

PROMISE

**Promoting Readiness of Minors in
Supplemental Security Income**

Expert Panel Meeting Notes

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INTRODUCTION TO MEETING

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PROMISE gets to the core of the most persistent issues we deal with in terms of PWD being gainfully employed. Only 21 percent of adults with disabilities are employed. SSI is looked at by some as a benefit to *not* becoming gainfully employed, so recipients do not lose benefits. This initiative can be a game changer in terms of helping the entire family. Every child needs a critical support network that supports both children and families. The purpose of today's meeting is to hear thoughts from a diverse group of experts in this field.

PURPOSE OF THE PROMISE INITIATIVE

**JAMEELA RAJA AKBARI,
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The purpose of PROMISE is to improve outcomes for youth with significant disabilities from low-income families. Primary focus is support efforts to improve coordination and increase use of existing services and make sure families are tied into services where they might be eligible or are but not receiving services. The underlying premise of PROMISE is that better services can improve outcomes for these families. PROMISE's goals include increasing the independence of youth on SSI and decreasing their reliance on the program, as well as reducing the federal government's cost. Right now we're getting stakeholder input. The program involves collaboration among four federal agencies. The key elements of PROMISE include:

- Focusing services to both youth and families rather than only focusing on youth;
- Waivers, if possible and if needed
- Rigorous design evaluation that SSA will lead, with input from ED
- Incentive and outcome-based payments that SSA will be in charge of developing and implementing. These might have pay-for-success payments.

The moderator facilitated introductions among panelists and attendees. The moderator also noted that this meeting was intended to gather input from experts outside of the federal government. There will be a meeting in April for federal government employees to discuss the same topics addressed in this session.

PANEL DISCUSSION

TOPIC 1: POPULATION

For purposes of the PROMISE project, the age range of interest is ages 14-18, with a follow-up/follow-along period of 7-10 years. Within the defined age range, who are the “right” subgroups for inclusion in this initiative? Should we select for those with the greatest likelihood of success? If so, who would we select? What do we know about who would be most likely to benefit from this project in terms of reaching an employment outcome, reducing dependency on cash benefits, and/or leaving the SSA rolls? Who would be the least likely to benefit?

Are there any low-hanging apples in terms of youth with certain characteristics who are most likely to be successful?

NOTE: *We are interested in whether we put ANY parameters on the population within the group of youth 14-18 on SSI. For example, creative models are encouraged so a systems change model may not limit interventions to a particular subgroup.*

Consider any attributes, including, but not limited to, individual demographic characteristics (age, disability, gender, work history, educational background, etc.), benefit status (length of time on benefits, age 18 redetermination, adult versus child benefits status), family factors (parental employment history, number of siblings also on SSI benefits, public versus private health care, other parental demographics).

PANEL RESPONSES:

- **Panelist:** Are ages 18-22 are included?
- **Federal Government Employee:** The focus is to look at interventions pre-determination for the adult program in order to improve the potential for success in outcomes. Unless there is a compelling reason to extend beyond 18, right now the focus is on interventions at 14-18. This age group was selected due to re-determination before adult services. 14-18 is at the beginning of the grant—so someone could obviously go on to 22 if they're 18 at intake.
- **Panelist:** This may leave out some of the current recipients going into postsecondary, and perhaps the age parameters should be reconsidered. For example, there are recipients ages 18-22 who might have an intellectual disability who are still attached to their high schools.

- **Panelist:** I agree with those concerns. The clear target groups are those with significant disabilities (e.g. intellectual, developmental, ASD). They are those with high support needs. That group tends to be attached more to their entitlement until age 21-22. Many interventions that would be promoted are not normally going to be happening for 14-15 year olds, but for 16-19 year olds. May not be a yes-no or either-or issue. If we are doing a rollout longitudinally, it's not that much of an issue. However, if we just shut it off at 18, then potentially we lose one of the groups that the interventions benefits the most (people with mental health needs).
- **Panelist:** This is a longer-term project. Early intervention is great, but it's really a process of following participants for 7-10 years on these outcomes. It is structured for a variety of intermediary outcomes. We've done post-transition kind of programs, but there are a lot of issues with getting families on board, etc. before rolling it out.
- **Panelist:** A lot of these issues really relate to the ultimate objective of the PROMISE project. There is some debate over how to develop incentive payments and how much savings we need to accrue for SSI. There are a variety of different approaches depending on objective and ultimate outcomes. One objective for targeting is youth with mental impairments who are most likely to have negative outcomes such as issues with dropout and jail. These impairments include affective, anxiety, and other mental disorders (e.g., schizophrenia, ADHD). If you target that group, they are most likely to go off SSI. In terms of savings to SSI, it's going to be relatively small. That's one end of the target spectrum. Another is to target those who we expect to be on SSI for long durations (e.g. ID and DD). Consideration of the target population is essential so it's a matter of clarifying those outcomes. Depending on the outcomes targeted, it will influence target population.
- **Panelist:** Some of the work done by people on the phone is to find ways to identify youth that are going to go off SSI after age 18, depending on when they come on and their impairment characteristics. Something to keep in mind is that there are predictive models that can be developed that may be helpful with this work in the future.
- **Panelist:** A hugely important outcome will be finishing high school. If one were to pick that as a targeted outcome, it would have age implications. That will have a huge impact going forward on the young person's life, but I am not sure of the impact on SSI. The dropout rate among those who get kicked off the program is high. Thinking about the outcome focus will determine age and target population.

- **Panelist:** This depends on services. For instance, whether we're trying to get dropouts back in. Same for postsecondary experience—if they enroll in postsecondary without graduating from high school, then we shouldn't leave that population out. Maybe we should be clear in the application process that this is a population that could participate.
- **Panelist:** I have issues with the phrase “low-hanging fruit.” Sometimes if you take the easiest route you learn the least. Encourage some of the focus to be on the hardest to get off the program, so we know what it will take in the long run. Whom should we target? More recipients who require fewer services and whose removal would result in a relatively low-cost reduction in SSI, or fewer recipients who require more services, but will likely result in a larger SSI cost savings? A lot of youth still have significant disabilities when they leave the program at 18. One issue is the types of outcomes - these kids have potential impact on these outcomes. It comes back to what outcomes are you trying to affect. That will heavily influence who we target and the types of interventions. We have to weigh the potential impact of providing services to different types of groups (those with different behavioral disorders may need very different types of interventions than those with ID or ASD and the costs for providing those services will vary). Length of time on benefits is an indicator of whether or not someone will be on or off, particularly during their teenage years. Youth who have had their benefits appealed are also pretty big indicators of youth who will potentially be leaving the program.
- **Panelist:** What do we know about who would be most likely to benefit from this project? Would like to target those individuals who have long histories of being on benefits, but we think that if we had enough time to work with them (over a 7-10 year period) that interventions could work to reduce benefits and get people off the rolls. But we can't do that in a hit-or-miss fashion. Is the purpose just to see how many people we can get off the rolls the fastest, or is it to find and assist those who are the most likely to benefit from the interventions? Because they are two different questions. Those with high support needs have potentially greater range of benefits that can accrue to them than just being on or off Social Security.
- **Federal Government Employee:** The purpose is not to see how many people can get off quickly, as there would be risk that they would eventually come back to SSI. The longer term purpose is to change reliance on SSI even slightly; that would be a positive outcome. To the point about a longer timeframe to have the interventions take hold, we run up against the appropriations cycle. That is why we're confined to a five-year grant period.

- **Panelist:** The earlier the intervention to set up the context for employment goals...it's almost like intervening. We want to redirect people toward employment outcomes by creating better understanding and program support at the interagency level. We need to think about ways to redirect ways families look at the program.
- **Panelist:** Agree with previous statement. We need to try to change the culture—if we change it at 14 or 15 years old and run it out seven or eight years, it will make a difference across the group with a sustained level of change toward some of the things mentioned.

TOPIC 2: FAMILIES AND FAMILY INTERVENTIONS

What do we know about the families of SSA recipients aged 14-18? 18-22 years? Are there family variables or interventions with families that may be related to a greater likelihood that youth will obtain employment, reduce dependency on cash benefits, and/or leave the SSA benefit rolls? NOTE: Is it even realistic to ask the grantees to serve families in addition to youth? Will they participate?

PANEL RESPONSES:

- **Panelist:** Will families be willing to participate? Families are typically those with a low-income, high-poverty profile.
- **Panelist:** There are different groups of family circumstances. Circumstance of families with low education and low income and high poverty—we don't know that much about how that plays into kids' ability to work. The question of how to involve them is important. A pilot study could take a program that is already working with parents and try to get them employed and then try to work with kids to make it a two-generational model. We already know that trying to get a parent to work who has a child with disability is very important but difficult. There is this interaction with older kids particularly. There is a group of SSI kids coming out of foster care and that is a special family situation. Then, of course, very involved parents are a different issue. It is much harder to focus on families that have many additional problems, but it is important to get them involved. In working with schools, those are the families hardest to get involved.
- **Panelist:** If you don't get the families involved, they will end up being a barrier at some point, so it is recommended that we serve families. Limited research that says that getting parents involved in IEP meetings while kids are in high school will lead to better post-school outcomes in employment. There is very limited research on teaching parents transition skills, but there are promising practices out there that could be useful in terms of getting parents involved. We need to get them involved.

- **Panelist:** We know a decent amount of information about the family characteristics of SSI recipients, and they look a lot like TANF families. Approximately half live in a household with a disability. Families are facing multiple barriers, and they're also low income. We need to think about a family intervention approach. The benefit check may be the primary source of income—how does that impact relationships within households? Concern over whether youth earnings belong to family or to the youths themselves. Family buy-in is related to how the program objective affects the household income situation. How do we structure that intervention? I am not sure if there's evidence-based practice on specific family interventions that work, but families need to be engaged and informed about goals of program.
- **Panelist:** This should be an interagency effort—to look more broadly to work with families to reengage if they're not employed. We should relieve the tension of the loss of the check by replacing it with other income and/or supports. We should take a systemic look at the problem since that benefit check is critical to family income.
- **Panelist:** We should recognize the importance of income to the family unit, or we won't get volunteers. Whether you can select a subset of parents who you want to deal with in the intervention strategy becomes an integral question.
- **Panelist:** Regarding parent involvement, we know some reasons why parents are or aren't involved and barriers to involvement (language, lack of child care, lack of transportation, low-wage work, makes it difficult to engage). So we should think about barriers and then take that into consideration for our services for kids. Hard to take on both the parent and the child, but we need knowledge of those difficulties and ways to encourage involvement. We may want to use incentives. One way is to take programs already working with adults and bringing that child component in to make it a broader program. A separate way is to just get families involved, and we need to address barriers in that process.
- **Panelist:** What is our goal with the family—to get them employed or on board with the project? Is it realistic to think that we will get them back employed, especially if they've been entrenched in the system for a long period of time?
- **Panelist:** We should use a broad definition of family, especially when we're looking at low-income families. Need to include extended families and broader interpretation of what family means.
- **Panelist:** One objective is to align state agencies in a way to draw on existing supports, such as employment agencies. PROMISE should promote coordination of existing services.

TOPIC 3: INTERVENTIONS CORRELATED WITH SUCCESS IN OBTAINING EMPLOYMENT AND LEAVING THE SSA BENEFIT ROLLS

What do we know about specific programs or interventions that have increased the likelihood of youth on SSI achieving an employment outcome, reducing dependence on cash benefits, and/or leaving the SSA benefit rolls?

PANEL RESPONSES:

- **Panelist:** There are areas that have been around longer than others, but looking at four to six things, including supported employment (established evidence-based practice with MH and those with ID and brain injury) and emerging customized employment for small groups. Self-employment opportunities are out there. And then there are areas developing with internships (e.g. Project Search, Marriott Bridges). Research with varying levels of evidence (thin to good) suggest that interventions work in terms of getting people into the workforce at maybe 20 to 32 hours of work. What hasn't been seen are studies showing the efficacy of these, and tying them directly to a cohort of 1,000 or 2,000 individuals with psychological disorders or ID that shows a reduction of benefits or coming off rolls over a period of time. The number of interventions correlates with obtaining employment but leaving SSA benefits rolls, there is no data with a respective cohort. That is the promise of PROMISE.
- **Panelist:** There is no evidence for interventions that have led to a decrease in rolls, for youth or adults. There haven't been a large number of interventions tested. In general, we know that the likelihood of achieving employment outcomes comes from the emphasis on employment as an outcome and customizing employment experiences to meet a youth's needs. It is also important to measure the fidelity in which staff members are delivering employment services and emphasizing employment as a key outcome. The emphasis on which you place on frontline staff and subsequent measurement of intensity of employment services clarifies the goal for the management of the project, as well as the frontline staff. It also clarifies the goals of TA for tracking, if TA is on the project.

- **Panelist:** Agree about focus on employment because there is confusion in VR programs about what the goals are. We have our arms increasingly around employment programs that are good interventions for people with significant disabilities, but we don't track whether a cohort of a thousand people over a period of five years begin to really show reductions in amount of cash payments and coming off the rolls when compared with a thousand who do not get the interventions. There is a body of literature that has grown over the last decade that shows that people directly involved in work programs do have better employment and transition outcomes. How do we know that this is making a difference? Unless you have a study with a big enough cohort, for comparison purposes, then you don't really have a chance to prove a hypothesis. It is hard to do these types of studies.
- **Panelist:** The studies are sort of ambiguous. The 20 to 30 hours of work and levels of wages don't often drop people off of payments. Want to separate those outcomes because employment is a positive outcome.
- **Panelist:** We need to focus on changing the culture. Get families into schools at 14-16 years, and then come in with interventions afterward (late teens). Those who are most significantly challenged probably won't be off rolls for their entire lives. But we could get some of the people who fall through the cracks—they may still qualify for SSI but we could get them off if we do this right because they could get jobs making enough to get them off the rolls. There will always be high support-high need individuals on SSI, but we could reduce the number of individuals on SSI who are not attached to other services or supports (because they have fallen through the cracks) and who could become engaged in supports, and earn an income to get them off the rolls. We need to have a cohort that goes long enough, at multiple sites, to see long-term outcomes. If there's enough money, we have enough tools now to do some of this work.
- **Panelist:** To follow people for 20 years afterward and gathering administrative data on employment—there is a difficulty of including the group of youth who will get cut off the rolls anyway, so saving money on them is a moot point. They're not in that much danger of coming back on because the characteristics that made them eligible as children do not count at the adult level. So how many recipients who are "falling through the cracks" will remain on SSI after redetermination?
- **Panelist responded:** This will depend on the status of youth and families. They will probably need minimal supports. Families will go the path of least resistance (i.e. get the SSI check). In order to break that progression of disability benefits you need to change the culture and give enough time for the intervention to catch hold. Starting younger is good—14 is great.

- **Federal Government Employee:** We're being myopic in just looking at disability research and should be looking at the population at large by looking at research that deals with families of low income and all youth in getting them to work.
- **Panelist:** Families support interventions that we know work. Also an interagency question. There is scattered evidence out there, and we can't solve it by saying we'll work with individuals and get it done. The focus on employment is a critical piece, but has to take place in a broader context of family and supports.
- **Panelist:** Regarding employment, we need to look at the practices of those without disabilities. Corresponding income of employment outcomes, which is the operational issue. Employer engagement and how to talk to employers is important. Income increase generally follows job progression, so we should be concerned about second or third jobs. We need people to maintain employment. People need to be able to move along trajectory of job changes.

TOPIC 4: INTERMEDIATE OBJECTIVES

The PROMISE Initiative may well need to look at relatively short term intermediate outcomes that can best be seen as precursors to employment, reducing dependency on cash benefits, and/or leaving the SSA benefit rolls. What do we know about outcomes that could be considered intermediate objectives with a demonstrated relationship to the longer term outcomes of this project? For example, does the intermediate outcome of attainment of academic or vocational credentials have a strong relationship to the long-term goals of employment earnings and reduction in cash payments or termination from the SSA benefit rolls?

PANEL RESPONSES:

- **Panelist:** Look at what interventions correlate with success for getting people with disabilities employed. Leaving SSA benefit rolls is not something that has been looked at. Look at variables and things that happen while 14-18 years old and still in school. Several school-related variables are predictors of better post-school/employment outcomes:
 - (1) increased interagency collaboration;
 - (2) self-advocacy and self-determination;
 - (3) parental involvement (research around parents and not families in general). If these three things happen, youth have an increased chance to experience better employment outcomes.

The National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) also looked at classroom practices and things teachers can do to improve employment skills. The list of 16 interventions is on its website.

- **Panelist:** Focus on education as intermediate outcome—it is important to employment. Have test scores or graduation as intermediate outcomes. Would include postsecondary, as well.
- **Panelist:** Looking at post-school outcomes as big long-term objective; look at things that keep kids in school as intermediate objectives (keeping kids in school until they graduate will lead to better post-school outcomes). Look at credits earned, GPA, suspensions, and expulsions—these would be intermediate outcomes.
- **Panelist:** Dropout rates could be considered an intermediate outcome.

- **Panelist:** Ultimate goal is employment and reduction in SSI benefits. Extent to which providers will base the interventions on some evidence-based practices. Will there be funding to keep going along the way...?
- **Panelist:** School retention is important. Even whether or not they're receiving special education services. Two-thirds are in special education, but what's happening with the other third? If employment is ultimate outcome, it's an intermediate outcome too.
- **Panelist:** Last June, in the IDD journal, there was research suggesting a strong correlation between paid work and employment outcomes. The closer student got to actual employment, the better the employment outcomes were.
- **Panelist:** Differentiate different types of experiences being provided early on in education and employment—it's not just a single work experience in school that leads to better outcomes; its career exploration and multiple experiences (tryouts) that lead to better outcomes. Is it possible that there were non-paid work experiences (job shadowing, volunteering, unpaid internships) that preceded the paid work experience?
- **Panelist:** Consider the high school credentials students get ... young people who exit with credentials other than a regular diploma are at specific disadvantage to accessing jobs; The type of diploma or credential you get is correlated with varying outcomes—see the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) for further information.
- **Federal Government Employee:** Regarding the correlation between paid work and post-21 employment. What is the quality of that paid work? Enough to leave benefits, to replace Medicaid? Looking at studies in relation to income adequacy.
- **Panelist:** That factor is being looked at, but is not going to come out until later (2014-15). Would be possible to look at previous correlational studies to see if they talk about the types of jobs. NLTS data might be helpful.
- **Panelist:** NLTS might look at correlational studies. Be careful in terms of making sure we have fidelity measures on the interventions and that it is an intermediate outcome too.
- **Panelist:** Work experiences during times when students are traditionally not in school—summers and holiday breaks—should be strongly considered.

- **Panelist:** Social isolation is an important issue—measuring social interaction (particularly in youth diagnosed with emotional and behavioral disorders) should be an intermediate outcome. We should also gauge the use of existing services.
- **Panelist:** Self-determination skills should also be gauged as an intermediate outcome.
- **Panelist:** Any of the 16 NSTTAC outcomes could be intermediate objectives—we would just need to decide which ones. These include: Career awareness, community experiences, exit exam requirements/ high school diploma status, inclusion in general education, interagency collaboration, occupational courses, paid work experience, parental involvement, program of study, self-advocacy/ self-determination, self-care/ independent living skills, social skills, student support, transition program, vocational education, and work study.

TOPIC 5: STATUTORY OR REGULATORY BARRIERS

What statutory or regulatory barriers exist that reduce or limit individuals on SSA benefits from seeking employment, reducing dependency on cash benefits, and/or leaving the SSA rolls? What is the evidence for the effect of these barriers? Which of the above laws or regulations might need to be waived or otherwise modified to improve the chances of success in reaching the goals of the Promise Initiative? What statutory or regulatory provisions could be enhanced (for example, enhancements or additions to existing work incentives) that would improve the chances of success in reaching the goals of the Promise Initiative?

PANEL RESPONSES:

- **Panelist:** We should think more broadly—think about the context of the incentives that push SSI and particularly state programs, and most notably TANF. State programs that push accessing SSI and then reliance on SSI. If you're really looking for ways to change the culture, you have to deal with the incentives. An ambitious option is to create a separate program separate from SSI that is an intermediary to SSI that deals with youth with disabilities. In terms of SSI, if you're looking at adult outcomes, the redetermination is a big one, as is whether youth have time to prove eligibility. The age-18 redetermination issue is a complex one and it influences employment decisions because they are potentially risking adult SSI if they do go to work so find ways to address that redetermination. Waivers needed?
- **Panelist:** What about giving youth with disabilities or any youth a trial period of five years when they could get their total SSI check and work as much as they want, and then drop them off like it was a trial work period (like SSDI)? Do you think that when we remove that cash benefit support that people would be more likely to work? Or would they revert back to a lower level? We know that people in their early 60s (e.g. the Gray Panthers) are shrewd about that, but people that are working are a different story. If we wean people off of benefits by age 35, we may establish a culture of work, and it may take hold. Once work attachment is established, less likely to detach. It may take 5-10 years. We can establish a work culture for the whole family, so they can see that they are capable of working. We can reduce the threat, and turn the algorithm around and make benefits contingent on having a job.

- **Panelist:** This would be fascinating to explore. This would be a radical way of changing the perception, which is what they did in TANF—to be time-limited with work requirements and moving it more toward having to work in order to get the benefits. We should not give them benefits forever, but we have a precedent to look at with TANF. People get triaged into the work path and the disability path.
- **Panelist:** One state used VR dollars to help family negotiate the VR system. However, RSA told them that they couldn't use money in this manner because it didn't lead directly to closures. Do we need VR use of funds waivers? Order of selection waivers? Look at using Department of Labor (DOL) apprenticeship and youth money.
- **Panelist:** This requires the resources and supports of more than one agency, and this has been challenging. This is necessary in order to support individuals after they exit school. There needs to be a more efficient way of pooling resources. Perhaps explore using waivers to pool funds.
- **Panelist:** To enhance the rate of reimbursement through Medicaid. We don't yet know what opportunities may be possible with the new Affordable Health Care Act.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION

- **Panelist:** Who is in the group falling through the cracks? Who are they?
- **Panelist:** A typical person falling through the cracks might be someone with a really significant learning disability who also has some behavioral issues, and maybe has been in and out of school due to suspensions. They may have the intellectual capacity to be able to work, but they are but causing challenges for their schools, families, and communities. This stands in contrast to someone who is nonverbal with ASD or a severe physical disability. The first person is of higher incidence, yet may still qualify for SSI. Some youth have mild behavioral disabilities that turn into more significant psychological disabilities later. They don't seem like they should be on SSI, but find their way there. These groups sometimes have an IEP, sometimes a 504 plan—it depends on how well their families work for services. Not trying to be vague, but it is a large group that once they're in the system, they stay there. And there is not a service system designed to pick them up. They often end up in and out of the juvenile justice system, and then also the substance abuse world.
- **Panelist:** A student who is falling through the cracks typically does not receive the vocational services that are necessary to promote successful employment outcomes.
- **Federal Government Employee:** Is this group likely to be eligible for SSI after age 18?
- **Panelist:** Administrative law judges determine that. The short answer is yes, but I'm not sure they should be. A significant number of those individuals are able to get SSI because in their schools and communities they have performed at a level that would not suggest that they have good work capacities. There are, however, other variables that are affecting them (family, community) that may not be severe enough for SSI, but may be able to convince an administrative law judge that they should be on SSI.
- **Federal Government Employee:** What about focusing on a slightly broader age group, perhaps 12 to 25 years of age. What are the possible upsides and downsides of doing that?

- **Panelist:** I love it. At 13, kids are in middle school, and in middle school and high school classes stay the same. Things start going awry in grades seven and eight. A nice intervention would be doing it right at that time and staying with it right until ages 22 or 23. We could offer a combination of family and community interventions through the teen period, which is tied around a meaningful employment and postsecondary set of options, and then transition kids at 18-21. Those options are staying with them because they've been embedded at early age.
- **Federal Government Employee:** The downsides?
- **Panelist:** It depends on the outcome. Starting at 12, what is the intervention, what are you delivering, and what is the outcome? The outcomes will be different for those at age 17, for example. Starts to focus on school achievement at a young age, and it makes the PROMISE intervention focus different because it's not on employment at a young age. Also, there is a different population (different disability characteristics) at the younger ages, particularly those with emotional disabilities (starts around age 13, mental health conditions start a little later). There are different populations at different ages.
- **Panelist:** Interventions will probably be more focused on the families at the younger age. On the backside, at the older age, you can look at multiple jobs and transitioning to different jobs. Get them on reasonably good career path.
- **Panelist:** High school teachers will tell you that the more the kids come to them from a middle school that provided for career education exposure and family participation, the better the outcomes. Parents start to pay attention to employment around age 13 or 14, and panic sets in around 17, 18, or 19. Culture change in the earlier years will make a huge amount of difference. Some of this is related to family, but what goes on in those schools is very important—specifically, how they are integrated and what kind of activities, courses, supports, collaborative instruction they are given. That will segue into guidance counseling in high school. If you start too late, that's problematic. Twelve may be too young, but starting with middle school is smart. Earlier is better, before the genie gets out of the bottle.
- **Panelist:** The 12-25 timeframe is great, but in terms of these grants that are five years, we want to get them to the point of graduation. The seven-to-ten year follow—is there an agency that will follow them? Realistically, have to figure out what can be done within the grant timeframe.

- **Federal Government Employee:** What are we going to know at the end of five years that we don't know now? Are there sufficient data systems to support systemic responsibility? Who is falling through the cracks? Is a systems review of which agencies have their hands of kids as they progress through the system? We need some better understanding about structurally what are the causes of these cracks in the system.
- **Panelist:** I agree with that concern. What are the cracks is the big issue. Why are certain people more likely to fall in the cracks? It is challenging for schools to collect these data. What does that mean in terms of operational data?
- **Federal Government Employee:** Regarding the target populations within schools—if education is the primary locus of the effects of these interventions, schools may have a problem with this program. 1. Is it even feasible? 2. How do we identify schools which are likely to support SSI well because they support all kids who are or are not on SSI well, but have similar characteristics that we would like to focus on? If we were looking at those schools that provide promising environments for all kids in the area of moving from school years to work years, what kinds of schools would we look for (what would we look for in applications)? There might be a problem trying to create programs in schools for kids on SSI, so we need to think about that. Schools may resist that.
- **Panelist:** Educators typically possess little knowledge of the SSI programs. There may be a need to educate them about it, in a way that is relevant to them and focused on their comprehension.
- **Panelist:** We need to ask what teachers really know about the SSI program and their comfort talking about it. We should make no assumptions that the teachers understand the SSI program at all. We need to help and support the educational community, as well.
- **Panelist:** School-based interventions are difficult because the pool of SSI recipients would be limited. We need to interface with the school and do things the school cannot do, including reaching kids at their homes. We should leverage resources that students may not be aware of, both in and out of school.
- **Federal Government Employee:** Should we treat schools as a random variable in the assignment? Or not?
- **Panelist:** Do not treat them as a random or stratified variable. Treat the intervention as attempting to encompass parts of the school experience. Engage teachers in the schools.
- **Panelist:** Rigorous evaluation mechanisms are important.

PANELISTS:

Pam Loprest	Center Director, Urban Institute, Income and Benefits Policy Center
David Wittenburg	Senior Researcher, Mathematica
David Test	Professor, University of North Carolina—Charlotte
David Johnson	Professor, University of Minnesota
Bill Kiernan	Director, Institute for Community Inclusion
Paul Wehman	Professor, Virginia Commonwealth University