Second-Chance Programs for Youth in the USA

Dan Bloom | MDRC | November 2017
Outline

US context

Disconnected youth in the US

Evaluation methods

Second-chance programs for youth

Lessons
US Context

- US policies and economic/social conditions vary greatly from state to state
- Key economic and social trends on next few slides
Declining wages for less educated

Hourly Wages by Education Level

(Normalized: 1973=100)
Less educated men less likely to work

Percent of Working-age Men in Workforce

![Graph showing the percentage of working-age men in the workforce by level of education over time. The graph indicates a downward trend in the percentage of men with high school education or less, and a steady percentage for those with some college education.](image-url)
Fewer young people working

Employment to Population Ratio
Mass incarceration

The Growth Of Incarceration
U.S. imprisonment rate per 100,000 people since 1880

FIVETHIRTYEIGHT
SOURCE: BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS
Disconnected youth in US

- Usually defined as youth, ages 16-24, neither working nor in school
- Nearly 5 million disconnected youth in US today
Disconnected Youth are Diverse

- Consistently Connected: 60%
- Initially Connected: 15%
- Later Connected: 15%
- Never Connected: 10%

Demographics:
- 39% live in a poor household
- 29% dropped out of high school
- 52% are male

- Black: 21.6%
- Native American: 20.3%
- Latino: 16.3%
- White: 11.3%
- Asian: 7.9%
% of youth who are disconnected 2008-2015

- 2008: 12%
- 2009: 14.7%
- 2010: 14%
- 2011: 14%
- 2012: 12%
- 2013: 12%
- 2014: 12%
- 2015: 12.3%

Recession
Disconnected youth rate, 2015

7.1%  9.7%  11.5%  12.3%  14.3%  17.5%
About the GED

- All US states offer high school equivalency test (often called the GED)
- Pathway to postsecondary education for high school dropouts
- But...
  - GED has limited value in labor market
  - Most GED holders do not complete college
Program evaluation

• Government funding increasingly going to programs with strong evaluation evidence

• Many types of evaluation
  – Implementation/process studies
  – Cost studies
  – Impact or outcome studies*
Evaluation Methods

Descriptive
Program participants

75% earned a GED

Comparison
Program participants

75% earned a GED

Comparison group

50% earned a GED

25% difference
Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT)
Example: College completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Career Academy</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Urban students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College completion rate</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
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US Context | Youth | Evaluation | Programs | Lessons
Example: College completion

- Career Academy: 49.7%
- Control: 50%
- Urban students: 27.8%
Example: College completion

- Career Academy: 49.7%
- Control: 50%
- Urban students: 27.8%
Second-chance programs

• No system for disconnected youth
• Programs vary from place to place
• Many youth go to GED prep or alternative high schools
• A few larger, federally funded youth programs
  – Often operated by nonprofit organizations
  – Small relative to the need
Second chance programs offer...

Education

Training

Work Experience

Youth Development

US Context

Youth

Evaluation

Programs

Lessons
Key second-chance programs
Job Corps
Job Corps

- Federally funded
- 125 programs
- Mostly residential program for ages 16-24
- 60,000 youth per year
- Education, job training
Job Corps Four-Year Findings

Earned GED (%)

- Program: 41.6%
- Control: 26.6%

Year 4 Earnings ($)

- Program: $10,296
- Control: $9,324

15pp impact

$972 impact
National Guard Youth ChalleNGe
National Guard Youth Challenge

• In 28 states, federal and state funding
• 5-month residential program for ages 16-18, who have dropped out of high school
• 12,000 youth per year
• Military-like structure
• Education, leadership, service, health, and other components.
Challenge Three-Year Findings

- **16pp** increase in GED receipt
- **$2,266** increase in Year 3 earnings
YouthBuild

US Context  Youth  Evaluation  Programs  Lessons
YouthBuild

- 260 programs in 46 states, mostly funded by the federal government
  - Also in 21 other countries
- Ages 16-24, mostly high school dropouts
- 10,000 youth per year (US only)
- Education, skills training, leadership, construction of housing
YouthBuild 30-Month Findings

14pp increase in GED receipt

$16 increase in weekly earnings
Young Adult Internship Program
YAIP

- Operates in New York City by nonprofit organizations with city funding
- Disconnected youth ages 16-24
- 1,800 youth per year
- Provides 14-week paid internship
YAIP One-Year Findings

$3,433 increase in year 1 earnings

29pp increase in year 1 employment

US Context  Youth  Evaluation  Programs  Lessons
Lessons (1)

•Disconnected youth are diverse; different programs needed for different types of youth
  – Who helps youth decide where to go?
  – How about youth who don’t volunteer?

•RCTs show programs can improve education and employment, but gains are small
Lessons (2)

• Biggest challenge is keeping youth engaged
  – Progress is usually not steady
  – Opportunities for leadership, service may help youth see themselves differently
  – Need supports to help youth meet daily needs and address barriers to success
  – Youth may relate better to staff who come from their backgrounds