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1. The Impacts of Workforce Development and Wage Policies on the Economic Well-Being of Low-Income Individuals and Families.................................................................................................................................. 1
The Impacts of Workforce Development and Wage Policies on the Economic Well-Being of Low-Income Individuals and Families

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Abstract: Among the primary strategies and challenges in contemporary anti-poverty policy are to establish and connect less-skilled individuals to jobs and career pathways that offer adequate initial earnings and earnings progression over time. This dissertation examines two types of policies that attempt to influence labor market outcomes and promote economic well-being in the United States. The first of these policies is the federally funded workforce development system that provides job training and placement services. The second is wage regulation in the form of living wage ordinances. The first chapter measures earnings progression among participants in Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs in the state of Washington during the period 2001-2008, compared to that among recipients of less intensive workforce development services. The study focuses on earnings progression rather than earnings levels to assess whether workers are likely to reach economic self-sufficiency within a short time. Based on merged Unemployment Insurance and workforce program administrative data, averaged individual-level regressions weighted according to propensity scores show that WIA participants had earnings progressions similar to those of individuals in the less intensive program. The second chapter measures earnings differences among job training participants in targeted and non-targeted industry sectors in King County, Washington. Comparing health care, manufacturing, construction, and automotive repair, the sectors chosen by the local Workforce Investment Board, to all other sectors, a fixed effects specification indicates few statistically significant differences in quarterly earnings of training recipients employed in targeted and non-targeted sectors. The third chapter measures the association of living wage laws, which intend to prevent poverty among employees in specific types of jobs, with the child support payments and earnings of noncustodial parents in major U.S. cities. This research connects two policy systems that have previously been studied separately, and assesses the role of wage regulation in the support of nonresident children. A difference-in-differences analysis of data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study suggests a positive association of living wage laws and living wage amounts with child support payment amounts and earnings, and no association of the laws with the probability of paying child support in full. Copies of dissertations may be obtained by addressing your request to ProQuest, 789 E. Eisenhower Parkway, P.O. Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346. Telephone 1-800-521-3042; e-mail: disspub@umi.com

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Subject: *Wages; *Well Being; *Child Support; *Job Training; *Children; *Payments; *Family; *Regulation; *Development Policy;

Classification: 8888: Social Services

Identifier / keyword: 0510 Economics, Labor 0629 Sociology, Industrial and Labor Relations 0630 Sociology, Public and Social Welfare


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Publication title: Dissertation Abstracts International, A: The Humanities and Social Sciences

Volume: 71