

Job Corps Pays off for Disadvantaged Youth



As the largest youth training program in the country, the success of Job Corps matters deeply to the nearly 50,000 low-income youth served by the program annually, the employers who rely on skilled young workers to fill jobs, and the taxpayers that make the program possible. Does Job Corps deliver on its promises to youth, employers, and taxpayers? The answer is a resounding yes!

In the most recent program year (ending June 2017) Job Corps placed 88.1 percent of its graduates (26,472 students) in employment, higher education, or the military.¹ **A comprehensive study of Job Corps by Mathematica policy research found that Job Corps increases educational attainment, reduces criminal activity, reduces reliance on public assistance, and increases participant earnings for several years after program completion. The study's authors concluded that "Job Corps is the only federal training program that has been shown to increase earnings for (disadvantaged youth)."**²

Despite Job Corps' proven successes, an April 2018 *Wall Street Journal* editorial entitled "The Job Corps Failure" attempted to cast doubt on the effectiveness of the program.³ The editorial cherry-picked information from a March 2018 Office of Inspector General (OIG) audit (which focused on the record keeping of Job Corps transition and placement services) to suggest that Job Corps doesn't improve the employment readiness of its graduates and doesn't provide effective placement services.

THE REAL STORY ABOUT JOB CORPS TRAINING AND PLACEMENT SERVICES

Job Corps excels at preparing students for the workforce. Regardless of whether students complete their training, they are offered career transition services to ensure they have the tools they need to enter quality jobs, higher education, or the military.⁴

As a result, in PY 2017:⁵

- 90.5 percent of students who entered the program left with one or more primary industry-recognized certifications in a high-demand career field;
- 85.4 percent of graduates were placed in good jobs, higher education, or the military;
- 63.3 percent of Job Corps students were placed in an occupation directly related to their trade; and
- 71.3 percent of students were still employed after one year.

Job Corps career transition services

- Individual counseling services
- Personalized career development plan and job search training
- Job placement services customized to individual needs and career goals
- For graduates: 12 months of support services for housing, transportation, childcare, health care, work clothing and tools, financial planning, counseling, mentoring, job retention, and legal services

In March 2018, the OIG released a report on Job Corps transition services, examining a small sample of only 324 out of the 65,425 student placement records from PYs 2010 and 2011. The OIG found that documentation on the specific services provided during that time (such as whether a student was self-placed or placed by a career transition provider) was not being entered into each student’s file. This led OIG to speculate that the services were not being provided. However, during the review period, specific documentation requirements did not exist. DOL has since provided better policies, guidance, and tools for record keeping to document the important work career transition providers do. These improvements include more explicit instructions and additional training for career transition service providers on documentation and record keeping and a requirement that all documentation be scanned into a secure Job Corps database.⁶ The OIG report has determined DOL’s improvements to be “sufficient.”⁷

WHERE WOULD DISADVANTAGED YOUTH BE IF JOB CORPS DID NOT EXIST?



Who are Job Corps Youth?

Job Corps trains youth with the greatest barriers to success, preparing them with the tools they need to succeed. Job serves:

- Youth who are disconnected from education and the workforce
- Youth in need of intensive behavioral supports
- Youth in need of intensive academic support (63.2% arrive reading at or below and eighth-grade level)
- Youth who have dropped out or failed to complete high school (48% enter Job Corps without a diploma)
- Youth struggling to support children (11.3% of females in Job Corps have dependents at home)
- Youth with disabilities (3x the average rate for youth)

Sources: *Job Corps Disability Report PY 2016; MSO16 Separated Results and Characteristics, 7/1/2017-4/30/2018, EIS Population (Active)*

While the OIG report identified areas for Job Corps to tighten up record keeping policies (which they have), it was not an indictment of the success of the entire program. For over 50 years, Job Corps has been fulfilling its mission to connect disadvantaged youth to the labor force through intensive social, academic, and career technical training.

Job Corps serves young men and women of diverse backgrounds from urban, rural, and suburban communities in every US state and territory. What these youth all have in common is that they face barriers to success in education, career, and life due to poverty. Low-income youth are three times more likely than their more affluent peers to be among the 4.9 million out-of-work and out of school youth.⁸ They are more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system and more likely to be victims of crime. They are more likely to rely on public assistance as adults and more likely to raise children in poverty (See Appendix 1).⁹

Those who question the value of Job Corps—despite its proven successes—should ask themselves, where would disadvantaged youth be without Job Corps? What are the alternatives to helping them overcome the multiple barriers they face to a job with self-sustaining wages?

Without Job Corps, more low-income high school dropouts would face long bouts of unemployment and low wages

Low-income youth are less likely to complete high school, setting them up for a bleak future.¹⁰ Only 40 percent of recent high school dropouts currently participate in the labor force.¹¹ As they grow into adulthood, their participation in the labor force is 20 percent less than the average 25- to 34-year old.¹² And high school dropouts will earn, on average, between \$280,000 and \$350,000 less than high school graduates during their working lifetime.¹³ Job Corps improves employment and earnings for low-income high school dropouts. In the most recent program year, 15,939 low-income high school dropouts earned a high school diploma or equivalent through Job Corps and 13,726 of those youth also completed their trade and left the program with multiple industry-recognized primary certifications.



Without Job Corps, more low-income youth would grow up to rely on public assistance

A child born to the lowest income quintile, or to the poorest fifth of parents, has a 43 percent chance of remaining in that income quintile, or being very poor, as an adult.¹⁴ Job Corps helps break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. The National Job Corps study found that participation in Job Corps decreased reliance on public assistance.¹⁵

Without Job Corps, more low-income youth would be involved in the criminal justice system

Across the United States, between 40 and 50 percent of the prison population grew up in families in the bottom quintile of the income distribution—and boys from the poorest families are 40 times more likely to end up in prison compared to boys from the richest families.¹⁶ The National Job Corps study found that participation in Job Corps decreases involvement in criminal activity. The study also found that Job Corps participants are less likely to be victims of crime.¹⁷ The victimization rate for all personal crimes among individuals with family incomes of less than \$15,000 was over three times the rate of individuals with family incomes of \$75,000 or more.¹⁸

Without Job Corps, more low-income youth would be unable to obtain affordable postsecondary education and credentials



Recent high school graduates from low-income homes are far less likely to go to college than their more affluent peers. Those who do enroll find themselves disproportionately attending for-profit colleges.¹⁹ Unfortunately, for-profit colleges only have a 35 percent completion rate,²⁰ and even if students do complete, they are burdened with tens of thousands of dollars of debt.²¹

Job Corps provides an alternative to college for low-income youth to enter the middle class. In the most recent program year, 60 percent of students who left Job Corps

completed a career technical training program. And 87.3 percent all career technical training students—regardless of whether they completed their trade—earned at least one industry-recognized certification.²² These certifications greatly improve students’ earning potential—Georgetown University researchers found that certificate holders earn 20 percent more than those with only a high school diploma and 70 percent more than someone without a high school diploma.²³

The truth is this—Job Corps provides an opportunity for disadvantaged youth facing almost insurmountable barriers to be successful in life. Job Corps transforms lives—and this type of intensive and comprehensive education and job training is only available to them at Job Corps. Simply put, Job Corps is not only effective, it is indispensable.

¹ Job Corps Outcome Measurement System, Center Report Card (OMS-10) for PY 2016

² Schochet, Burghardt, and McConnell. (2006). *National Job Corps Study and Longer-Term Follow Up Study: Impact and Benefit-Cost Findings Using Survey and Summary Earnings Records Data*. Retrieved from: https://wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText_Documents/National%20Job%20Corps%20Study%20and%20Longer%20Term%20Follow-Up%20Study%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf

³ Wall Street Journal. (2018). *The Job Corps Failure*. Retrieved from: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-job-corps-failure-1524432262>

⁴ <https://epmh.jobcorps.gov/ePRH%20Chapter%204/ePRH%20Chapter%204%20-%202007.01.17.pdf>

⁵ Job Corps Outcome Measurement System, Center Report Card (OMS-10) for PY 2016

⁶ https://epmh.jobcorps.gov/ePRH%20Change%20Notices/Documents/PY%2015/PRH%20CN%2015-12%20Career%20Transition%20Casenotes/PRH%20CN%2015-12%20Chapter%204_transmittal.pdf

⁷ U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General. (2018). *Job Corps Could Not Demonstrate Beneficial Job Training Outcomes*. Retrieved from: <https://www.oig.dol.gov/public/reports/oa/2018/04-18-001-03-370.pdf>

⁸ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). *Youth and Work: Restoring Teen and Young Adult Connections to Opportunity*. Baltimore, MD. Retrieved from: <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-YouthAndWork-2012-Full.pdf>

⁹ Department of Health and Human Services. (2009). *Vulnerable Youth and the Transition to Adulthood*. Retrieved from: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/system/files/pdf/75846/index.pdf>

¹⁰ Department of Health and Human Services. (2009).

¹¹ National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). *Digest of Education Statistics: 2016*. Retrieved from: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017094.pdf>

¹² U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). *The Condition of Education 2016 (NCES 2017-144), Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment*. Retrieved from: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cbc.asp

¹³ Social Security Administration, Estimated Lifetime Earnings by Educational Attainment. Retrieved from: <https://www.ssa.gov/retirementpolicy/research/education-earnings-alt.html>

¹⁴ Greenstone, Looney, Patashnik, Yu. (2013). *Thirteen Economic Facts about Social Mobility and the Role of Education*. The Hamilton Project. Retrieved from: http://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/legacy/files/downloads_and_links/THP_13EconFacts_FINAL.pdf

¹⁵ Schochet, Burghardt, and McConnell. (2006).

¹⁶ Looney and Turner. (2018). *Work and Opportunity Before and After Incarceration*. The Brookings Institution. Retrieved from: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/es_20180314_looneyincarceration_final.pdf

¹⁷ Schochet, Burghardt, and McConnell. (2006).

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Justice. (2008). *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 2010: Statistical Tables*. Retrieved from: <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cvus08.pdf>

¹⁹ National Bureau of Economic Research. (2011). *The For-Profit Postsecondary School Sector: Nimble Critters or Agile Predators?* Cambridge, MA. Retrieved from: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w17710.pdf>

²⁰ Cooper, P. (2018). *College Completion Rates Are Still Disappointing*. Forbes. Retrieved from:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/prestoncooper2/2017/12/19/college-completion-rates-are-still-disappointing/#123b15f7263a>
<https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Certificates.FullReport.061812.pdf>

²² Job Corps Outcome Measurement System, Center Report Card (OMS-10) for PY 2016

²³ Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. (2012). *Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees*. Washington D.C. Retrieved from: <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Certificates.FullReport.061812.pdf>

APPENDIX 1: JOB CORPS CHANGES THE ODDS FOR DISADVANTAGED YOUTH

