence of a Criminal Record Among Single-Mother TCA Caseheads



What Are the Characteristics of Reporters and Their Cases?

In this section, we provide a profile of reporters by describing their demographic characteristics including age, racial/ethnic background, marital status, and educational attainment. Case characteristics including jurisdiction, assistance unit size, and age of youngest child are included in the discussion as well. It is important to note that survey findings related to marital status, educational attainment, racial, and ethnic background were based on data at the time of the survey (August through October of 2002) while findings related to age and region are based on administrative data pulled in June 2002.

Table 2, following this discussion, shows that for the sample as a whole, the typical female Maryland TCA payee was African American (86.4%), approximately 30 years of age, and had never been married (71.4%). In terms of demographics, those who report a criminal history and those who do not were quite similar regarding ethnicity and marital status, but significantly differ in terms of age and educational level. Specifically and perhaps surprisingly, women who self-report having a criminal record tend to be older. More than two-fifths (43.7%) of women in this group were 26 years of age and older, compared to less than one-third (31.3%) among women who denied having a criminal record. Median age among self-reporters was also appreciably higher (30.9 years vs. 27.9 years).

Clients acknowledging a criminal history also have significantly lower levels of education than their counterparts who disavow such a history. Well over half (54.2%) of reporters fail to complete high school, compared to two-fifths (40.1%) of other recipients. This finding is especially worrisome given the poor labor market outcomes associated with truncated educational attainment. On a more positive note, we also find that reporters who do obtain a high school diploma or GED, are just as likely as non-reporters to have additional education beyond high school although the proportions are relatively small (14.9% vs. 15.2% respectively).

Table 2. Payee Characteristics.

	No Report (n=687)	Report (n=104)	Entire Sample (n=791)
Age**			
18 to 20 years	5.8%	0.7%	5.2%
21 to 25 years	36.1%	23.7%	34.5%
26 to 30 years	16.7%	23.0%	17.5%
31 to 35 years	14.6%	20.7%	15.4%
Mean Age (years)	30.0	31.7	30.3
Median Age (years)	27.9	30.9	28.5
Racial/Ethnic Background			
African American	87.0%	83.0%	86.4%
Caucasian	12.6%	17.0%	13.2%
Hispanic ³	2.4%	1.9%	2.3%
Other Non-Hispanic	1.1%	0.0%	1.0%
Marital Status			
Never Married	72.1%	65.9%	71.4%
Married or living with partner	11.5%	12.3%	11.6%
Separated, Divorced, or Widowed	16.5%	21.7%	17.1%
Highest Education Completed**			
Less than High School Diploma	40.1%	54.2%	41.9%
High School Diploma/GED	44.8%	31.0%	43.0%
More than a High School Diploma/GED	15.2%	14.9%	15.1%

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Table 3, following this discussion, provides information about the case characteristics of our sample. Although the sample for this study is limited to TCA cases that include a female casehead with at least one child in the assistance unit, variations in case composition still exist. Overall, we find that on average, TCA caseheads have two children (mean = 2.2, median = 2.0) under the age of 18 in their care. One-third (32.8%) have only one child, while nearly the same percentage (33.5%) have two. Cases tend to include relatively young children, with an average age of 4.2 years for the youngest child. One-half of cases have at least one child who is under the age of two years (median = 2.0 years).

TANF recipients who report having a criminal record do not differ significantly from those who do not report such a record in terms of how many children are in the TANF case. However, there are significant differences in the ages of those children, with reporters being more likely to have older children in their care. This difference is not surprising considering reporters are, on average, older than non-reporters. Two-fifths (40.9%) of non-reporters have at least one child under six years of age, compared to only one-fourth (26.4%) of reporters. On average, the youngest child of women without

³ Some cases may have identified more than one race category and, therefore, the categories shown are not mutually exclusive.

a criminal record is about one year younger than the youngest child of women with a criminal record (mean = 4.1 years vs. 5.1 years, respectively).

Table 3 also shows the geographic distribution of our TANF sample across the state's subdivisions. Nearly two-thirds (64.8%) of female TANF recipients in our sample resided in Baltimore City and a little more than one-tenth (12.1%) are from Prince George's County. There are no statistically significant differences between those who report a criminal record and those who do not on this variable.

Table 3. Case Characteristics.

	No Report of Criminal Record (n=687)	Report of Criminal Record (n=104)	Entire Sample (n=791)
Number of Children Less than Age 18 in Household			
0 (Pregnant)	1.6%	3.8%	1.8%
1	33.5%	27.6%	32.8%
2	33.6%	33.0%	33.5%
3	18.1%	24.1%	18.9%
4 or more	13.2%	11.5%	13.0%
Average Number of Children under 18 years	2.2	2.2	2.2
Median Number of Children under 18 years	2.0	2.0	2.0
Age of Youngest Child			
Less than 1 year	20.3%	15.8%	19.7%
1 to 5 years	48.2%	43.0%	47.5%
6 to 14 years	28.4%	37.2%	29.6%
15 years or older	3.1%	4.0%	3.2%
Average Age of Youngest Child*	4.1	5.1	4.2
Median Age of Youngest Child	2.0	3.0	2.0
Region⁴			
Baltimore City	64.0%	70.3%	64.8%
Prince George's County	13.2%	5.4%	12.1%
Baltimore County	5.3%	4.0%	5.1%
Metro Region	4.9%	5.4%	5.0%
Anne Arundel County	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%
Montgomery County	2.1%	2.0%	2.1%
Upper Eastern Shore Region	3.0%	2.0%	2.8%
Western Maryland Region	1.3%	2.7%	1.5%
Lower Eastern Shore Region	1.4%	2.7%	1.6%
Southern Maryland Region	2.1%	2.7%	2.2%

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

⁴ The regions are as follows: Metro (Carroll, Harford, Howard, and Frederick); Western (Allegany, Garrett, and Washington); Southern (Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's); Upper Shore (Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's, Caroline, Talbot, and Dorchester); Lower Shore (Worcester, Wicomico, and Somerset).

What are the Welfare Experiences of Reporters and Non-Reporters?

Long-term welfare receipt or dependency has often been viewed as a risk factor for future welfare use (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007). Because there is now a 60-month limit on adults' receipt of federally-funded cash assistance, it is imperative that families are able to transition from welfare to employment as quickly as possible and, further, that those transitions are permanent ones. For multiple reasons, including employer reluctance and the barrier findings presented elsewhere in this report, it is reasonable to assume that, all else equal, women with a criminal record might have more difficulty in making this transition and/or make greater use of cash assistance than other low-income women. To test this line of reasoning, we used two measures to compare the welfare histories of women with and without a criminal record. As presented in Table 4, following this discussion, we examined the number of months of cash assistance receipt in the 12 months immediately prior to the survey as well as the total number of accumulated months of benefit receipt that counts against clients' 60-month lifetime limit.

There are no significant differences in the short-term welfare measure. On average, women in both groups had received assistance in eight of the preceding 12 months. Perhaps notably, however, the median or midpoint is 11 months among those with a criminal record and nine months among those without one.

The bottom portion of Table 4 shows, for the sample as a whole and separately for both groups, the number of months that clients have accrued which count toward/against their 60 month limit. On this measure, the two groups do differ significantly; women who reported having a criminal record have used up significantly more months on their five-year clock than have women who report no criminal background. At the time of our survey, reporters had used up a bit more than half of their available months (33.5), on average. In contrast, the average for non-reporters was 7.1 fewer countable months (26.4) and the difference was statistically significant. As indicated by the medians or midpoints shown in Table 4, half of all reporters had used up roughly three years of the available five (median=34 months) compared to a median or midpoint of roughly two years (22 months) among non-reporters.

Considered in context, this latter finding may not be surprising, but it does provide additional evidence that women with a criminal background, like their male counterparts, do indeed face any number of struggles in attempting to rebuild their lives. In terms of welfare reliance, at least some previous research has suggested that female offenders typically do have higher rates of welfare utilization than other women but the extent of their usage has not been reported (Butcher & LaLonde, 2006).

Table 4 . Historical Receipt of TCA.

	No Report of Criminal Record (n=687)	Report of Criminal Record (n=104)	Entire Sample (n=791)
Number of Months of Receipt 1 Year Prior to Survey			
1 – 3 Months	15.2%	14.3%	15.1%
4 – 6 Months	16.9%	14.1%	16.5%
7 – 9 Months	18.1%	13.4%	17.5%
10 – 12 Months	49.8%	58.2%	50.9%
Mean Number of Months of Receipt 1 year Prior to Survey	8.4	8.8	8.5
Median Number of Months of Receipt 1 year Prior to Survey	9.0	11.0	10.0
Number of Months of Receipt Counted Towards the 60-Month Time Limit **			
None	2.1%	0.7%	2.0%
1 – 12 Months	29.0%	18.9%	27.7%
13 – 24 Months	21.7%	16.2%	20.9%
25 – 36 Months	18.0%	17.8%	18.0%
37 – 48 Months	13.3%	19.2%	14.0%
49 – 60 Months	10.5%	20.3%	11.8%
Over 61 Months	5.4%	7.0%	5.6%
Mean Number of Months of Receipt Counted Towards the 60-Month Time Limit ***	26.4	33.5	27.4
Median Number of Months of Receipt Counted Towards the 60-Month Time Limit	22.0	34.0	24.0

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

What are the Employment Experiences of Reporters and Non-Reporters?

Because one of the best predictors of obtaining employment is prior employment, in this last section of our baseline findings chapter, we consider welfare recipients' histories of Maryland UI-covered employment and how those with a criminal history may differ from those without such a history. Table 5, following this discussion, shows that the vast majority of non-reporters (92.6%) and reporters (95.6%) were UI-employed at some point prior to the survey date.

We also find high rates of employment in the two years prior to the study month; approximately three-quarters (i.e., 73.8% of non-reporters and 75.7% of reporters) of reporters and non-reporters worked in a UI-covered job. Similarly, we find that reporters and non-reporters worked, on average, four quarters out of the eight quarters prior to the survey. Despite the similar rates of employment and average quarters worked, we do find significant differences between the two groups in terms of average quarterly

earnings and mean number of UI-jobs held in the two years prior to the survey. Though reporters hold significantly more jobs on average, they earn significantly less than non-reporters in quarterly earnings, specifically an average of \$393.20 less per quarter in the two years prior to the survey.

In the year before the survey, we still find relatively high rates of employment among reporters and non-reporters with a slightly higher percentage of reporters employed relative to non-reporters; 57.7% of non-reporters and 61.5% reporters are employed at some point between July 2001 and June 2002 (one year prior to our survey). On average, both reporters and non-reporters worked two quarters (2.3 quarters for non-reporters and 2.2 quarters for reporters) during the year. Women with a criminal history continued to work significantly more jobs on average than non-reporters, averaging 2.3 jobs during the year compared to 1.9 jobs for non-reporters. In addition, they also earned \$324.96 less than non-reporters in terms of average quarterly earnings. However, the difference in earnings is not statistically significant. Non-reporters earned \$1,552.90 in mean quarterly earnings while reporters earned \$1,227.94 per quarter on average.

The last section of Table 5 presents employment information for the quarter in which the family completed the TANF caseload survey. We find that one-third (34.1%) of TANF women with a criminal record worked in that quarter while just over one-quarter (27.0%) of non-reporters were working in the quarter which brought them into our sample. Reporters earned considerably less than non-reporters in total earnings for that quarter, averaging \$1,062.05 with half earning less than \$677.98. Non-reporters earned \$427.74 more in total earnings with an average \$1,489.79 for that quarter, but this difference was not statistically significant.

In sum, our analyses of past UI-covered employment reveal that women with a criminal history are as likely to be employed as those without such a history. However, that work appears to be more unstable with more frequent job changes and lower quarterly earnings. In the next chapter, we examine self-reported employment barriers among the women in our sample. Then, in our third and final findings chapter, we examine whether the observed employment and earnings patterns for reporters and non-reporters persist over time.

Table 5. Employment History.

	No Report of Criminal Record (n=687)	Report of Criminal Record (n=104)	Entire Sample (n=791)
Ever Employed Prior to Survey	92.6%	95.6%	93.0%
Two Years Prior to Survey	73.8%	75.7%	74.1%
Mean Number of Quarters Worked	4.1	4.0	4.1
Mean Number of Jobs Held*	2.8	3.4	2.9
Mean Quarterly Earnings*	\$1,715.75	\$1,322.55	\$1,662.90
Median Quarterly Earnings	\$1,328.69	\$912.21	\$1,294.21
Standard Deviation	\$1,514.20	\$1,291.99	\$1,491.32
Range	\$14.80-\$10,026.39	\$44.82-\$8,558.61	\$14.80-\$10,026.39
One Year Prior to Survey	57.7%	61.5%	58.2%
Mean Number of Quarters Worked	2.3	2.2	2.3
Mean Number of Jobs Held*	1.9	2.3	1.9
Mean Quarterly Earnings	\$1,552.90	\$1,227.94	\$1,507.67
Median Quarterly Earnings	\$1,126.41	\$870.45	\$1,079.14
Standard Deviation	\$1,467.38	\$1,274.06	\$1,445.13
Range	\$14.80-\$8,819.48	\$27.32-\$9,165.91	\$14.80-\$9,165.91
Quarter of Survey	27.0%	34.1%	27.9%
Mean Total Earnings	\$1,489.79	\$1,062.05	\$1,421.12
Median Total Earnings	\$877.45	\$677.98	\$812.45
Standard Deviation	\$1,540.25	\$1,192.38	\$1,495.79
Range	\$14.57- \$7,891.42	\$15.69- \$4,530.67	\$14.57- \$7,891.42

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Possession of a criminal record, of course, is not the only barrier that TANF recipient adults may face as they attempt to successfully navigate a path from welfare to work. The research literature and front-line experience have consistently documented challenges in areas ranging from clients' physical and mental health issues and domestic violence to human capital deficits such as limited work experience and low educational attainment as well as situational or logistical challenges such as housing and transportation (S. Danziger & Seefeldt, 2002a; Huan & Douglas, 2004; Pavetti, 2003; Zedlewski, 2003). Family challenges, including those associated with having a disabled child or other family member with special needs, are also not uncommon (Brandon, Hofferth, & Hogan, 2008). Moreover, the limited research evidence available suggests that the incidence of barriers such as these may be higher among women who have prior involvement with the criminal justice system than among other women (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999; Snell, 1994). Thus, in this section we examine a number of the most commonly-discussed employment barriers and, in particular, how TANF women with and without a criminal record differ, if at all, on these measures.

Thirteen potential barriers are examined. These consist of three human capital barriers, six personal and family issues, and four variables measuring common situational/logistical challenges.

Human Capital Barriers

The three sets of bars in Figure 2 concern the human capital barriers of educational attainment, past work experience, and job skills/tasks. On all three of these measures, recipients who self-report having a criminal record fare poorly compared to clients who said they did not have a criminal history.

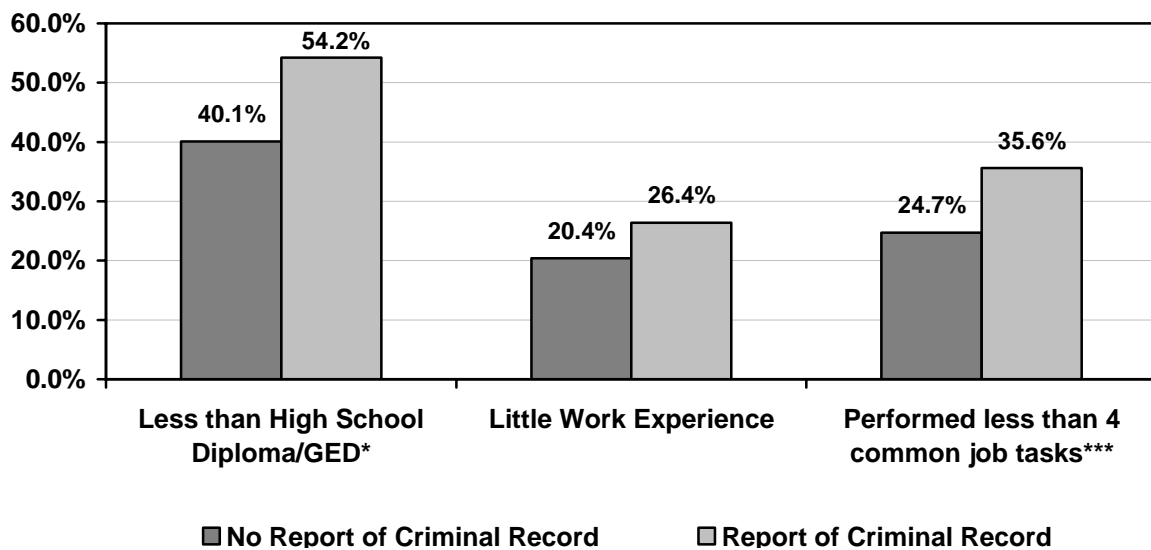
The first set of bars presents clients' self-reported levels of educational completion. This finding we have reported previously but it bears repeating. More than half (54.2%) of reporters have neither a high school diploma nor a GED, compared to about two-fifths (40.1%) of other clients and the difference is statistically significant. In terms of competing for available jobs, of course, these educational attainment levels alone indicate that clients are disadvantaged vis-a-vis other Maryland residents, at least 85% of whom aged 25 and over have at least completed high school (U.S. Census Bureau, June 2004).

Prior work experience, reflected in the second set of bars on Figure 2, is another important determinant of employability. Among other things a history of previous work indicates to the employer that the person is likely to possess the non-technical or 'soft skills' such as punctuality, basic problem-solving skills, and the ability to follow directions, that are needed to function in the work environment (Welfare Information Network, 2000). Perhaps not surprisingly, employers rely heavily on these skills when considering disadvantaged workers, particularly cash assistance recipients (Holzer, Raphael & Stoll, 2003a).

Unfortunately, as shown on Figure 2, about one-fifth (20.4%) of women with no criminal record and about one in four (26.4%) with such background have relatively little work experience, specifically working less than half of the time since their 18th birthdays. The difference between the two groups was not statistically significant, however. Finally, in this regard, it should be mentioned that while the administrative data show that the large majority of clients in both groups did have at least some UI-covered employment in Maryland, the raw data indicate that for many this employment was sporadic and intermittent.

The third variable in this cluster may provide a crude proxy for the degree of complexity or difficulty of the type of work/jobs in which these women have previously been employed. It looks at the extent to which women had regularly (daily or weekly) performed at least four of nine very common on-the-job tasks such as talking with customers face-to-face or on the phone, reading instructions, filling out forms or working with a computer. More than one in three (35.6%) women with a criminal record had not regularly performed four or more of these basic tasks; among women with no criminal record the comparable percentage was 24.7%.

Figure 2. Self-Reported Human Capital Barriers.



* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Personal and Family Barriers

We also looked at seven personal and family issues that could impede a woman's ability to successfully transition from welfare to work. These results appear in Figure 3 which follows this discussion and, in the text, we report on each of the seven potential barriers separately. At the most general level, however, findings show that, among women with a criminal record, four of the seven barriers (special needs child/disabled family member, victim of severe physical violence, diagnosed drug or alcohol problem,

possible learning disability) are significantly more likely to be present⁵. For the remaining three barriers (poor physical health, mental health problem, current substance abuse problem) while prevalence rates are not inconsequential in either group, there are no statistically significant differences between women with a criminal record and those without one.

Physical health problems and/or self-perceived poor health is one of the most commonly reported barriers for adult welfare recipients across studies, although prevalence rates range from as low as 10% to as high as 36% (Danziger & Seefeldt, 2002a; Zedlewski, 2003). In our study we find that roughly one of every five clients in both the criminal reporters group (19.1%) and the non-reporters group (20.7%) rated their own health status as being only fair or poor and, using a generally-accepted measure (Physical Functioning Scale of the SF-36 Health Survey) had a physical functioning score in the bottom quartile. This 'one in five' finding is similar to that reported in other studies of TANF recipients and there are no significant differences between reporters and non-reporters.

The research literature indicates that it is not uncommon for TANF adults to have a special needs child or elderly, disabled or sick family member requiring additional care and our study finding was consistent. Moreover, although prevalence rates were high in both groups, women who had self-reported a criminal record were significantly more likely to report such care-giving responsibilities than were other women (44.5% vs. 32.0%).

Another potential barrier to sustained independence from welfare is the presence of a mental health problem. Problems of this type are more difficult to accurately measure in the welfare office setting and self-disclosure rates, even in research interviews, are less than for other types of problems or barriers. It is generally agreed that validated scales are the preferred measurement method and, most often, these are used to assess specific indicators of common mental health issues such as clinical depression or anxiety. This is the approach used in our study. Using various validated scales and a self-report question to create a composite measure, respondents were coded as having a possible mental health barrier if they experienced major depression within the last year or serious psychological distress in the past 30 days. There were no significant differences between the two groups of women and rates were fairly high: 32.7% among those with a criminal record and 28.6% among those without one.

Standardized, validated scales were also used to assess current drug and alcohol dependence, the third personal barrier on which the two groups were similar. Prevalence rates were low in both groups; using validated measures we find that 6.9% of those with a criminal background and 4.7% of those without such a record appeared to have a chemical dependence issue. These rates are generally in line with those reported for the general U.S. population (Acs & Loprest, 2007).

Although there were no significant differences between the two groups of women on the observed rates of current drug or alcohol dependence, there are marked and

⁵For detailed information on how these barriers were measured, see Appendix A.

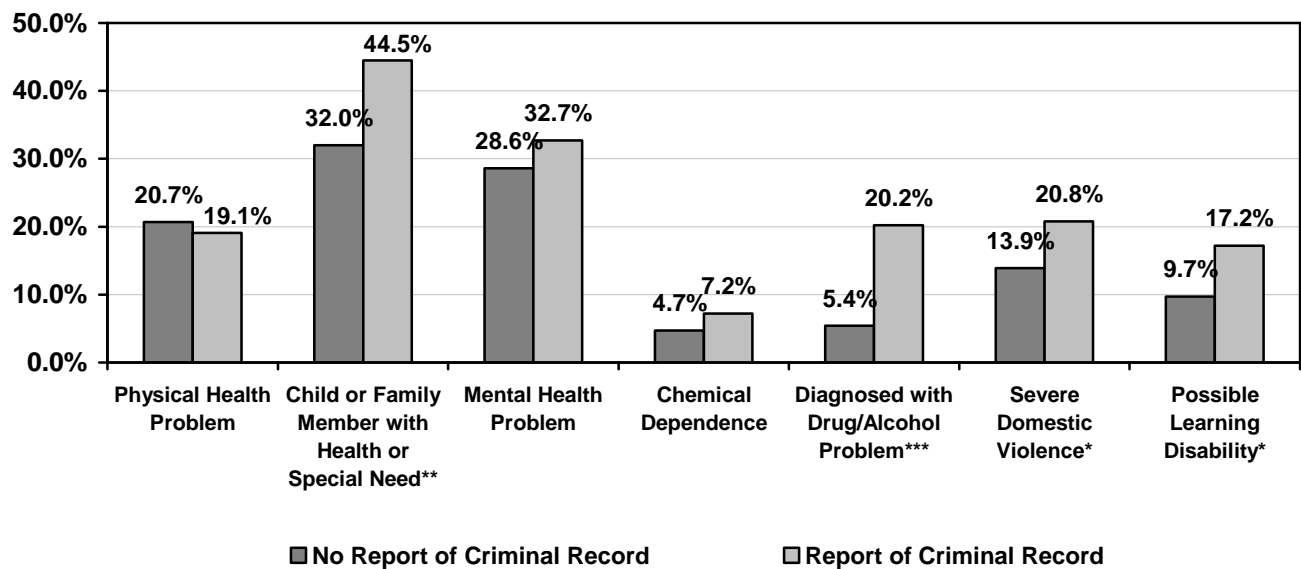
statistically significant differences between the two groups when we consider if they have ever been diagnosed with a substance abuse problem. Fully one of every five (20.2%) women with a criminal background had such a diagnosis at some point in time, compared to only 5.4% of those with no criminal record. This finding has important implications for welfare program managers, of course, because substance abuse tends to be a long-term issue and affected individuals often cycle repeatedly through dependence, treatment, sobriety. Of course, our finding of significantly higher rates among those with a criminal record may not be all that surprising because, for women, involvement with the criminal justice system is often associated in some way, shape or form with drugs or alcohol. From 1985 to 1996, to illustrate, female drug arrests increased by 95% and, in just one six year period (1990-1996), the number of felony drug convictions among women increased by 37% while convictions for simple possession increased by 41% (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999; McVay, 2000).

Domestic violence is another difficult to measure problem and, like substance abuse and mental health, prevalence rates are often underestimated and the problem goes undetected. Research has generally shown a high prevalence of domestic violence among low-income women in general and women receiving cash assistance in particular (Hetling, Saunders, & Born, 2006; Office of Justice Programs, 2004; Tolman & Raphael, 2000). However, our own Maryland research studies as well as those from other states consistently indicate that very few women disclose domestic violence to their caseworkers (Hetling & Born, 2006; Hetling et al., 2006; Lennert, 1997) Though it is common for domestic violence to go unreported, research suggests that it can have long-term adverse effects in many areas of health and daily functioning (Tolman & Rosen, 2001). As shown on Figure 3, we find that female TANF recipients with a criminal record were significantly more likely to experience severe physical abuse within the past year: 20.8% compared to 13.9% for women with no reported criminal record.

Learning disabilities, especially those which are undiagnosed, may also present major challenges to sustained employment as they can result in difficulties executing common job tasks, following directions, persevering at tasks and the like. In addition to challenges associated to sustaining employment, the presence of a learning disability can also hinder recipients' ability to fill out job applications as well as their ability to perform well in job interviews (Hauan & Douglas, 2004).

In our survey study, women were coded as having a probable learning disability if they scored 12 or more on the Washington State Learning Needs Scale. Using this measure, we find that almost one-fifth (17.2%) of women who report a criminal history have a potential learning disability. The rate among non-reporters is nearly half that (9.2%) and the difference between the two groups is statistically significant.

Figure 3. Self-Reported Personal and Family Barriers.



* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Logistical/Situational Challenges

Finally, Figure 4 which follows this discussion focuses on logistical or situational circumstances that, if present, could also potentially make it difficult for women to obtain and maintain employment. Four such variables thought to be common impediments are examined in this study: transportation; unstable housing; problematic neighborhood; and child care. The general finding is that three of the four barriers (all but child care) were significantly more likely to be present among women with a criminal record than among those without one. It is important to note, however, that while there was no significant difference between the two groups with regard to child care, the incidence of such problems was quite high across-the-board; two-fifths of reporters (43.8%) and non-reporters (40.8%) said that problems with child care had prevented them from participating in work, education, or training in the past year.

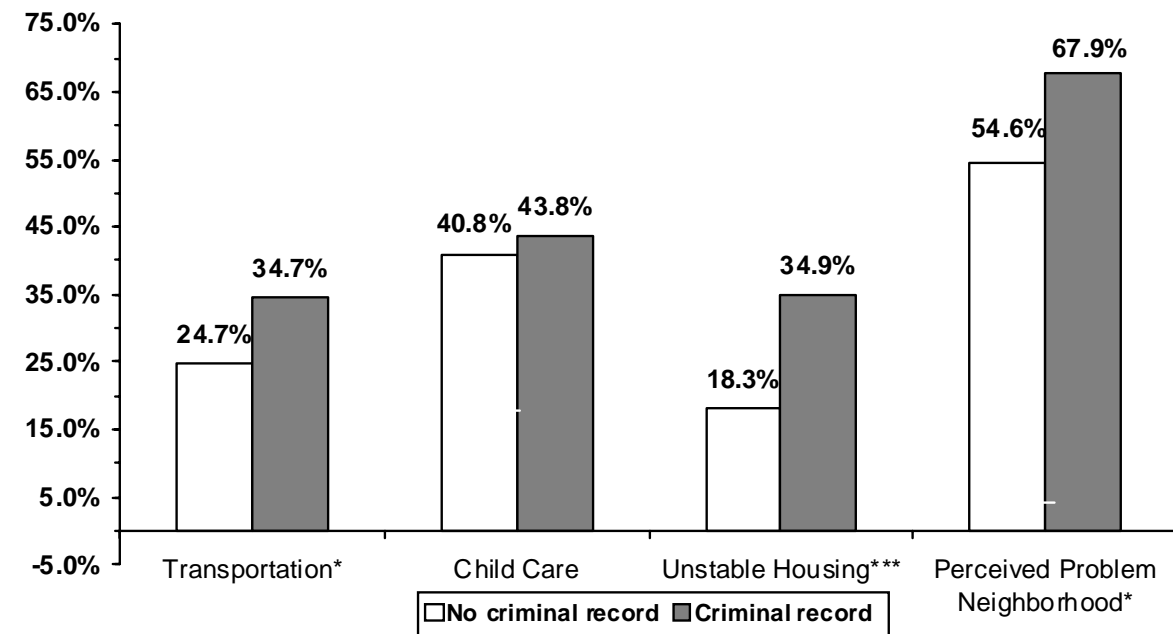
Transportation has long been viewed as one major impediment to the ability of many low-income women to obtain and maintain employment. Among other things, research has documented a spatial mismatch between the location of low-income families, including those on TANF, and the locations in which job growth has been and is taking place (e.g., Defense Base Closure and Re-Alignment). Thus, in this study, we were interested to learn if transportation difficulty was more likely or not among women with a criminal background; indeed, we found that it was. More than one of every three reporters (34.7%) indicated that they had difficulty with transportation to and from work or work activities within the past year. The rate among non-reporters was not inconsequential (24.7%) but it was significantly lower.

Although there have been a number of studies looking at the effects of housing assistance on women's efforts to leave welfare for work (Zedlewski, 2003), there has

been little research into how housing instability (i.e., evictions) may be connected to the welfare to work transition. In this study, we found that, perhaps not unexpectedly, women with a criminal background were more than twice as likely as other women to experience housing instability. Fully one-third (34.9%) of reporters said they had been evicted or moved two or more times within the past year compared to 18.3% of non-reporters. The difference was statistically significant.

Study respondents were also asked about certain characteristics of the neighborhoods in which they resided such as unemployment among residents, the prevalence of run-down and abandoned buildings, drugs, and the extent of criminal behavior such as assaults and burglaries. Although not as well-researched as individual-level barriers, neighborhood problems such as these may also impede a successful welfare-to-work transition. Among other things negative or stressful neighborhood conditions may affect a woman’s child care and employment options or choices (i.e., avoiding night-shift work or locating safe, supervised child care). Among all women in our study sample, the incidence of at least one major community or neighborhood problem was very high, but was significantly higher among women with a criminal record (67.9%) than among those with none (54.6%).

Figure 4. Self-Reported Logistical and Situational Challenges.



* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Number of Barriers Present

The *type* of barrier faced by a woman trying to leave welfare for work is certainly important to assess in front-line welfare practice and to take into account when devising actual training or work plans for the individual. It is equally important to be aware of and give practical consideration to the *number* of potential barriers present in the case for this, too, could affect the woman's ability to work consistently. Consistent with what common sense would suggest, research does show that the more barriers a recipient faces, the less likely she is to become employed (Brown, 2001; Zedlewski, 2003).

Thus, in our study, we also examined the "how many" question with regard to the total number of barriers identified during the survey. We also looked at the three categories of barriers (human capital deficits, personal/family challenges, logistical/situational) separately and, for each category, identified the proportion of clients who had two or more such issues present.

Table 6, following this discussion presents findings from these analyses. As shown, results are generally as one might expect. On three of the four measures, women with a criminal record fare more poorly than women without a criminal record and, on all three measures, the difference between the two groups is statistically significant. Specifically, compared to women without a record, women with a criminal background are more likely to have two or more human capital deficits (37.0% vs. 25.2%), two or more logistical/situational challenges (59.6% vs. 40.2%), and to have more potential barriers overall (mean=4.3 vs. 3.3 per case).

As noted, we find no significant difference between groups in the percentage of women with two or more personal/family challenges (i.e., health, mental health, substance abuse, learning disability). However, it should be noted that, in both groups, a substantial minority of clients do have at least two such barriers present: 37.5% among reporters and 31.1% among non-reporters.

This relatively high across-the-board rate would appear to add further weight to arguments favoring more thorough and sophisticated, individualized assessment. Some have expressed concerns about the additional time and/or resources that this type of assessment and amelioration might require. However, the counter-argument is that, given the generally long-term and powerfully disruptive nature of most challenges of this type, failing to identify and address their existence up-front is likely to prove even more time-consuming later. This is not to minimize the very real difficulties agencies may face in finding appropriate community-based services to address identified problems nor the increased demands on staff that rising caseloads entail. However, problem assessment and service availability, while related, are two different phenomena and the actual or perceived absence of the latter does not minimize the importance of the former insofar as effective case management and welfare-to-work success is concerned.

In sum, our analyses of employment barriers of various types reveals that – while many barriers are present in a fairly high proportion of families across-the-board, women with a criminal record do appear particularly disadvantaged in many ways. First, the data show that they are significantly more likely to face certain challenges. These include:

low levels of education, limited work experience, disabled child/family member, chemical diagnosis, domestic violence, learning disabilities, housing instability and problematic neighborhoods. They also face significantly more barriers at a given point in time.

For policy makers, program managers, and front-line caseworkers, these results are sobering if perhaps not totally surprising. Overall, they point out that in the caseload in general, there are a not inconsequential number of women who face one or more, not always obvious or asked-about, potential barriers to independence. It seems likely that, in at least some cases, it is these barriers that, despite the worker's and agency's best efforts, may cause welfare-to-work plans or activities to be less than optimally successful. For women with criminal records – and their caseworkers – the data suggest that challenges could be even more daunting; the majority will have other and multiple challenges on the path to independence. As these women in particular attempt to rebuild their lives, the data suggest that a thorough assessment of strengths and needs, as well as effective, tailored case management is needed to help them overcome the challenges and barriers they confront. The next and last findings chapter returns to our central study theme. It looks at longer-term employment and earnings experiences of TCA recipients with and without self-reported criminal records.

Table 6. Number of Potential Employment Liabilities.

	No Report of Criminal Record (n=687)	Report of Criminal Record (n=104)	Entire Sample (n=791)
% with 2 or more Human Capital Deficits** ⁶	25.2%	37.0%	26.8%
% with 2 or more Personal and Family Challenges ⁷	31.1%	37.5%	32.0%
% with 2 or more Logistical and Situational Challenges*** ⁸	40.2%	59.6%	42.8%
Number of All Potential Liabilities for Employment**^d			
0	6.3%	2.9%	5.8%
1	13.0%	5.8%	12.0%
2	19.1%	13.5%	18.4%
3	20.4%	14.4%	19.6%
4	15.0%	18.3%	15.4%
5 or more	26.2%	45.2%	28.7%
Mean Number of Liabilities (standard dev)***	3.3 (2.0)	4.3 (2.2)	3.4 (2.0)

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

⁶ Human capital deficits include having no high school diploma, no work experience, or routinely performing fewer than four job tasks.

⁷ Personal and family challenges include health problems, family member or friend with health problems, mental health problem, current drug or alcohol dependence, experience with severe domestic violence, possible learning disability.

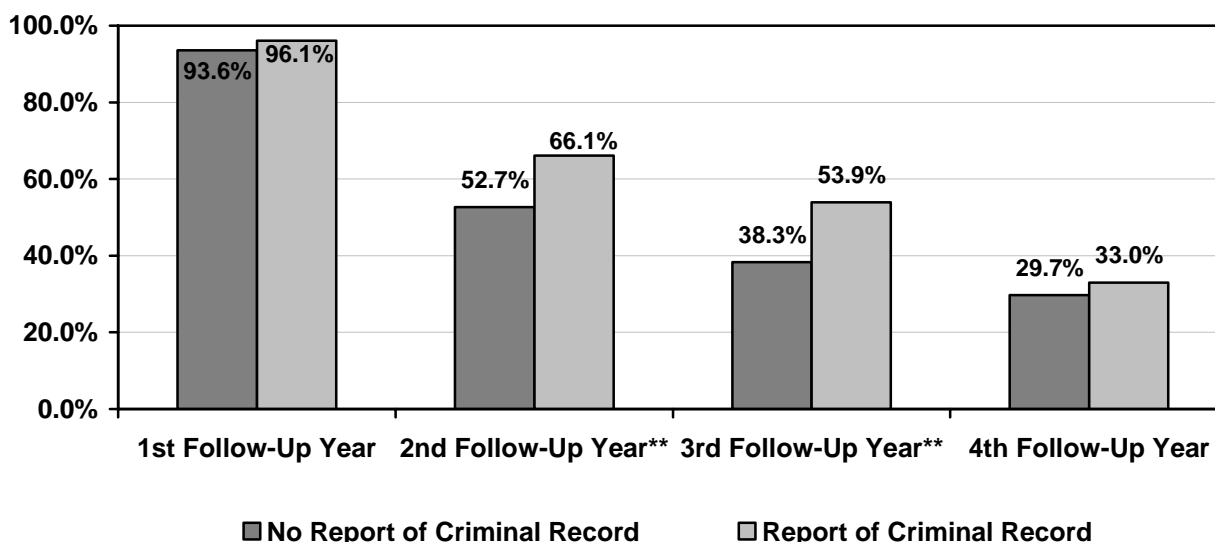
⁸ Logistic and situational challenges include transportation problems, child care problems, unstable housing, and bad neighborhood conditions.

Findings presented in the previous chapters revealed a number of differences between female welfare recipients who report that they have a criminal history and those who do not. Most notably, reporters have significantly higher rates of employment barriers such as low education levels, learning disabilities, a sick or disabled child or other family member, and domestic violence. They also have significantly more barriers, longer welfare histories, and more unstable employment histories. In this chapter, we examine the extent to which reporters and non-reporters experience different welfare participation and employment outcomes in the four years after they entered our study.

To What Extent Do Women Receive TCA During the Follow Up Period?

Figure 5 presents TCA utilization data for the four-year follow-up period for reporters and non-reporters as well as for the sample as a whole. Almost all reporters (96.1%) and non-reporters (93.6%) received TCA in the first follow up year. In the second follow-up year, we find that reporters are significantly more likely to receive TCA compared to non-reporters. Specifically, two-thirds (66.1%) of reporters and a little over half (52.7%) of non-reporters received TCA at some point during the second post-survey year. This pattern continues through the third year, with over half of reporters (53.9%) receiving TCA compared to only 38.3% of non-reporters. Yet, by the fourth follow-up year, we find that the differences between non-reporters and reporters are no longer statistically significant and only one-third (33.0%) of reporters and 29.7% of non-reporters received TCA during that year.

Figure 5. Percent Receiving TCA in Each Follow-Up Year.



* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Table 7 provides more information about how many months of assistance families received, among those with any participation in that period. In the first follow-up year, those with no criminal record averaged eight (8.01) months of TCA receipt while those

with a record averaged roughly nine (8.6) months of receipt. In subsequent years, both groups received TCA for an average of seven months. However, considering the entire follow up period, women with a criminal record received assistance for significantly more months than those without such a record. Over the entire period, reporters received cash assistance for over a year and a half (19.4 months) with half receiving TCA longer (median = 19.0). Non-reporters averaged less than a year and a half, or 16.8 months, of TCA receipt during the follow-period, with a median of 15 months.

These data indicate that, compared to women without a criminal history, those with such a history appear to have a more difficult time making a permanent transition off the welfare rolls. To some extent, these differences in welfare utilization are not surprising, given that women with a criminal history report significantly more barriers to employment, have higher prevalence rates of several different types of barriers, have longer welfare histories initially, and have more unstable employment histories. It is impossible with these data to establish a causal link among these variables. However, their correlations alone indicate that, at a minimum, having a criminal history appears to be a good marker for someone who is likely to have difficulty in transitioning off the welfare rolls.

Table 7. Number of Months of Follow-Up TCA Receipt Among Participants.

	No Report of Criminal Record (n=687)	Report of Criminal Record (n=104)	Entire Sample (n=791)
1st Follow-Up Year			
Mean Number of Months	8.01	8.61	8.09
Median Number of Months	9.00	10.00	9.00
Standard Deviation	3.93	3.67	3.90
2nd Follow-Up Year			
Mean Number of Months	7.21	6.46	7.09
Median Number of Months	7.00	6.00	7.00
Standard Deviation	3.56	3.49	3.56
3rd Follow-Up Year			
Mean Number of Months	6.70	6.66	6.70
Median Number of Months	7.00	6.19	7.00
Standard Deviation	3.67	3.62	3.66
4th Follow-Up Year			
Mean Number of Months	6.76	7.71	6.90
Median Number of Months	7.00	7.00	7.00
Standard Deviation	3.59	2.93	3.51
Entire 4-Year Follow-Up			
Mean Number of Months**	16.79	19.43	17.14
Median Number of Months	15.00	19.02	15.00
Standard Deviation	12.26	12.31	12.29

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

What Are the Employment Outcomes of Reporters and Non-Reporters?

One of the main goals of TANF is to help families transition from welfare to financial self-sufficiency. However, as the previous chapter showed, reporters often face challenges to maintaining employment and spend more time on the welfare rolls than their counterparts who do not have criminal records. In Table 8, we examine their employment and earnings from Maryland UI-covered employers in the four years after the survey. Surprisingly, we find no statistically significant differences between those with a criminal record and those without in employment rates, number of quarters employed, and average quarterly earnings. The majority of reporters and non-reporters had Maryland UI-employment at some point during the four-year follow-up period. Four-fifths (79.8%) of non-reporters and three-fourths (74.9%) of reports were employed at some point.

Over half of both reporters (52.7%) and non-reporters (55.6%) were working in UI-covered employment at some point in the first follow-up year and worked on average in 2.5 out of four quarters. However, despite having similar rates of employment and working just as many quarters, reporters earned on average \$152.07 less than non-reporters in mean quarterly earnings (\$1,877.79, \$2,029.86; respectively); this difference, however, was not statistically significant. The median average quarterly earnings for the two groups are quite different though, with half of reporters earning less than \$808.54 in average quarterly earnings compared to half of non-reporters earning more than \$1,522.37 per quarter.

In subsequent years, employment rates remain fairly steady, with about one-half of female caseheads working at some point in the year. The rates for reporters are 51.9%, 52.3%, and 55.4% in the second, third, and fourth years, respectively. Although the percentage of non-reporters working in each of these periods is slightly higher (58.5%, 57.3%, and 57.0%, respectively), the differences did not reach standard levels of statistical significance.

Table 8 also shows that for both groups average quarterly earnings tend to increase in the second through fourth follow up years. In the second year, for example, non-reporters earned an average of \$2,528.43 per quarter in UI-covered earnings and reporters earned \$2,538.39. In the third year, reporters worked an average of 3.1 quarters and earned \$2,582.31 in quarterly earnings compared to non-reporters who worked 2.9 quarters and earned \$2,785.62 in quarterly earnings. In the fourth follow up year, average quarterly earnings for both groups top \$3,000 with a mean of \$3,038 for non-reporters and \$3,328 for reporters.

The bottom section of Table 8 summarizes TANF recipients' employment and earnings for the entire four year follow-up period. As mentioned previously, the majority of women work in a UI-covered job at some point. Regardless of their criminal history, TANF recipients worked in an average of nine of the 16 follow up quarters, or a little more than half the time. Total UI earnings for the four year period averaged around \$25,000 with a mean of \$24,974.03 for women with a criminal record and \$24,651.07 for women without such a record.

In terms of employment outcomes, we find only one statistically significant difference between reporters and non-reporters. On average, welfare recipients who reported having a criminal history had significantly more jobs (mean = 4.3) than their counterparts who did not report such a history (mean = 3.9). Although the difference is fairly small, it is consistent with the patterns observed in terms of recipients' employment history and may reflect continuing challenges to maintaining employment for those with a criminal record.

Table 8. Employment Experiences During the Follow-Up Period.

	No Report of Criminal Record (n=687)	Report of Criminal Record (n=104)	Entire Sample (n=791)
One Year Post Survey	55.6%	52.7%	55.2%
Mean Number of Quarters Worked	2.5	2.5	2.5
Mean Quarterly Earnings	\$2,029.86	\$1,877.79	\$2,010.77
Median Quarterly Earnings	\$1,522.37	\$808.54	\$1,486.61
Standard Deviation	\$1,789.16	\$2,204.52	\$1,844.24
Two Years Post Survey	58.5%	51.9%	57.6%
Mean Number of Quarters Worked	2.8	2.6	2.8
Mean Quarterly Earnings	\$2,528.43	\$2,538.39	\$2,529.61
Median Quarterly Earnings	\$2,112.42	\$1,744.83	\$2,050.69
Standard Deviation	\$2,167.87	\$2,695.48	\$2,233.52
Three Years Post Survey	57.3%	52.3%	56.7%
Mean Number of Quarters Worked	2.9	3.1	2.9
Mean Quarterly Earnings	\$2,785.62	\$2,582.31	\$2,760.92
Median Quarterly Earnings	\$2,279.75	\$1,426.27	\$2,119.13
Standard Deviation	\$2,441.55	\$3,124.09	\$2,531.07
Four Years Post Survey	57.0%	55.4%	56.8%
Mean Number of Quarters Worked	3.0	2.8	2.9
Mean Quarterly Earnings	\$3,037.54	\$3,328.08	\$3,066.30
Median Quarterly Earnings	\$2,323.97	\$2,523.92	\$2,380.39
Standard Deviation	\$2,416.94	\$3,690.32	\$2,612.26
Entire 4-Year Follow-Up	79.8%	74.9%	79.2%
Mean Number of Quarters Worked	9.0	8.9	9.0
Mean Number of Jobs Held*	3.9	4.3	3.9
Mean Total Earnings	\$24,651.07	\$24,974.03	\$24,691.29
Median Total Earnings	\$13,230.00	\$9,104.22	\$ 12,901.76
Standard Deviation	\$27,555.00	\$38,861.11	\$29,163.81

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

CONCLUSIONS

In this report, we have presented a wealth of empirical data on the characteristics, circumstances, and outcomes of welfare recipients with a criminal history. Our findings indicate that a significant minority of women receiving TANF have previously been involved with the criminal justice system. In addition to the stigma associated with prior criminal involvement, these women have more barriers than their counterparts without such a history. They are also more likely to face serious barriers such as low levels of education, unstable employment histories, learning disabilities, domestic violence, and a history of drug and alcohol dependence.

Though reporters represent a significant minority of all recipients, it is important keep in mind that growth of the female offender population is substantial and is likely to continue. With that, it is expected that growing numbers of them will come into contact with public assistance programs and caseworkers should be aware of the limitations they bring to the labor market, namely the knowledge that certain occupations may be closed to them by law (e.g. child care, banking, or certain medical professions). This is especially true if they want to get them into employment as quickly as possible.

For policy makers and program managers, these findings suggest that it is important to consider program strategies specifically geared towards the subgroup of welfare recipients with a criminal history. Ideally, agencies should provide an in-depth individualized assessment that would provide caseworkers with information on all of the client's barriers to employment, including a criminal record. Case managers' ability to obtain appropriate work activities and employment prospects will be enhanced if they are aware of a client's history and of the types of positions open or closed to someone with such a history. At a minimum, clients should be asked if they have a criminal history and an affirmative response should be a "red flag" to case managers about other possible barriers, especially domestic violence.

This study is unique in that we track TANF recipients' welfare and employment outcomes over an extended period of time (i.e. four years). Our findings indicate that, in the current TANF environment, women with a criminal record appear to be having a harder time leaving the rolls. Although they have similar employment rates and earnings to their counterparts without such a record, they tend to have more jobs and receive more months of cash assistance. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine whether these differences in outcomes result from other differences between the two groups, such as the fact that women with a criminal history tend to have more employment barriers in general. Regardless of the reason for these outcome differences, their presence alone raises concerns. In the current TANF environment with strict time limits and work requirements, women with a criminal history can not afford to remain on the rolls longer than necessary. Indeed, it would behoove policy makers and program managers to develop program strategies to meet the unique needs of this vulnerable population.

This is admittedly not an easy task, especially in today's difficult economy when public resources are stretched thin, unemployment rates continue to rise, and assistance caseloads are increasing. Nonetheless, the reality is that a significant minority of

female TANF caseheads do have a criminal record and this fact almost certainly affect the ease, speed, and/or success of efforts to help them move from welfare to work. Even with the additional barrier of prior criminal involvement, however, study findings about employment and earnings over our four year follow-up period suggest that positive outcomes, in the long-term, may be achievable for many of these women.

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Appendix A: Measurement of Barriers from Survey Scales

Barrier	Description of Measure
Payee Physical Health	Physical Functioning Scale of the SF-36; Defined as having a physical health problem if self-rated health as fair or poor AND physical functioning score was in the lowest quartile by age and gender.
Child's/Other Family Member's Health	Does your child have a health, behavioral or other special need? Do have an elderly, disabled, or sick family member or friend you are caring for? During the past 12 months, was this ever such a problem that you could not take a job or had to stop working, or could not attend education or training activities?
Payee Mental Health	6-item K6 Non-Specific Psychological Distress Scale; World Health Organization Composite International Diagnostic Interview Short-Form (WHO CIDI-SF) for a Major Depressive Episode; Defined as experiencing nonspecific psychological distress OR having major depression
Diagnosed Alcohol/Drug Dependence	Have you been diagnosed as having a drug or alcohol use problem?
Current Alcohol/Drug Dependence	WHO CIDI-SF for alcohol dependence and for drug dependence; Defined as having alcohol/drug dependence if reported having 3 or more of the 7 symptoms of the CIDI-SF for alcohol dependence or drug dependence.
Domestic Violence	16-question Conflict Tactics Scale for interpersonal violence (modified version); Any moderate or severe threats or violence within the past year.
Probable Learning Disability	Score of 12 or greater on the Washington State Learning Needs Scale