



WORKING, EXPECTED TO WORK PROJECT

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Prepared for
ALBERTA HUMAN RESOURCES AND EMPLOYMENT
People and Skills Investments Division

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Working, Expected to Work Project* was undertaken to review the existing benefits and services received by working ETW clients to determine the challenges they face in becoming self-sufficient. Findings presented in this report are based on a synthesis of multiple activities including:

- interviews with key stakeholders,
- an analysis of administrative data,
- a review of documents (reports, etc.) provided by Alberta Human Resources and Employment as well as,
- a literature review to identify and review information related to best practices in four other Canadian provinces as well as other comparable jurisdictions.

The objectives of the *Working, Expected to Work Project* are to:

- Review existing benefits and services received by working ETW clients (Section 3.0);
- Identify the characteristics of the working ETW client group including wages earned and hours of work (Section 4.0);
- Identify working ETW client use of Income Support and benefits (Section 5.0);
- Identify the effectiveness of programs and services for the working ETW client group (Section 6.0);
- Identify gaps present in the support and services available to working ETW clients (Section 7.0);
- Determine the challenges and disincentives working ETW clients face in becoming self-sufficient (Section 8.0); and
- Identify best practices related to working clients receiving income support supplements (Section 9.0); and
- Identify key findings and recommendations (Section 10.0).

KEY FINDINGS

What Income Support benefits and non-financial benefits are currently available to working ETW clients?

Alberta Works brings together financial and non-financial supports under four broad categories: Income Support; Health Benefits; Employment and Training Services; and Child Support Services. These supports and benefits are described in further detail in Section 3.0.

What is the profile of Working ETW clients?

AHRE administrative data showed that working ETW clients are most commonly single parents (61.8%) or single persons (26.7%). More working ETW clients are female (71.3%) than male (28.7%). Working ETW clients are most commonly between the ages of 20 to 29 years (35.7%) or 30 to 39 years (34.7%). The majority of working ETW

clients had grade 12 education or less (83.4%). Working ETW single parents remained on Income Support longer than any other family type.

Supporting working ETW client survey data showed that 90.7% of respondents had at least one dependent child.¹ Only 16% of working ETW respondents identified themselves as a member of a visible minority group. Thirty-two percent (32.0%) of working ETW respondents identified as themselves as Aboriginal. One quarter of respondents (25.3%) identified themselves as someone with a disability.

What are the challenges or barriers for this client group?

Lack of affordable childcare was a key barrier identified by AHRE key informants and Working, ETW survey respondents. Insufficient childcare options and supports can prevent parents on Income Support from being able to find or maintain work.

Transportation is another challenge for ETW clients when working. While many are eligible for transportation subsidies, commuting between home, work, and childcare is often time-consuming and difficult for clients using public transportation.

Poor life/soft skills is a main barrier among working ETW clients. Lack of life management skills, poor understanding of workplace culture and employer expectations makes it difficult for many clients to find and maintain employment.

Low self-confidence was also identified by key informants and working ETW survey respondents as a barrier to working. In addition to having poor soft skills, many clients lack confidence to find and engage in work.

How are program benefits used by working ETW clients to improve their employment situation?

There is a diverse range of employment and training programs and services available to eligible working ETW clients. Employment services that provided job searching, employment skills assistance, and access to resources such as computers, were seen by key informants and working ETW survey respondents to have a positive impact on clients' ability to find work.

Services that help to obtain child support payments for single parents were of great benefit to working ETW clients. Child Support Services and the Maintenance Enforcement Program were identified as essential services for clients who wished to obtain, register, and collect their child support payments. The additional income generated from support payments helps client find and maintain employment.

The Alberta Adult Health Benefit and the Alberta Child Health Benefit allow working ETW clients to address health issues before engaging in job search and working activities.

¹ ETW survey data: It should be noted that ETW client survey data is not generalizable to the population of ETW clients as a whole due to the small sample size. Therefore, data presented in this section should be interpreted with caution.

How effective are the benefits available to working ETW clients in helping them become independent from Income Support?

An effective mix of programs and services identified by key informants included combining individualized assessment, and education and job training activities, with childcare support and health benefits. Generally, this mixed approach helps Working ETW clients become independent from Income Support.

What are the gaps present with the support and services for working ETW clients?

An important gap identified by the research was the need for additional job maintenance programming. Working ETW clients need continued training and support after entering the workforce to encourage ETW worker retention rates. It was also reported that the Alberta Adult Health Benefit should be extended to single and childless couple working ETW clients who have left Income Support. It was stated that allowing this group of clients to continue to receive health benefits would encourage job maintenance and retention rates.

Suggestions for improvements in service delivery included additional training for frontline staff to ensure that knowledge and understanding of AHRE programs and services is up-to-date and clear. Also, it was noted that frontline staff could better serve and meet working ETW clients' needs if provided with more discretionary power to access additional funding for clients.

Are there any disincentives within the current supports to becoming self-sufficient?

Personal barriers among working ETW clients are a main obstacle to becoming self-sufficient. Low self-confidence and fear of leaving Income Support were barriers frequently reported by key informants. Employment earnings exemption levels were felt to be adequate and do not serve as an incentive to remain on Income Support.

The majority of working ETW survey respondents reported needing a modest annual income for it to be equivalent to Income Support and associated benefits in order to self-sufficient (\$20,000 - \$29,999). This finding was supported by respondents' actual reported income, which was typically less than \$25,000.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of recommendations can be found in Section 10 of the final report. These recommendations are based on the findings from AHRE key informant interviews and the working ETW client survey.

1 Child support orders and agreements should be obtained for all working ETW single parents and blended families.

2 Extending Child Support Services to all low-income Albertan families should be explored.

3 The Alberta Adult Health Benefit should be available to all ETW clients after leaving Income Support.

4 The transportation supplement should be increased for working ETW clients.

5 Expanding job maintenance programming in order to better support clients in their transition to the workforce should be investigated further.

6 Office hours for the Employment and Training Services should be more flexible to better accommodate clients.

7 Improved co-ordination of services and communications between government departments is required to better serve ETW clients.

8 Providing training and/or employment programs that allow working ETW clients to obtain higher paying jobs should be explored.

9 Staff training and knowledge of AHRE programming and services may need to be increased.

10 Additional research should be conducted with current and former working ETW clients.

SECTION 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1 Project Background

Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE) administers Alberta Works, a program that helps unemployed Albertans find and keep jobs, provides employers with skilled workers, and aids low-income Albertans by covering basic costs of living. Alberta Works is comprised of four components: Employment and Training Services, Income Support, Child Support Services and Health Benefits.

The Income Support program provides financial assistance to Albertans who do not have enough money to cover basic needs such as shelter, food and clothing. Those who are eligible for Income Support are also eligible to receive health benefits, information and training to find a job, and help to obtain child support payments.² There are three client types:

1. Those expected to work (ETW);
2. Those not expected to work (NETW); and
3. Those in need of academic upgrading or training (Learners).³

In order to qualify for Income Support potential clients are expected to undergo an Employability Assessment. It considers factors such as employment history, work skills, education, life management issues such as addictions and housing, career goals, physical and mental health, and family related issues such as childcare and family violence.⁴ Clients are then categorized into 1 of the 3 client groups as listed above. To qualify for the ETW group, clients must have one or more of the following characteristics:

- Employed and able to sustain full-time employment in the competitive labour market;
- Able to be employed and available for employment in the competitive market;
- Able to participate in an educational or training program leading to employment in the competitive labour market; or
- Able to be employed but temporarily unavailable for employment because of a health problem of six months duration or less, or responsible for the care of a child under 12 months of age.⁵

After qualifying for the ETW group, clients are required to develop a mutually agreed upon Action Plan or Client Investment Plan to work towards independence and self-sufficiency. A variety of programs and supports and services are available to assist clients in achieving their plan goals. Based on the identified client needs, clients are

² Alberta Human Resources and Employment. "About Income Support". Accessed: November 15, 2005 <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/isp/index.asp>

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Alberta Human Resources and Employment (2005). Income Support: Policy Manual Not Expected to Work Expected to Work. p. IS 02-02-01 page 2

⁵ Alberta Human Resources and Employment (2005). Income Support: Policy Manual Not Expected to Work Expected to Work. p. IS 02-02-02 page 1

matched to appropriate programs and resources for skills upgrading, finding employment, or aid in another form.

A large number of ETW clients are employed. On average, there are approximately 4,200 working clients⁶ who receive an income supplement, as they are unable to meet their basic needs.

The current *Working Expected to Work Project* was designed to gain a better understanding of the existing benefits and services received by working ETW clients, the challenges and disincentives working ETW clients face in becoming self-sufficient, the characteristics of the client group, the gaps present in the supports and services available to working ETW clients, and best practices related to ETW clients.

The research questions to be addressed by *Working Expected to Work Project* are:

- What Income Support benefits and non-financial benefits are currently available to working ETW clients?;
- What are the demographic characteristics of working ETW clients? (e.g. age, gender, marital status, education level, rural/urban);
- How many working ETW clients identify themselves as Aboriginal, immigrant, visible minority, or person with a disability?;
- What is the number of hours worked and the length of time working ETW clients have remained at their current employment?;
- What are the wages earned by working ETW clients? What benefits are provided by employers?;
- What are the challenges or barriers for this client group?;
- How are program benefits used by working ETW clients to improve their employment situation?;
- How effective are the benefits available to working ETW clients in helping them become independent from Income Support?;
- What are the gaps present with the support and services for working ETW clients?;
- Are there any disincentives within the current supports to becoming self-sufficient?; and
- What are the best practices in other provinces and comparable jurisdictions?.

⁶ AHRE (June 2005), "Working, Expected to Work Clients – Summary of Characteristics".

SECTION 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To guide the research process, a research framework was developed listing the project research questions, indicators associated with each question, and the data sources for measuring the indicators (see Appendix A). Work completed for the *Working Expected to Work Project* includes:

- Documentation and literature review;
- Surveys with 75 Working, Expected to Work Clients and 21 Key informant interviews;
- Administrative Data Review to profile Working, ETW clients;
- Development of an Interim Report; and
- Development of a Final Report.

2.1 Document and Literature Review

A literature review was conducted of the varying practices within Canada and internationally in regards to social assistance client groups, program administration, and service delivery. This review consisted of the following provinces as requested by AHRE: Alberta, Québec, Ontario and British Columbia. Furthermore, international research was reviewed presenting findings from successful programs from the United Kingdom.

2.2 Profile of Working Expected to Work Clients

AHRE provided the Consultant with the following documents for review

- *Working Expected to Work Clients – Summary of Characteristics*;
- *Profile of Non-Learner Alberta Works Clients*; and
- A presentation of *Single and Single-parent ETW Clients Characteristics*.

These documents were used to create a profile of working ETW clients and to provide greater understanding of the client group characteristics.

2.3 Survey of Working Expected to Work Clients

Malatest conducted telephone surveys with 75 working Expected to Work clients in order to answer research questions pertaining to the effectiveness of Income Support services and benefits.

2.3.1 Sampling Plan

In November 2005, there were approximately 3,630 working ETW clients in Alberta.⁷ The 3,630 cases from November 2005 were distributed through 6 regions in Alberta as described in Table 2.1.

⁷ From data supplied by AHRE, Working Expected to Work Clients: Regional Caseload Distribution – November 2005.

Table 2.1 Sampling Plan

	Northwest	Northeast	Edmonton	Central	Calgary	South	All Regions
Number of Working ETW Clients	356	231	1209	418	1052	285	3551
% of Sample Composition	10.00%	6.75%	33.80%	11.71%	29.78%	7.96%	100.00%

Alberta Human Resources and Employment provided Malatest with the contact information of the 3,551 clients from November 2005. Malatest drew a sample of 527 client names. The sample was randomized to ensure an equal probable chance of clients being contacted to complete the survey.

2.3.2 Design of the Survey Instrument

The telephone survey instrument was designed in consultation with AHRE. Questions were asked regarding: client demographics, employment characteristics, education status, client use of program benefits and services, client satisfaction with program benefits and services as they related to supporting clients to become self-sufficient, and challenges and/or barriers for working ETW clients. Only slight revisions of the survey instrument were performed after the field-test. The survey instrument can be found in Appendix B.

2.3.3 Client Introduction Letters

Prior to conducting the survey, the Consultant mailed out introduction letters to working ETW clients in order to familiarize the client with the purpose of the survey and provide assurances of confidentiality.

2.3.4 Computer Assisted Telephone Interview System and Pre-testing of the Survey Instrument

The Consultant developed a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) programmed questionnaire that was administered by telephone with information entered directly into the database during survey administration.

A total of 10 survey pre-tests were completed. Although at the onset of the project it was anticipated that the survey should be between 5 and 10 minutes, it was found that the survey took longer to complete with respondents. On average the survey took 23.6 minutes to complete with a minimum complete time of 12.3 minutes and a maximum completion time of 38.1 minutes. A total of 75 working ETW clients were surveyed.

2.3.5 Surveyor Training

Malatest & Associates Ltd. conducted training sessions with all surveyors to orient staff to the key issues associated with the project. During this period, extra supervisory personnel was scheduled to address survey questions and/or identify potential problems.

2.3.6 Analysis of Survey Data

Section 5 provides a detailed examination of responses in the format of frequencies. As discussed in consultation with AHRE, due to the small sample surveyed (75 respondents) the generalizability of the findings is low and consequently, information should not be used to describe the wider population of working ETW clients.

2.4 Key Informant Interviews

The Consultant conducted 21 key informant interviews with AHRE stakeholders. The interviews provided information regarding: program issues and barriers faced by working ETW clients, disincentives to becoming self-sufficient, gaps in supports and services, the effectiveness of benefits in helping clients become independent from Income Support, and how working ETW clients use program benefits to improve their employment situation. The key informant guide can be found in Appendix C. AHRE provided Malatest with a list of stakeholders to be interviewed, the number of interviews completed with each group is summarized below in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2
Key Informant Completions**

Key Informant Category	Number of Completions
Corporate AHRE Staff, People and Skills Investment Division	3
Delivery AHRE Staff	8
Frontline Staff	10
Total Completed to Date	21

The Consultant sent an introduction letter to all interview participants with a description of the study and referenced the FOIP Act. To ensure timely completion of the interviews, the letters were sent via e-mail when possible.

Interviews were completed with stakeholders who specialized in a variety of service areas: Employment and Training Services, Income Support, Child Support Services, and Health Benefits.

A total of 21 interviews were completed with the final interview completed on Monday February 6, 2006.

SECTION 3: OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE IN CANADA AND ALBERTA

Section 3 provides an overview of the social assistance system in Canada, followed by a description of Alberta's program, Alberta Works. The four broad categories of assistance provided by Alberta Works are described in more detail in order to develop an understanding of the financial and non-financial benefits available to working Expected to Work clients.

3.1 Social Assistance in Canada

Over the last several years there has been a significant decrease in unemployment rates across Canada⁸. Specifically, Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan have all seen significant drops in their unemployment rates. As of December 2005, the unemployment rate in Canada was 6.5%, with Alberta having the lowest unemployment rate amongst all the provinces at 4.1%. Following Alberta with low unemployment rates are Manitoba (4.2%), British Columbia (5.1%), Saskatchewan (5.3%) and Ontario (6.2%).⁹

The decrease in unemployment rates in Canada is due mainly to higher productivity in primary industries (oil/gas and forestry), and an overall improvement in the economic condition in the 1990s.¹⁰ Although unemployment rates are low, there are Canadians in need of social assistance programming such as income assistance and supports in finding employment. Given the unique situations and needs of the different sub-groups of unemployed Canadians (e.g. single individuals, childless couples, single parents, immigrants, youth, Aboriginals), specialized programming is often required to address their needs.

In Canada, the federal government provides block payments to provincial and territorial governments through the Canada Social Transfer (CST) and the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) system. The CST is for welfare, post-secondary education and social services programs and the CHT is to support provincial health care.¹¹ It is up to the province or territory how to allocate these funds to social assistance programs. The provinces are not required to fund programs on a matching basis from the federal government. Consequently, each province and territory has its own system for providing funding to individuals and families whose resources are inadequate to meet their needs. While each province and territory has its own unique social assistance (SA) programming, there are common features between them.

As outlined by Human Resources Development Canada, the general social assistance framework is composed of five major categories: (1) legislative and regulatory policies; (2) short-term labour force attachment strategies; (3) long-term labour force attachment

⁸ Statistics Canada (2005) Labour Force Statistics.

⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ Department of Finance Canada. http://www.fin.gc.ca/gloss/gloss-c_e.html#cst

strategies; (4) collateral support programs; and, (5) the delivery system.¹² These categories are not mutually exclusive and in fact there can be considerable overlap between them. Below is an overview of each of the five categories of social assistance.

3.1.1 Legislative and regulatory policy

Legislative and regulatory policy includes eligibility for social assistance, setting benefits levels, setting maximum time limits for receiving benefits, increasing earnings exemptions, and providing tax benefits for low-income earners. Legislative changes are often made in order to reduce overall social assistance caseloads.¹³ In order to be effective, policy changes must include the provision of connecting to collateral supports (i.e. childcare) and incentives to return to work¹⁴.

Though social assistance is most often the responsibility of provincial bodies, service delivery is mainly conducted at the municipal/community level. Few provincially run programs are community-based and have the ability to adapt to local needs and conditions.¹⁵

3.1.2 Short-term labour force attachment strategies

Short-term labour force attachment strategies are designed to help clients find employment within 6 months, regardless of the employment they find. Examples include job seeking and other labour market skills training such as resume writing, work experience, and work placement.

Research has shown that programs focusing on helping clients find employment (i.e. job-search, resume writing, short-term employment) can reduce SA caseloads and increase employment rates and average earnings, but are more successful with clients with few personal barriers and with stronger educational backgrounds.¹⁶ Further, short-term strategies do not support some clients in becoming self-sufficient in the long term.¹⁷

Short-term strategies include several types of work force programs including workfare, wage-based work experience and wage subsidy. Workfare is when work is performed in exchange for benefits only. Wage-based work experience is similar to workfare but participants are paid money relative to the amount of time they work. Wage subsidy is when a client is provided a subsidized wage at their current job. These work force programs provide an opportunity for clients to become connected to the labour market. Short-term strategies are most effective when they are temporary, used as a first step

¹² Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) (1999). Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market.

¹³ HRDC (2000). Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market – Final Report.

¹⁴ Department for Work and Pensions (2006). A New Deal For Welfare: Empowering People To Work. http://www.dwp.gov.uk/aboutus/welfarereform/docs/A_new_deal_for_welfare-Empowering_people_to_work-Full_Document.pdf.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Gueron, J. and Pauly, E. (1991). From Welfare to Work (Summary). Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

towards employment and are combined with education and additional on-the-job training (i.e. long-term labour force attachment strategies).¹⁸ However, work force programs have several disadvantages such as their high costs and the fact that some employers may be reluctant to participate for fear of getting a poor worker or one who requires excess supervision.

3.1.3 Long-term labour force attachment strategies

The goal of long-term labour force strategies is to help those who have found employment keep their job, and to minimize the dependence on SA for those with the greatest disabilities or challenges. Long-term strategies are necessary because short-term strategies do not always support clients to becoming economically self-sufficiency. Many social assistance clients who have difficulty finding employment often have low levels of education, lack job experience, and often have multiple family or personal barriers. Research has shown that individuals with more education have a greater rate of employment, work more hours with more earnings per hour, and are less reliant on government support than individuals with less education.¹⁹ Short-term strategies may get people back into the labour market, but long-term strategies are needed to keep them there.

Long-term labour force attachment strategies focus on job retention and keeping the client in the labour force. At times, the difference between short-term and long-term strategies can be difficult, or arbitrary to define. Examples of long-term strategies include earned income supplement programs or policies, human capital development programs (i.e. education and skills training) and tailored or mixed programs.

3.1.4 Collateral support programs

Collateral support programs such as childcare subsidies, transportation subsidies, housing subsidies, medical benefits, and other various subsidies (e.g. clothes for work).

Childcare supports for families with children, whether through tax benefits/credits and/or direct subsidy, are one of the most important benefits that SA with children recipients can receive.²⁰ This is particularly true for single parents on social assistance as childcare represents a significant expense, and is often the main barrier to seeking employment. Other supports such as transportation and extended medical coverage can also be important in helping people transition from social assistance to self-sufficiency. Extending the benefits to SA recipients for a transitional period is often necessary to ease the transition from SA to employment, and to help individuals move towards self-sufficiency.

¹⁸ HRDC (2000). Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market – Final Report.

¹⁹ HRDC (1999). Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

3.1.5 The delivery system

Provincial and territorial governments assume the responsibility of social assistance programming delivery, in some jurisdictions, however, program delivery often occurs at a regional and/or sub-regional level.²¹ The main reason for this type of delivery is that provincial and territorial governments believe that a local labour market orientation is the most appropriate for designing programming and labour market strategies for social assistance recipients.

An alternative service delivery method is the creation of “single window” social assistance programs allows administrators to place clients directly into an employment stream. Combining departments responsible for social assistance with those responsible for education and training is one way to ease a SA recipient’s transition from SA to employment. The combination of SA and employment services (i.e. education and training) leads to greater communication and planning among the departments, as well as less bureaucratic overlap.

3.2 Social Assistance in Alberta – Alberta Works

Alberta Human Resources and Employment’s Alberta Works program exists to aid unemployed Albertans find and keep jobs, to help low-income Albertans cover their basic costs of living, and to help employers meet their need for skilled workers. Alberta Works brings together financial and non-financial supports under four broad categories:

- Employment and Training Services
- Health Benefits;
- Income Support; and
- Child Support Services.

In order to determine eligibility for some of the Alberta Works components, a service needs determination is conducted. Qualifying for any one of the four components does not mean that an individual is eligible to receive services from the other components. Each of the four services has its own eligibility criteria, and specific programs within a component may have additional eligibility requirements.

3.2.1 Employment and Training Programs and Services

The goals of Employment and Training Services are to:

- increase opportunities for Albertans to make successful transitions from school to work, unemployment to employment, and from one career path to another; and
- increase the capacity of Albertans to respond to changing skills, knowledge, and abilities required by the economy.

²¹ HRDC (2000). Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market – Final Report.

Programs, services and supports include:

- Skills Investment programs and services
 - [Career Information](#)
 - [Training for Work](#)
 - [Work Foundations](#)
 - [Workforce Partnerships](#)
- Supports to Skills Investment programs and services
 - Disability Related Employment Supports
 - Part-Time Training

3.2.1.1 Career Information

Career Information provides programs and services that give individuals the information and resources they need to make well-informed career, education, employment and business decisions. These include:

- Career Development Services – includes [assessments](#), [client investment plans](#), [career: work/life case management](#), [career consulting](#) and [workshops](#).
- [Exposure Courses](#) – provides job-ready clients with the opportunity to obtain the job specific skills required for employment in as short a time period as possible.
- [Job Placement Services](#) – to help clients locate, obtain, and maintain jobs. It connects clients who are ready, willing and able to work with employers needing to fill jobs.
- [Labour Market Information Centres](#) – friendly well-equipped offices where people have access to job finding and career planning resources.
- [Youth Connections](#) – designed to prepare young people for learning and work by providing them with career and employment assistance.

3.2.1.2 Training for Work

Training for Work provides full-time and part-time occupationally focused training opportunities to enable clients to get a job and substantially improve their employment situation or adapt to changing labour conditions and skill requirements to sustain employment. Program elements include:

- Alberta Job Corps – an employment/training program that provides work-place experience and training for clients who have demonstrated they are unable to get or maintain work in the competitive labour market and have applied for or are receiving income support.
- [First Nations Training to Employment](#) – workplace-training opportunities for First Nations members in occupations that are in labour market demand.
- [Integrated Training](#) – skills-based training that combines academic and general employability skills with occupation-related skills.
- [Occupational Training](#) – classroom-based training that is occupation-specific and may include work experience.

- [Self-Employment](#) – training that facilitates entry into self-employment by offering clients formal instruction on business plan development, business counseling, coaching and guidance.
- [Summer Temporary Employment Program](#) (STEP) – a temporary employment program mainly for high school and post-secondary students to provide career related employment opportunities during the spring and summer months.
- [Transitional Vocational Program](#) – training and work experience to assist clients with a developmental disability to obtain and maintain employment and gain independence.
- [Workplace Training](#) – worksite training provided by an employer.

3.2.1.3 Work Foundations

Work Foundations provides full-time and part-time basic skills training to enable clients to pursue further job related training and/or to find a job and substantially improve their employment situation. Program elements include:

- [Academic Upgrading](#) – in Grades 10 to 12.
- [Basic Skills](#) – training in literacy and numeracy (grades one to six), adult basic education (grades seven to nine), life skills/personal management training.
- [English as a Second Language](#) (ESL) – training to improve English language competencies for clients whose first language is other than English.
- General Education Development (GED) – upgrading to meet minimum academic requirements of a high school education.
- Technical Entrance Preparation – intensive programs to provide entrance requirements for clients to Alberta’s technical institute programs.
- University College Entrance Preparation – intensive programs to enable learners to achieve the necessary matriculation course equivalents for admission to Alberta post-secondary institutions.

3.2.1.4 Part-Time Training

Alberta Human Resources and Employment provides two funding options to provide assistance to eligible clients who are enrolled in part-time training. They are:

- Skills Investment Bursary (SIB) – \$1200
 - maximum amount issued is \$1200 per semester to a maximum of \$3600 per calendar year
- AHRE Part-time Bursary (PTB) – \$300
 - maximum amount issued is \$300 per semester to a maximum of \$900 per calendar year

Students may receive either the Skills Investment Bursary or Part-time Bursary but may not receive both during the same semester.

3.2.1.5 Learner Benefits

Income Support clients and low-income Albertans may be eligible for financial assistance to participate in employment and training programs. Eligible students have access to tuition, books and supplies, and as well as income support during training.

3.2.2 Health Benefits While Receiving Income Support

Through Alberta Works, people eligible for Income Support (Not Expected to Work, Expected to Work, Learners) receive a Health Benefits Card that provides coverage for themselves and their dependants, unless they receive coverage through the Government of Canada (e.g. First Nations persons with registered status under the Indian Act).

Health benefits for Income Support recipients includes:

- premium-free Alberta Health Care Insurance
- prescription drugs and essential over the counter medications
- eye exams and glasses
- dental care
- emergency ambulance services
- essential diabetic supplies
- Eligible persons are also enrolled in the Albert Health Care Premium-Free Group

3.2.3 Health Benefits After Income Support

In certain circumstances, people who leave Income Support are eligible for the Alberta Adult Health Benefit, administered by Alberta Human Resources and Employment.

People who leave Income Support in the following situations are eligible to receive the Adult Health Benefit if they are living in Alberta and:

- People assessed as Expected to Work who have dependent children and leave Income Support for a job;
- All people assessed as Not Expected to Work who leave Income Support for a job; and
- People with a severely handicapped adult in the household who leave Income Support due to an increase in their federal Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPP-D) payments.

3.2.4 Income Support

Currently, Alberta has the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. In Alberta, the unemployment rate has dropped from 4.4% in December 2004 to 4.1% in December of 2005. When controlling for age and gender, we find that Alberta's youth (ages 15-24) have a total unemployment rate of 7.2%. When broken down by gender, male youth have an unemployment rate of 9.1% and female youth have an unemployment rate of

5.2%. When examining Albertan adults (25+), the rate of unemployment drops considerably to 3.2%, with equal proportions of men and women being unemployed. Despite the low rate of unemployment in Alberta, programs and services to assist the unemployed and those with low-incomes are still required.

Income Support provides financial benefits to individuals and families who do not have the resources to meet their basic needs like food, clothing and shelter. The level of assistance an individual can receive depends upon their available financial resources, their ability to work, and the number of dependents in the family. Income Support clients may also be eligible to receive supplementary benefits. Supplementary benefits provide additional assistance for specific needs, such as job search, childcare, or special diets.

People in three general situations may be eligible for Income Support:

- Not Expected to Work: People who have difficulty working because of a chronic mental or physical health problem or because of multiple barriers to employment;
- Expected to Work: People who are looking for work, working, or unable to work in the short-term; and
- Learners: People who need academic upgrading or training in order to get a job.

For the purpose of this review, the working ETW client group will be examined.

Persons who are eligible for Income Support may also receive:

- Health Benefits Card for themselves and their dependants;
- Information and training to find a job; and
- Help to obtain child support payments.

Income Support clients who are working continue to receive financial assistance with only a portion of their employment earnings being taken into account when their financial benefits are calculated. The earnings exemption amount varies depending on an individual’s family situation and client category. For Expected to Work and Not Expected to Work clients, the earnings exemption is as follows:

Family Type	Earnings Exemption on net income
Singles	\$115 a month + 25% of additional earnings
Couples (with or without children)	\$115 a month + 25% of additional earnings for <i>each</i> working adult
Single Parents	\$230 a month + 25% of additional earnings

3.2.5 Child Support Services

Through Child Support Services, Alberta Works helps single parents and parents of blended families get the legal agreements or court orders they need to obtain child support.

For single parents or parents of blended families who are receiving Income Support, mandatory cooperation with Child Support Services is expected in order to obtain a support order and have it registered with the Maintenance Enforcement Program. After Child Support Services receives a referral, the worker gathers information from the

applicant, and the other parent if possible. If necessary, the worker assists with establishing paternity, and in locating the other parent. The worker then attempts to negotiate an agreement with the other parent to provide child support, or proceeds to court to obtain an order.

Agreements and applications for orders are prepared in accordance with established government child support guidelines. Workers also register applicable agreements and orders with the Maintenance Enforcement Program, which enforces, collects and disburses support payments.

Child Support Services can continue to provide help to obtain child support after the parent stops receiving financial/health benefits.

Once Income Support clients receive child/adult support payments, the equivalent is deducted from their Income Support payments. This deduction does not reduce the total amount of monies received per month. Rather, the deduction is used to reduce the amount of assistance paid by the Income Support program.

3.3 Working ETW Clients

The information that follows this section focuses on one subgroup of Income Support clients, those classified as Expected to Work who are working.

SECTION 4: PROFILE OF WORKING ETW CLIENTS

4.1 Overview

The following section is a profile of working ETW clients. Using data collected from the working ETW client survey, AHRE key informant interviews, and AHRE administrative data, detailed working ETW client demographic and employment information is presented. Specifically, the following research questions are answered:

- What are the demographic characteristics of working ETW clients? (e.g. age, gender, family composition, education level, rural/urban);
- How many working ETW clients identify themselves as Aboriginal, immigrant, visible minority, or a person with a disability?;
- What is the number of hours worked and the length of time working ETW clients have remained at their current employment?;
- What are the wages earned by working ETW clients? What benefits are provided by employers?; and
- What are the challenges or barriers for this client group?

It should be noted that working ETW client survey data is not generalizable to the population of working ETW clients as a whole due to the small sample size. Therefore, data presented in this section should be interpreted with caution.

4.2 Profile of Working ETW Clients

Based on AHRE 2004/2005 administrative data and a survey of working ETW clients, a profile of working ETW clients was created which describes their family composition, age, gender, educational level, aboriginal identity, visible minority status, immigrant status, disability status, and program duration.

AHRE administrative data shows that working ETW clients are most commonly single parents (61.8%) or single persons (26.7%). More working ETW clients are female (66.0%) than male (34.0%). Working ETW clients are most commonly between the ages of 20 to 29 years (35.7%) or 30 to 39 years (34.7%). The majority of working ETW clients had grade 12 education or less (83.4%). Single parents remained on Income Support longer than any other family type, working or not.

Observations from the working ETW client survey showed that almost half of the respondents were single, 83.6% of the sample was female, and 90.7% had at least one dependent child.²² The largest percentage of working ETW respondents was between the ages of 30 to 39 years (37.8%). Just over half of working ETW respondents had less

²² ETW survey data: It should be noted that ETW client survey data is not generalizable to the population of ETW clients as a whole due to the small sample size. Therefore, data presented in this section should be interpreted with caution.

than high school (53.3%). Only 16% of working ETW respondents identified themselves as a member of a visible minority group. Thirty-two percent (32.0%) of working ETW respondents identified as themselves as Aboriginal. One quarter of respondents (25.3%) identified themselves as someone with a disability.

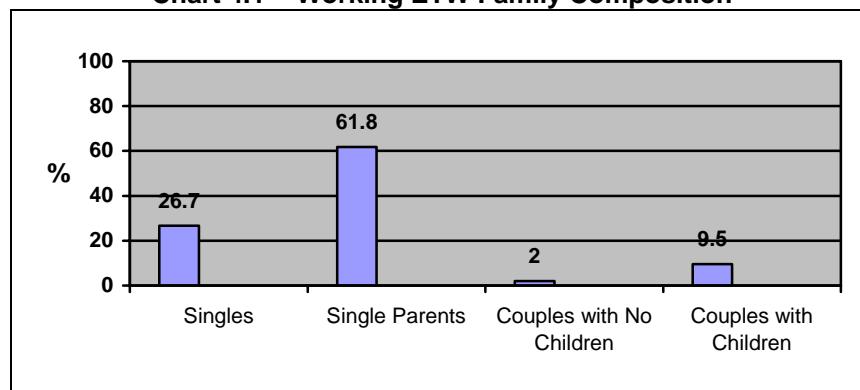
Further details of working ETW client characteristics are presented below.

4.2.1 Detailed Findings

Single parents (61.8%) and single individuals (26.7%) make up the largest portions of Working ETW Income Support Clients.

According to AHRE 2004/05 administrative data, single parents made up the largest portion of working ETW Income Support clients at 61.8%. Single individuals were the second largest family type (26.7%), followed by couples with children (9.5%) and couples with no children (2.0%).

Chart 4.1 - Working ETW Family Composition



Source: AHRE (June 2005), "Working Expected to Work Clients – Summary of Characteristics".

Almost half (48.0%) of working ETW clients are single.

The survey of working ETW clients collected the marital status information of respondents. Almost half (48.0%) of the working ETW clients surveyed classified themselves as single. The remaining 52.0% indicated they were either separated from a cohabiting partner or divorced (33.3%), married or cohabitating (14.7%) or widowed (2.7%).

The majority (90.7%) of the working ETW clients surveyed had at least one dependent under the age of 18 years. Twenty-two percent of working ETW respondents had one child (22.7%), 37.3% had two children, 22.7% had three children, and 8.0% had four or more children.

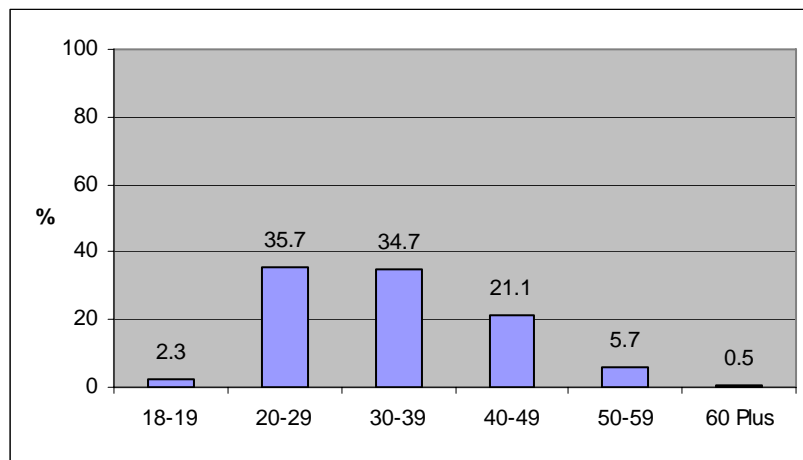
Concerning marital status and the number of children, 45.3% of working ETW clients were single and had one or more children under 18 years, while 28.0% of separated or divorced respondents had one or more dependents, and 13.3% of married or cohabiting

respondents had more than one dependent. The majority of the respondents had their children living with them all of the time (88.0%).

A third (33.0%) of working ETW clients were between the ages of 20 to 29 years.

AHRE 2004/05 data showed that the largest percentage of working ETW clients were either between the ages of 20 to 29 years (35.7%) or between 30 to 39 years (34.7%). Another 21.1% were between 40 to 49 years, and only 5.7% were between the ages of 50 and 59 years. The age categories representing the fewest working ETW clients are those under the age of twenty (2.3%) and those over the age of 60 years (0.5%).²³

Chart 4.2 - Working ETW Client Age



Source: AHRE (June 2005), "Working Expected to Work Clients – Summary of Characteristics".

The average age of working ETW clients surveyed in the current project was 38 years, with the largest percentage of respondents falling between the ages of 30 to 39 years (37.8%). The next largest percentage of respondents was between 40 and 49 years (31.1%), followed by 20 to 29 years (20.3%), and 50 to 59 years (10.8%). None of the survey respondents were under 20 years or over 60 years of age.

More Working ETW clients were female (66.0%) than male (34.0%).

According to AHRE's 2004/05 administrative data, 71.3% of working ETW clients were female and 28.7% were male.²⁴

Surprisingly, when compared to AHRE administrative data, the ETW client survey revealed that the majority of ETW respondents were female (82.6%).

The majority (84.0%) of working ETW clients had grade 12 education or less.

AHRE client data from 2004/05 showed that the majority of working ETW clients (83.4%) had an education level of grade 12 or less. Only 16.6% had some form of post-

²³ AHRE (June 2005), "Working Expected to Work Clients – Summary of Characteristics".

²⁴ AHRE (June 2005), "Working Expected to Work Clients – Summary of Characteristics".

secondary education: university (8.0%), other non-university (7.2%), or training in the trades (1.4%).²⁵

Table 4.1: Level of Education of Working ETW Clients

Education Level	Working Expected to Work Clients	
Grade school (grade 12 or less)	14,973	83.4%
University	1,178	8.0%
Other Non-University (Post Secondary)	1,336	7.2%
Trades	287	1.4%
All Education	4219	100.0%

Source: AHRE, (December 2005), "Profile of Non-Learner Alberta Works Clients".

Unexpectedly, 38.7% of the ETW clients surveyed for this project had post-secondary education as compared to only 16.0% in the 2004/05 AHRE client data. Among those with post-secondary education, 4.0% held a university degree, while 20.0% had a university/college diploma or certificate and 14.7% had a trades/vocational technical certificate or diploma. Just over half (53.3%) of the ETW survey respondents had less than high school education. Of those who did have less than high school, 42.1% almost finished grade 12.

The majority of ETW respondents live in a city.

ETW respondents were asked whether they lived in a town, city, or rural area.²⁶ Most respondents lived in a city (84.0%), while 10.7% lived in a town and 5.3% lived in a rural area. Of all ETW survey respondents, 40.0% lived in Edmonton, 21.3% lived in Calgary, 6.7% lived in Lethbridge and the remainder lived elsewhere in Alberta.

Twenty-five percent of ETW respondents identified as themselves as Aboriginal (32.0%).

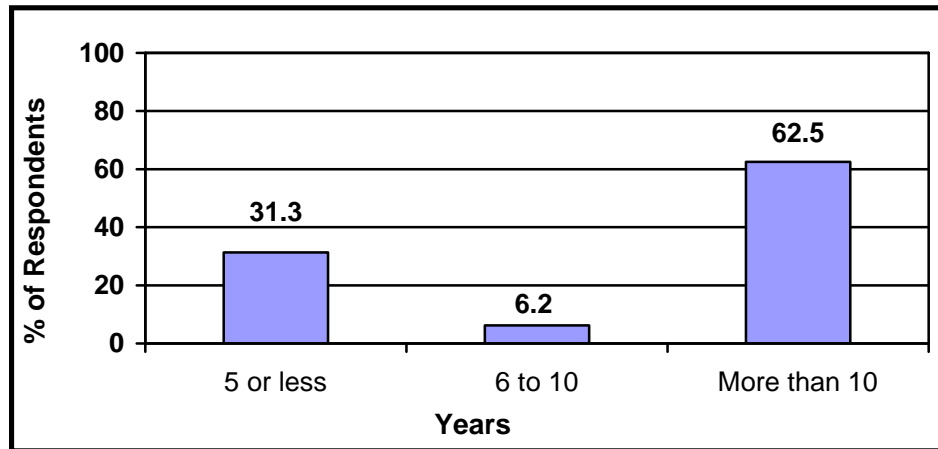
No statistics were available on Aboriginal identity, visible minority or immigrant status from the 2004/05 AHRE client administrative data. Among the ETW clients surveyed for this project 32.0% identified themselves as Aboriginal. None of the survey respondents identified themselves as Inuit.

The majority of ETW survey respondents did not identify themselves as a visible minority (78.7%). Most respondents were born in Canada (78.7%). Of the respondents born outside of Canada (21.3%), 62.5% had been living in Canada more than 10 years. Approximately one-third (31.3%) of those born outside of Canada had been living here five years or less. Of the 75 respondents, 77.3% reported English as the language first learned at home in childhood.

²⁵ AHRE (June 2005), "Working Expected to Work Clients – Summary of Characteristics".

²⁶ A rural area is defined as 10,000 people or less.

Chart 4.3 - # of Years Lived in Canada



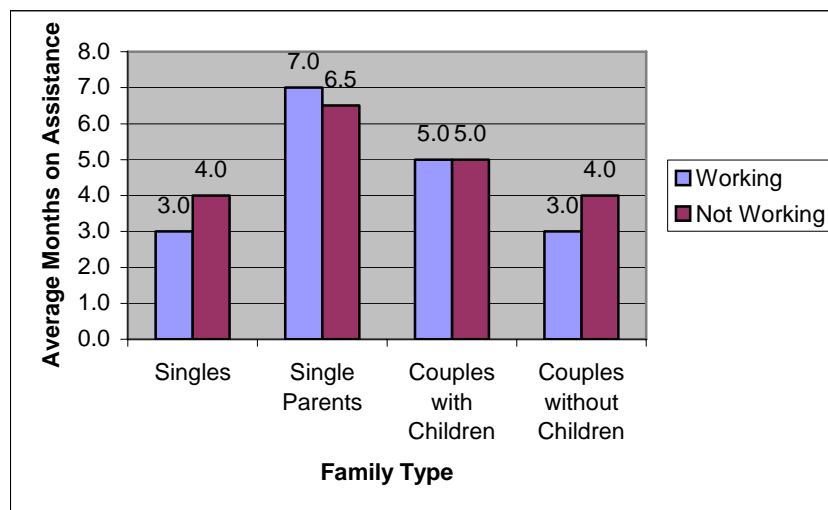
One quarter of respondents (25.3%) identified themselves as someone with a disability.

Of the 75 survey respondents, 25.3% stated they identified themselves as someone with a disability. Disability was defined as someone with a long-term physical or mental condition that limits the kind of work they can do. No information was available on disability status from the 2004/05 AHRE client data.

Working ETW single parents remained on Income Support longer than any other family type.

2004/05 AHRE client data shows working ETW single parents remained on Income Support longer than any other family type. Unexpectedly, single parents who were working remained on Income Support longer than single parents who were not working (7.0 months vs. 6.5 months). Please refer to Chart 4.4.

Chart 4.4 - ETW Average Duration on Income Support by Family Type (2004/05)



Source: AHRE, (December 2005), "Profile of Non-Learner Alberta Works Clients".

4.3 Employment Outcomes of Working ETW Clients

Using AHRE administrative data and working ETW client survey responses, a profile of working ETW client employment outcomes was created, including employment status, full-time or part-time status, major occupational group, hours worked, wage rate and benefits.

AHRE administrative data showed that more than half of working ETW clients were employed full-time in 2005 (58.9%). Further, more working ETW single parents were employed full-time (54.0%) compared to single persons (33.3%). The most common occupations reported among working ETW clients were food and beverage services and cashiers.

Working ETW survey observations showed that 82.6% of ETW clients were either employed, self-employed or self-employed and in school or training. Almost half of all working ETW respondents surveyed for this project reported working in Sales and Service occupations (45.3%). The majority of working ETW survey respondents made less than \$25,000 per year at their current job, regardless if they were still receiving Income Support. The majority of working ETW survey respondents (75.8%) received no employer benefits.

More than half of working ETW clients were employed full-time in 2005 (58.9%).

AHRE has three categories for employment type: full-time, part-time and self-employed. AHRE data reports that in 2005, 58.9% of working ETW clients were employed full-time, 39.8% were employed part-time, and 1.4% were self-employed.²⁷

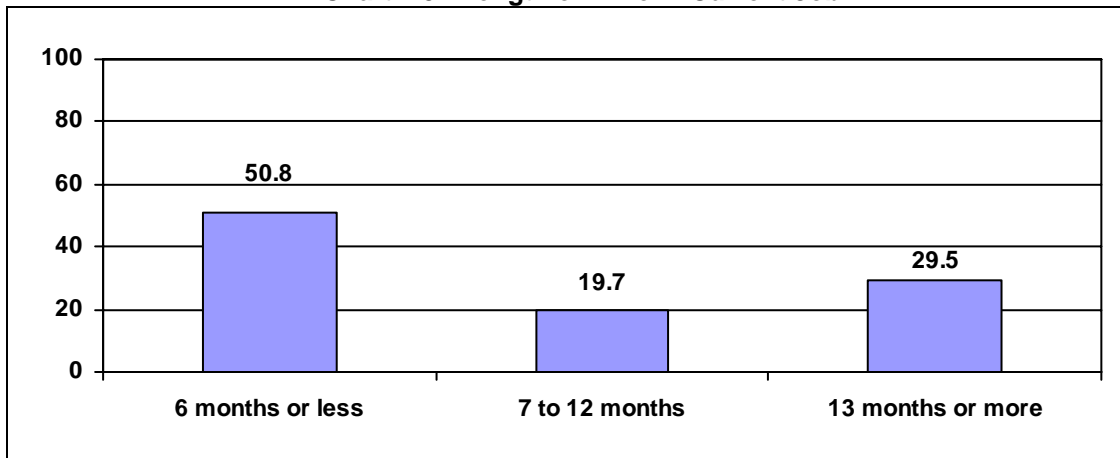
The sample of client names provided by AHRE for surveying were clients who reported being employed in November 2005. When interviewed in January 2006, 96.0% of respondents reported that this was true. Respondents were also asked their current employment status. As of January 2006, 82.6% of working ETW clients were either employed (69.3%), self-employed (5.3%), or employed and in school training (8.0%). Unemployed individuals comprised 14.7% of the sample and 2.7% were unemployed and waiting for school or training to commence.

Half of working ETW respondents had been employed in their current job for 6 months or less.

Working ETW respondents who were employed at the time of the survey were asked how long they had been working at their current job. Fifty percent (50.8%) of employed ETW survey respondents had been working in their current job for 6 months or less, 29.5% had been working 13 months or longer in the same job, and another 19.7% had been employed between 7 and 12 months in the same job.

²⁷ AHRE (June 2005), "Working Expected to Work Clients – Summary of Characteristics".

Chart 4.5 - Length of Time In Current Job



More working ETW single persons are employed full-time (73.4%) compared to single parents (51.4%).

AHRE 2005 client data shows that 61.8% of working ETW clients are single parents. Among single parents, 51.4% are employed full-time while 47.5% are employed part-time. In contrast, AHRE 2005 client data shows that 73.4% of single persons work full-time and 25.5% work part-time.²⁸

Food and beverage servers and cashiers are the most common occupations reported among working ETW clients.

AHRE 2004/05 data reported that food and beverage servers and cashiers are the most common occupations reported among working ETW clients.

When asked about their occupation, more than half of all ETW respondents surveyed for this project reported working in Sales and Service occupations (45.3%). Other occupational types reported include Business, Finance and Administration occupations (9.3%), Health occupations (9.3%), and Trades, Transport and Equipment Operator occupations (9.3%). Other occupational types contained fewer than 5% of all cases.

74.2% had a permanent job, 16.1% had temporary or short-term contract work, and 8.1% had seasonal work.

Of working ETW survey respondents who stated they were currently employed (82.6%), more detailed questions were asked regarding their current job. Almost two-thirds of respondents (61.3%) currently had a permanent job, 13.3% had a temporary or short-term contract position, while only 6.7% had seasonal work.

Thirty-eight percent of working ETW survey respondents (38.7%) were employed part-time (less than 30 hours per week) and 37.3% worked full-time (30 or more hours per

²⁸ AHRE (June 2005), "Working Expected to Work Clients – Summary of Characteristics".

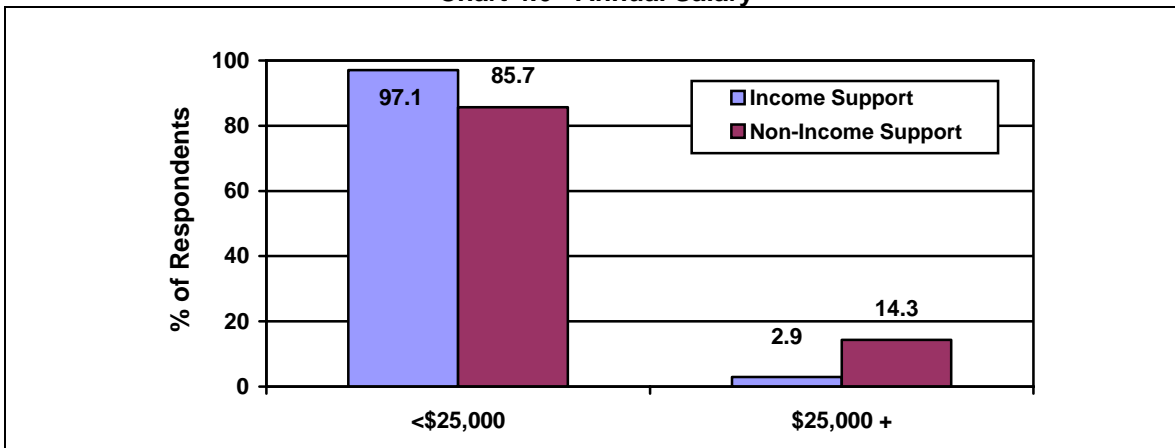
week). The range of hours worked per week was from 5 to 84 hours per week, with a median of 30 hours worked.

The majority of working ETW survey respondents made less than \$25,000 per year at their current job.

Working ETW survey respondents were asked their current wage earnings and number of hours worked per week in order to calculate their annual salary.²⁹ Employed ETW clients who were currently receiving Income Support (45.3%) reported incomes ranging from \$1,820.00 to \$31,200.00. The median income was \$11,375.00 per year. With the exception of one individual, all working ETW clients currently receiving Income Support made less than \$25,000 per year at their current job.

Among employed ETW clients who were no longer on Income Support, annual incomes ranged between \$3,600.00 and \$84,000.00, with a median income of \$16,354. Eighty-five percent (85.7%) of working ETW clients no longer on Income Support made less than \$25,000 per year at their current job, while 14.3% made more than \$25,000 per year.

Chart 4.6 - Annual Salary



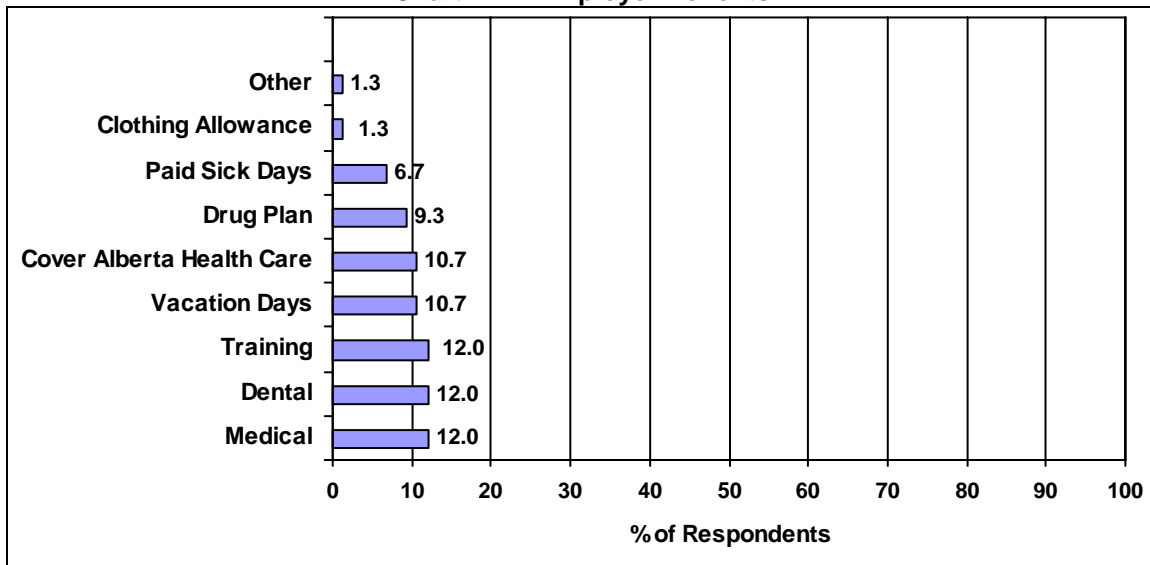
The majority of Working ETW survey respondents (75.8%) received no employer benefits.

Of the working ETW survey respondents, 75.8% stated that they received no benefits from their employer. Examining those who were currently receiving Income Support, 76.3% did not receive benefits from employers. Similarly, among working ETW respondents no longer on Income Support, 73.9% did not receive benefits.

For those working ETW survey respondents who did receive employer benefits, the most commonly received were medical (12.0%), dental (12.0%), and training benefits (12.0%). Some working ETW respondents also received vacation days (10.7%), Alberta Health Care coverage (10.7%), or drug plan coverage (9.3%).

²⁹ The annual salary was calculated by the CATI system and then confirmed with the respondent.

Chart 4.7 – Employer Benefits



4.4 Barriers of Working ETW Clients

There are many things that can make it difficult for clients to find and keep a job and/or leave Income Support. AHRE key informants and respondents in the working ETW client survey provided information on the key barriers working, working ETW clients experience in obtaining and maintaining employment and leaving Income Support.

4.4.1 Barriers to Obtaining and Maintaining Employment

The most common barriers for working ETW clients were lack of affordable childcare, lack of life/soft skills, lack of transportation, and mental health and addiction problems.

The most commonly mentioned barriers for working ETW clients to obtaining and maintaining employment noted by AHRE key informants were lack of affordable childcare, lack of life/soft skills, lack of transportation, and mental health and addiction problems.

AHRE key informants were of the strong opinion that lack of affordable childcare was a key barrier for working ETW parents. It was felt that the high cost of childcare was a significant obstacle for working ETW clients in searching for work as well as attending work. Informants felt that there should be more childcare options for clients whose hours of work fell outside of typical childcare business hours.

Key informants frequently noted that many working ETW clients lack soft skills. Specifically, skills such as being able to cope with stress at home and at work, managing conflict at work, lack of problem solving skills, lack of financial management skills, and understanding employer expectations, were all mentioned by various informants as barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment. There were those that felt more

programs should include training for working ETW clients to develop these types of skills.

AHRE key informants were of strong opinion that lack of transportation for working ETW clients was a barrier to finding and keeping a job. It was felt that without reliable and timely transportation, such as a public transit system, clients faced difficulties getting to job interviews, were limited to accepting employment in certain locations, and, for clients with children, unreasonable amounts of time could be spent travelling between child care locations and work.

AHRE key informants also listed mental health problems and addiction issues of working ETW clients as key barriers to finding and keeping a job. It was noted that clients with mental health issues and/or addiction problems were subgroups that required special assistance beyond what was offered by most programs and services. Many of these clients require intensive, long-term support before other issues such as unemployment can be addressed.

4.4.2 Barriers to Leaving Income Support

Problems with childcare and lack of confidence/self-esteem were the most commonly cited barriers to leaving Income Support.

Both AHRE key informants and working ETW clients were asked about barriers to leaving Income Support. Common barriers identified by both groups were problems with childcare, lack of confidence/self-esteem and loss of health benefits.

Among working ETW survey respondents, 38.7% listed problems with childcare arrangements as a barrier to leaving Income Support. AHRE key informants mirrored this belief noting that the cost of childcare is most problematic for clients.

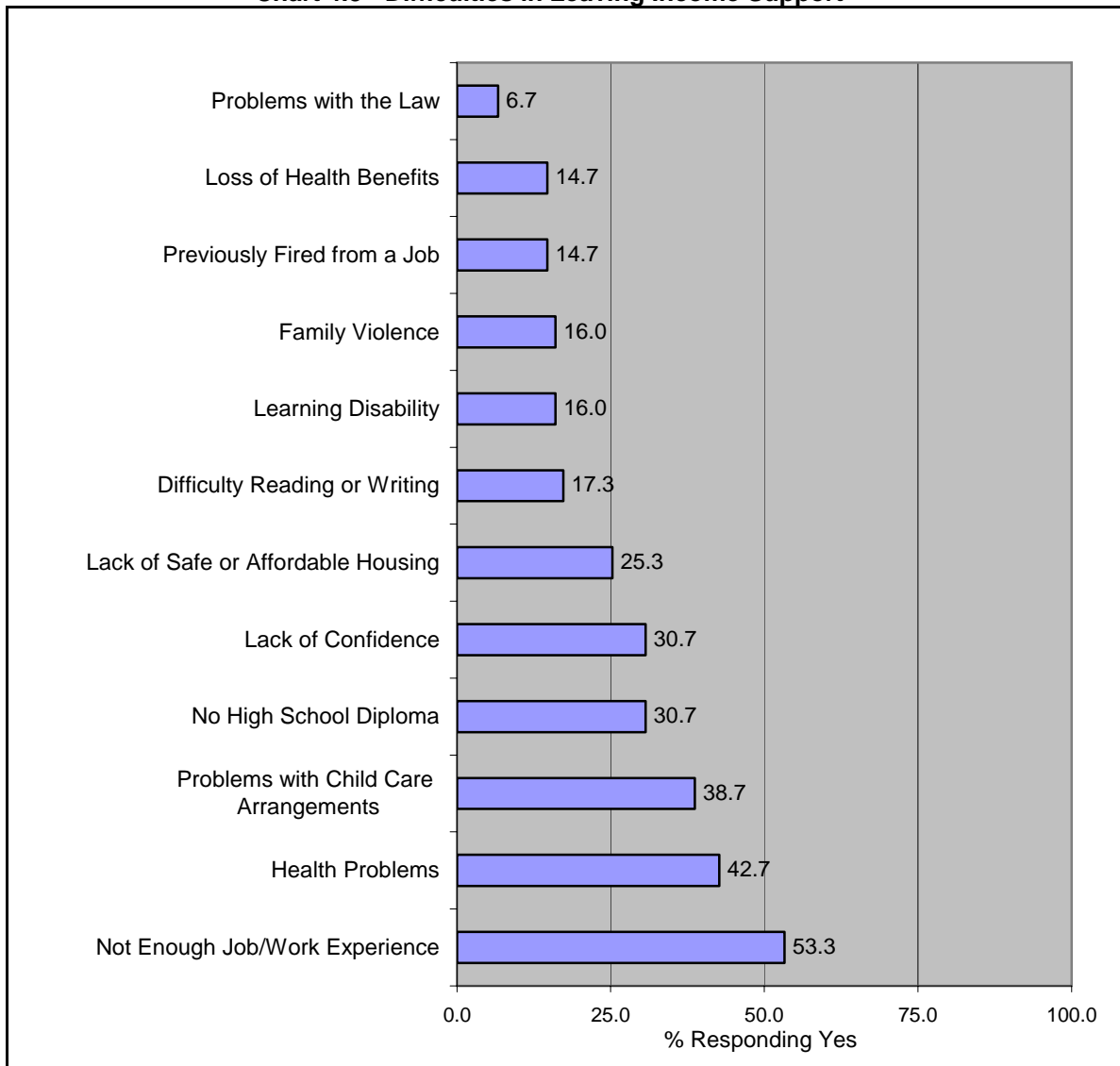
Lack of confidence was another barrier identified by working ETW survey respondents (30.7%) and reiterated by AHRE informants. AHRE key informants felt that working ETW clients often feared leaving the 'safety-net' of Income Support, often because they lacked confidence in their own abilities to be independent. There were those that mentioned this lack of confidence was intergenerational, that is, some working ETW clients were from families where their own parents had been clients of assistance programming. Key informants also pointed out that some clients were fearful of leaving Income Support because they held the perception that it would be difficult to "get back on" should they need to in the future.

Loss of health benefits appears to be significant barrier to leaving income support. Key informants generally agreed that the loss of medical benefits by working ETW clients that are either single or in a childless couple serves as a barrier to leaving income support. Supporting this, working ETW survey respondents commonly cited loss of health benefits (14.5%) and or health problems (42.7%), which can be assumed to require health benefits, as key difficulties in gaining independence from income support. Key informants also noted that some working ETW clients have high medical costs and

consequently it does not make financial sense for them to leave Income Support if they will lose their health coverage.

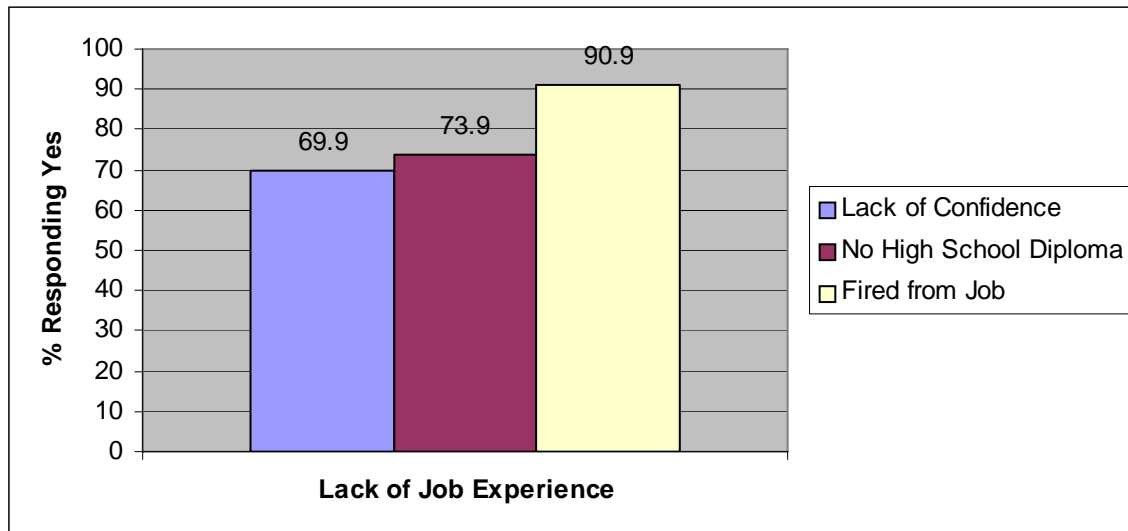
In addition to problems with childcare arrangements and lack of confidence, other commonly cited barriers (Chart 4.8) to leaving Income Support by working ETW survey respondents included insufficient work experience (53.3%) and not having a high school diploma (30.7%).

Chart 4.8 - Difficulties in Leaving Income Support



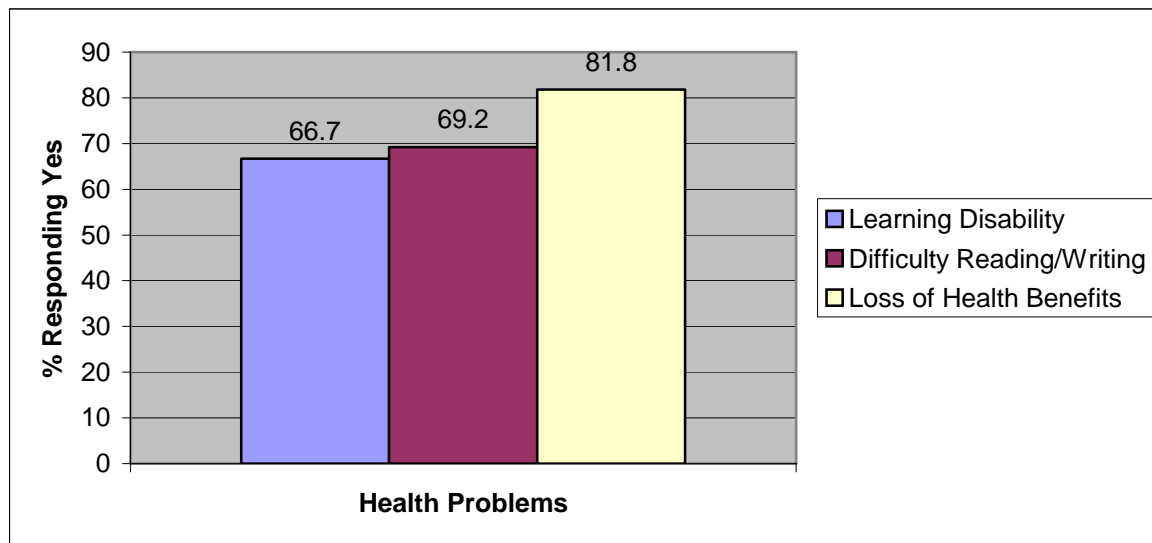
With respect to barriers to leaving income support it was found that experience of one barrier was correlated with the experience other barriers (Chart 4.9). Thus, respondents who indicated insufficient job experience as a barrier were more likely to also report lack of confidence as a barrier (69.9%), as well as having no high school diploma (73.9%) and previously being fired from a job (90.9%).

Chart 4.9 – Lack of Job Experience



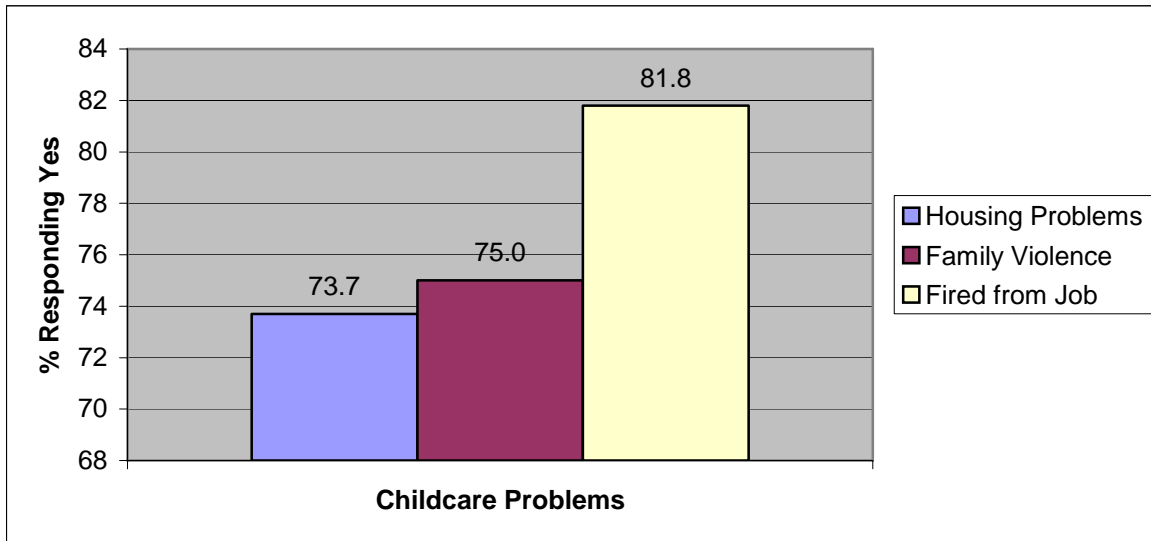
Similarly working ETW survey respondents who noted that health problems were a barrier to leaving Income Support, also more commonly reported loss of health benefits (81.8%) as a barrier (Chart 4.10). This group reported more difficulty reading and/or writing (69.2%) and learning disabilities (66.7%).

Chart 4.10 – Health Problems



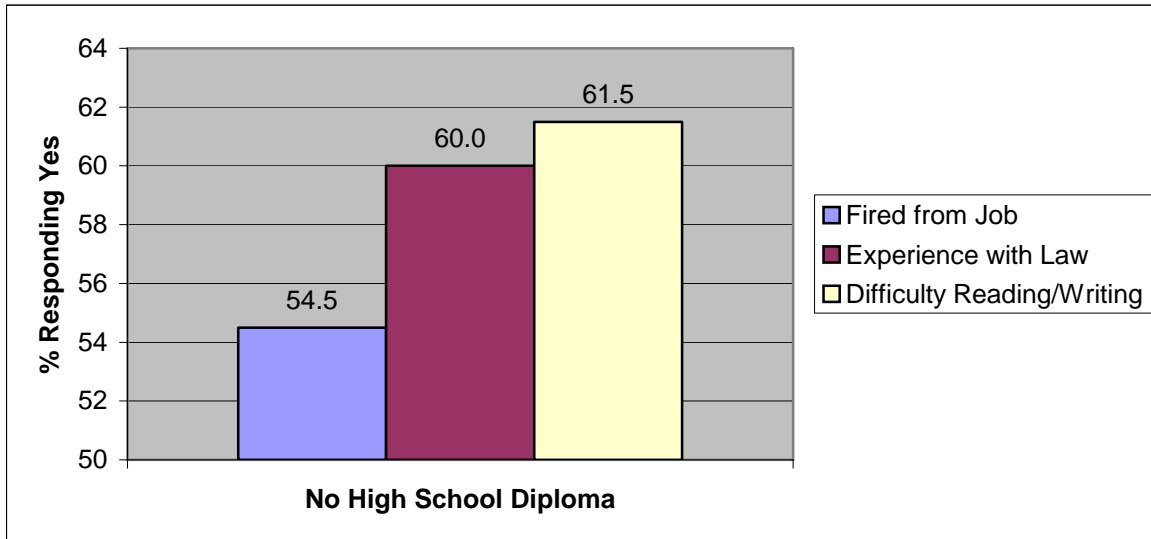
When childcare arrangements were a barrier to self-sufficiency, working ETW clients were more likely to report family violence (75.0%), lack of safe/affordable housing (73.7%) and previous termination of employment (81.8%) as barriers to leaving income support (Chart 4.11).

Chart 4.11 – Childcare Problems



Lastly, respondents who indicated not having a high school diploma as a barrier to leaving Income Support also reported difficulty reading and/or writing (61.5%), difficulties with the law (60.0%) and previously being fired from a job (54.5%) (Chart 4.12).

Chart 4.12 – No High School Diploma



SECTION 5: WORKING ETW CLIENT USE OF PROGRAM BENEFITS

This section outlines the findings of AHRE key informant interviews and working ETW client surveys in order to address how programs and services are used by working ETW clients to improve their employment situation. As defined by AHRE, there are five broad categories of assistance:

- Employment and Training Services;
- Health Benefits;
- Child Support Services;
- Supplementary Benefits and
- Programs and Services Available from Other Government Departments (e.g. Child Care Subsidy Program – Alberta Children’s Services);

Key informant respondents and working ETW survey respondents were asked which programs and services provided by AHRE were most useful to improving the employment situation of working ETW clients. Specifically, both groups indicated the programs and services that assisted them to find or maintain employment. Further details regarding working ETW client use of services and programs are provided below.

5.1 Working ETW Client Use of Programs and Services

5.1.1 Employment and Training Services

Labour Market Information Centres, Career and Employment Assistance Services, and Alberta Learning Information Service were cited as the most useful employment and training services for finding and maintaining employment.

Generally, there was consensus among AHRE key informants and working ETW survey respondents as to which employment and training services were most useful for finding and maintaining employment. Both key informants and working ETW respondents indicated the following as the services accessed most often:

- Labour Market Information Centres (LMIC) (34.7% of survey respondents);
- Career and Employment Assistance Services (CEAS) (30.7% of survey respondents); and
- Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) (20.0% of survey respondents).

In regards to LMIC, key informants noted that the advantage of the LMIC service is that working ETW clients can easily access it. Key informants generally felt that LMIC was an important tool as it provided a wide variety of information and resources to clients for job searches, training, and equipment such as newspapers, computers and faxes. There were those that noted that LMIC was an especially important service for clients with low education skills or with poor computer literacy because many of the resources did not require use of a computer.

Both working ETW clients and key informants also favoured Career and Employment Assistance Services. General consensus among AHRE informants was that this service was an important first step for working ETW clients to get started in the workforce. CEAS allows working ETW clients to develop important skills such as interviewing and job location skills. Other informants were of the opinion that Career and Employment Assistance Services was especially useful when linked to the LMIC service because it provided job skills with resources to find jobs. Approximately half of working ETW survey respondents (52.1%) who used CEAS agreed or strongly agreed that the service helped them find or maintain a job.

Both AHRE key informants and working ETW clients felt that ALIS is a valuable service to help find or maintain a job. Comments from AHRE informants were that ALIS was more useful to students or a younger client population, however, its strength lies in the fact that the site is a comprehensive resource, a 'one-stop shop', for not only working ETW clients but also Albertans as a whole. Like LMICs, ALIS was often cited as being easily accessible and providing a wide range of services such as applying for a student loan. More than half of working ETW survey respondents (73.4%) who used ALIS agreed or strongly agreed that the service helped them find or maintain a job.³⁰

One service that was less frequently cited by working ETW survey respondents (9.3%) but highly promoted among AHRE key informants for assisting working ETW clients to find or maintain employment was the Alberta Job Corps. Key informants felt strongly that it was useful program for finding and maintaining employment because programs and services are tailored to the needs of the client. For example, clients have their specific needs identified and receive training or skill development to fill the gap. Other informants also mentioned that the service also helps working ETW clients to build soft skills in addition to more concrete job skills. Specifically, communication skills, team building skills, and stress coping strategies are soft skills that are vital for working ETW clients to maintain a job.

Research reflects the views of the AHRE key informants and working ETW survey respondents in that studies of employment services in Organizational for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries found that services such as counselling, placement assistance, job matching, and other related services generally have positive impacts on the post-program employment and earnings of participants. Further, the cost associated with this type of programming is relatively low. However, it was noted that employment services by themselves are of limited use to multi-barriered clients and in areas where unemployment are high.³¹

5.1.2 Child Support Services

Obtaining and registering child support orders is crucial for single parents and low-income families on Income Support.

³⁰ It should be noted that this amounts to 11 survey respondents out of 75 who used the service and were in agreement that it helped provide or maintain a job.

³¹ Betcherman, Olivas, and Dar (2004). Impacts of Active Labor Market Programs: New Evidence from Evaluations with Particular Attention to Developing and Transition Countries.

Key informants were asked how Child Support Services helps working ETW single parents and blended families find or maintain employment.³² AHRE informants were of the belief that obtaining a child support order and registering it with Maintenance Enforcement Program was a crucial service for single parents and low-income families on Income Support. Once the order is enforced, and the parent(s) is no longer receiving Income Support, they would now have a new source of income. Other informants noted that it required a minimal amount of time on the part of the client to obtain and register the order, which in turn reduced the time away from work for the client. Research shows that collateral policies to obtain and enforce court ordered child support payments by non-custodial parents increase success of the client finding work and leaving assistance. Further, the collection of child support payments helps lower costs associated with running social assistance programs and services.³³

Though key informants felt that obtaining a child support order was critical for single parents and low-income families, just over half of all working ETW clients who had children where a parent lived outside the home had obtained a court order or agreement for child support payments (51.9%).

5.1.3 Programs and Services Available from Other Government Departments

Clients of Income Support are made aware of and can access programs and services offered by other government agencies, whether federal, provincial, or municipal. AHRE key informants were asked to identify which programs and services available from other government departments are the most effective for working ETW clients to find or maintain employment. Child-related programs were the most frequently mentioned type of program by informants. Specifically, Alberta Children's Services' Child Care Subsidy Program, Alberta Justice's Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP), and the Government of Canada's National Child Benefit Supplement (NCBS) were programs favoured by key informants. Generally, it was felt that the most important characteristic of these programs is the additional income provided to eligible clients.

Child-related programs such as the Child Care Subsidy Program, Maintenance Enforcement Program, and the National Child Benefit Supplement help ETW clients in a variety of ways, from providing additional income to reducing stress levels.

AHRE key informants viewed the Child Care Subsidy Program as an important benefit because it allows eligible working ETW clients with children the freedom to work or look for work. Without the subsidy, the high cost of childcare would make it extremely difficult for parents to either find or maintain work. There were those that expressed the opinion that the reduced cost of childcare services means that clients are able to meet other basic expenses such as food and clothing. In regards to working ETW survey respondents with dependent children, only 39.7% said they used the subsidy program,

³² For the ETW client survey, respondents who were receiving child support payments were asked if the payments helped them keep working or stay in school, however, results cannot be reported as this subgroup contained too few respondents.

³³ 2000 House Ways and Means Green Book (2000). Child Support Enforcement Program.

however, of those that did use it, 85.2% agreed or strongly agreed that the program helped them find or keep a job.

Findings from the literature review highlight the importance of accessible childcare programming. Studies show that childcare is often the main barrier to employment for those on social assistance. Inadequate childcare options can prevent parents from being able to accept jobs, change jobs, accept promotions, or take advantage of training or education.³⁴ Clearly, lack of childcare can have long-term impacts on clients of social assistance. Three main barriers that social assistance clients face with childcare are: cost, availability, and quality of care. The cost of childcare can limit clients' choice for type and location of care. The constraint of choice will in turn affect clients' other labour market decisions, such as where and when to work. The availability of childcare spaces is another issue for clients of social assistance. The growing workforce in Canada, and in particular Alberta, has meant that the number of childcare spaces is limited. Quality of care is another concern for parents who rely on informal childcare settings.³⁵

Among AHRE informants, MEP was also critical to working ETW clients finding or maintaining employment. Key informants felt strongly that the extra income that MEP brings in to former working ETW clients is important since this income continues to be collected after the client leaves Income Support. Other informants also pointed out that MEP means that clients do not have to spend time collecting child support payments themselves. This time saved by the clients reduces stress levels and increases the time spent searching for a job or being able to work. Again, research on child support enforcement programs illustrates the need for such services.³⁶ The enforcement of child support payments increases the income available to parents and families, which in turn increases the likelihood of families being able to leave social assistance. Also, for families not yet on assistance, enforcement of child support payments helps families from turning to welfare.

Key informants also commented on the NCBS, a supplement to provide extra support to low-income families in addition to the Canada Child Tax Credit. As with MEP, the NCBS provides additional income to low-income families and is available to clients outside of Income Support. HRDC research corresponds with key informant opinions, as the NCBS was an important development for federal social programming in Canada.³⁷ The NCBS has provided additional money to low-income families, while encouraging provinces and territories to reinvest in programs that promote labour force attachment.

Some informants had the misperception that the NCBS was not available to working ETW clients if they did not file their taxes regularly. In fact, the NCBS is available to clients without filing their tax returns and once the return is filed, discrepancies between the pro-rated amount and the actual amount to be paid to the client are rectified.

³⁴ HRDC (1999). *Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market*.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Morgan, Laura. (2002). *Child Support Enforcement in the United States and the Role of the Private Bar*.

³⁷ HRDC (1999). *Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market*.

Other government programs provide important benefits for ETW clients and collaboration between departments is important in providing continued support to clients.

Key informants noted the importance of services provided by other provincial ministries such as Alberta Health and Wellness, which has services and programs for clients with mental health issues. These informants stressed the importance of collaboration between provincial ministries in order to address the needs of clients with mental health problems, who often have poor labour force attachment. Interprovincial ministry collaboration was said to support client referral between agencies and help ensure continuity of services since the community mental health supports that extend beyond coverage available through in-hospital or out-patient psychiatric care.

A federally delivered benefit mentioned by key informants was the GST refund. The benefit of the GST refund is that it provides additional income to low-income families, whether they remain on Income Support or not. Similar to the NCBS, key informants noted that a difficulty with the GST refund is that client taxes must be filed in order to receive it.

AHRE key informants also mentioned three other federally sponsored benefits which were successful in supporting ETW clients. The Employment Insurance program (EI), which provides assistance to those who are unemployed, is similar to the GST and NCBS in that it requires the filing of income taxes. The second program mentioned was the Human Resources Social Development Canada (HRSDC) Federal Skills Links program. It was noted that the Skills Link program provides additional long-term supports for clients. A third program delivered through Social Development Canada (SDC) is the Opportunity Fund. The federal program provides assistance to people with disabilities in obtaining and maintaining employment.

5.1.4 Health Benefits

The Alberta Adult Health Benefit and the Alberta Child Health Benefit lessen client anxiety and allow clients to concentrate on finding or maintaining employment.

AHRE key informants were asked what type of health benefits were the most effective for assisting working ETW clients to find or keep a job. Overall, key informants were of the opinion that the Alberta Adult Health Benefit and Alberta Child Health Benefit are beneficial because they lessen anxiety for clients and allow them to focus on working or finding employment. Further, informants mentioned that for working ETW clients with children, once they obtain employment, both the parent and child continue to receive benefits, which in turn encourages job maintenance. Also, others pointed out that many employers do not pay health coverage immediately. Therefore, the additional coverage allows the working ETW client to obtain and maintain employment without the risk of losing medical coverage.

The literature review findings support key informant observations. Health costs for social assistance recipients and/or children are potential barriers to work.³⁸ One U.S. study

³⁸ HRDC (1999). Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market.

found that almost 90 percent of the social assistance caseload experiences substance abuse, a health limitation, chronic depression, or a child with a chronic medical condition or serious disability.³⁹ Extended health care benefits can help subsidize medical costs that typically are covered only in higher wage occupations.⁴⁰

5.1.5 Supplementary Benefits

While on Income Support, working ETW clients may also be eligible for a number of supplementary benefits. A list of 21 supplementary benefits was developed and presented to both AHRE key informants and working ETW survey respondents. AHRE key informants were asked which were the most effective for working ETW clients to obtain and maintain employment. Working ETW survey respondents were asked which supplementary benefits they had received and whether it helped them overcome personal circumstances that were making it difficult for them to work.

Generally, AHRE informants felt strongly that supplementary benefits were an important additional resource for working ETW clients. It was pointed out that supplements fill resource gaps that other services and programs cannot meet. While it was strongly recognized this as a noteworthy part of the services AHRE makes available, some informants also commented that most supplementary benefits do not encourage long-term success.

Child Care funding, Employment Maintenance Allowance, Utility Connection/Reconnection Deposit, and Employment, Training and Transitional Supports are the most frequently accessed supplementary benefits.

AHRE key informant comments and working ETW survey observations were closely aligned with regards to which supplementary benefits were most accessed and useful in supporting employment in working ETW clients. The top supplementary benefits mentioned by both groups included:

- Child Care funding (36.0% of working ETW respondents);
- Employment Maintenance Allowance (24.0% of working ETW respondents);
- Utility Connection/Reconnection Deposit (18.7% of working ETW respondents); and
- Employment, Training and Transitional Supports (18.7% of working ETW respondents).

Both key informants and working ETW survey respondents listed funding for childcare while working ETW clients are working, looking for work, or in training or treatment, as one of the most accessed and effective supplements. Thirty-six percent of working ETW respondents utilized the Child Care supplement (36.0%) and 77.7% of those who accessed the supplement agreed or strongly agreed that it helped them overcome personal circumstances that were making it difficult for them to work. Similarly, AHRE key informants commented on the importance of the Child Care supplement because it allows working ETW clients to look for work and remain attached to the labour force.

³⁹ Pavetti and Olsen. (1996). Personal and Family Challenges to the Successful Transition from Welfare to Work.

⁴⁰ HRDC (1999). Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market.

Some informants also noted that the supplement is crucial to a client's mental well-being since it provides assurances that they can access childcare when they find employment. As noted in Section 5.1.3, research has demonstrated that childcare supplements are one of the most essential services for single parents or blended families on social assistance as it can determine whether a parent is able to work or not.

The Employment Maintenance Allowance was also noted by both groups as a critical supplement. Twenty-four percent of working ETW respondents accessed this allowance (24.0%) with 55.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the allowance helped them overcome personal circumstances that were making it difficult for them to work. For AHRE informants, the value of the Employment Maintenance Allowance is it assists working ETW clients with the on-going costs of working. For example, key informants commented on working ETW clients' needs to 'upgrade' or maintain their work wardrobe in order to continue working.

Both groups mentioned the Utility Connection/Reconnection Deposit as a valuable supplement. Among working ETW respondents, 18.7% reported using the deposit with 85.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the deposit helped them overcome personal circumstances that were making it difficult for them to work. AHRE informants who mentioned the deposit also simultaneously commented on the Relocation Allowance, which helps clients with moving expenses when relocating for work. The Utility Connection/Reconnection Deposit, with the Relocation Allowance, were both cited as supporting clients who were trying to make the transition to work by allowing them to move to accept a job.

The Employment, Training, and Transitional Supports supplement was another frequently accessed benefit. Eighteen percent of working ETW respondents accessed this supplement (18.7%) and 57.1% agreed or strongly agreed that it helped them overcome personal circumstances that were making it difficult for them to work. Many AHRE informants felt that this supplement was essential in order to get clients working. Specifically, the supplement allows clients to purchase work-related items such as clothing, tools, and safety wear; without these items, clients would not be able to start working or continue working. A few informants noted that this supplement is easily accessed and quickly received by most working ETW clients which also assists clients with beginning to work without delay.

Children's School Expenses, AADAC Allowance, and Escaping Abuse Benefit were also effective in getting ETW clients to find or keep a job.

While no AHRE informants mentioned the Children's School Expenses benefit, working ETW survey respondents' observations revealed it as the most utilized supplement. More than half of all survey respondents accessed the Children's School Expenses benefit (52.0%) and 51.3% agreed or strongly agreed that it helped them overcome personal circumstances that were making it difficult for them to work.

AHRE informants noted the AADAC Allowance benefit was essential for getting clients to a stage where they are ready to look for work. That is, before clients with substance abuse problems can begin to look for work, their immediate health issues must first be addressed. A similar point was made about the Escaping Abuse Benefit, mentioned by

informants, that in order for clients from abusive relationships to begin working, they must first be able to feel safe and live in a stable environment.

SECTION 6: EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

This section outlines the findings from AHRE key informant interviews and the working ETW client surveys with respect to the effectiveness of the benefits available to working ETW clients in helping them become independent from Income Support. Informants were asked whether the current programs and services offered were effective for addressing working ETW client barriers when it comes to leaving income support. Key informants also indicated which mix of programs and services were the most effective for getting working ETW clients off Income Support.

6.1 Effectiveness of Programs and Services

The current programs and services available to working ETW clients are effective in helping clients become independent from Income Support.

There was strong opinion among AHRE key informants that the current mix of programs and services offered to working ETW clients were either moderately or highly effective in getting clients off Income Support. However, informants also pointed out that the effectiveness of programs and services was largely dependent on the type of client. Multi-barriered clients or those with mental-health or addiction problems were difficult to get off Income Support because often they could not get to the first step of finding and keeping a job.

After reviewing the list of programs and services offered by AHRE, working ETW survey respondents were asked if they required any additional help in order to get off Income Support and if so, what type of help was needed. Almost half of all working ETW respondents (44.0%) indicated that they required additional assistance. The most commonly cited type of assistance related to having additional income in order to meet a variety of needs such as rent and bill payments, and, as one respondent pointed out, being able to pay bills at the time they are due. Similar to the need for additional income, many expressed they required a “better job” with a higher salary. Specifically, a number of these respondents stated they did not have enough time to look for a better job because they were currently working.

Individualized help and child support are key to helping clients get off Income Support.

It was strongly believed among key informants that the service needs assessment was an integral aspect to providing effective programming to working ETW clients. The ability to identify clients’ unique needs and barriers is essential to determine what programs and services are most suited to the client. Key informants noted that this was particularly true for clients with disabilities and addictions issues.

Key informants felt strongly that receiving child support payments was one of the most important steps for clients to becoming independent from Income Support. Numerous

informants also mentioned that child support payments, next to employment income, were a critical source of income for leaving social assistance. Others felt that child support payments also allowed clients to focus on work, whether it be to look for a different job or take a lower paying job with better or fewer hours, in order to manage their families.

6.2 Effective Mix of Programs and Services

Key informants identified the combination of individualized assessment, and education and job training activities, with childcare support and health benefits as the most effective approach for working ETW clients

Generally, AHRE key informants felt strongly about the importance of providing a mix of programs and services in order to best meet the needs of working ETW clients. Comments by informants focused on combining education and job training activities, guided by individualized assessment, with childcare support and health benefits, in order to provide an effective mix of programs and services to working ETW clients. Others informants felt that in addition to this mix, life skills training and job maintenance support should be provided to clients to ensure that the client is fully equipped to be independent from Income Support assistance. Further still, others noted that specific subgroups of ETW clients with disabilities, such as mental health problems, require on-going support during and after Income Support assistance. It was felt, however, that this type of support was not readily available.

Findings from the literature support the opinions of key informants. A study commissioned by HRDC identified the importance of using mixed strategies to move individuals from social assistance to work. Mixed strategies allow for a broad range of clientele to be reached, while simultaneously ensuring that programming is tailored to the individual. Successful mixed strategies provide a combination of job search, education, job training and work placements, and emphasize employment. They also communicate a consistent message to staff and clients, commit adequate resources to serve the population, enforce participation requirements while setting high expectations for participants, are cost-effective or cost-conscious, and have close ties to industry and employers.⁴¹ In particular, tailoring a program to the participant type (e.g. single parent), though labour and cost-intensive, may be the best approach for helping individuals with complex problems.

⁴¹ HRDC (1999). Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market.

SECTION 7: GAPS IN PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

This section outlines the findings from AHRE key informant interviews and the working ETW client survey in regards to gaps in the services and programs provided by AHRE for working ETW clients. Further, AHRE informants were asked how program delivery could be improved to better meet the needs of working ETW clients. For each of these research questions, key informants provided responses specific to each of the five broad categories of assistance:

- Employment and Training Services;
- Child Support Services;
- Programs and Services Available from Other Government Departments (e.g. Child Care Subsidy Program – Alberta Children’s Services);
- Health Benefits; and
- Supplementary Benefits.

When asked about gaps in programming and improvements in service delivery AHRE key informants often provided the same responses in both areas. Further, responses for improvements in service delivery were frequently suggestions for improving services and programs in general. Detailed findings from the key informant interviews are presented below.

7.1 Gaps in Programs and Services

7.1.1 Employment and Training Services

Job maintenance programming may need to be expanded in order to better support clients in their transition to the workforce.

AHRE key informants felt strongly that programming for job maintenance should be expanded. Specifically, it was suggested that job maintenance should include on-going support and counselling to working clients who have left Income Support. Others noted that job maintenance activities should involve not only the employee, but also their employer. Many employers lack understanding of the obstacles transitioning clients face or they may not be culturally sensitive to clients of certain ethnic backgrounds. More communication between the client, the employer, and service provider would help encourage job maintenance. Using an interactive approach to managing a client in their new work environment allows potential crisis points to be avoided for the clients. Not only would the support aid the client, it would also provide extra help for the employer in communicating and training the client.

Research reflects the views of the AHRE key informants interviewed emphasizing that job maintenance strategies are important when helping clients attain self-sufficiency. Clients often cycle on and off assistance over time. Clients may leave a job when they find that working provides few rewards as many of the jobs that income assistance

recipients find are low-paying with few benefits, while other recipients may lack some of the “soft skills” needed for employment and thus find it difficult to retain a job.⁴²

Comments from AHRE informants strongly indicated a need for programs to include more life skills training. It was felt that life skills training would assist clients maintain their jobs by ensuring they have the skills to cope with work stress and employer expectations such as time management and work ethics. It was pointed out by some informants that many working ETW clients have grown up on social assistance which can impact their life skills and work attitudes. HRDC research on lessons learned within social assistance programming underlines the importance of the key informant observations. That is, increasing clients’ awareness of workplace culture and norms is a good practice to facilitate a person’s entry and maintenance into the labour market.⁴³

Other key informants were of the belief that part-time training programs required more funding. It was felt that there are insufficient supports, both financial and non-financial, for working clients who wish to upgrade their skills on a part-time basis in order to find better employment.

7.1.2 Child Support Services

Child Support Services may require extension to all low-income Albertans to potentially reduce families seeking assistance in the future.

Overall, AHRE key informants noted very few gaps for Child Support Services. However, informants were of strong opinion that Child Support Services should be extended to include all low-income Albertans, not just clients of Income Support. Currently, AHRE’s mandate is to provide Child Support Services to other low-income Albertans when it will not reduce or delay services to applicants receiving Income Support, AISH, or AAHB. It is only when there is no existing support order that services may be provided to other Albertans. While this finding does not apply to the target group of interest for this report, working ETW clients, it is mentioned as it was felt to be important because, if applied to all low-income families, it has the potential to reduce those seeking assistance in the future.

7.1.3 Programs and Services Available from Other Government Departments

Stronger partnerships would help provide clients with skills and training that are more closely tied to future labour market trends.

Concerning other government departments, AHRE key informants had more suggestions for improvements in service delivery (see section 7.2) than gaps in programs and services.

There were those of the opinion that skills and training provided should be more closely tied to future labour trends. It was felt that a stronger partnership between AHRE and

⁴² HRDC (1999). Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market.

⁴³ HRDC (1999). Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market.

Alberta Education and Advanced Education was needed in order to ensure that current program meets potential labour gaps. This would then allow the clients to be streamed into education and training programs that would lead to industries in need of workers. It was pointed out that this partnership would ensure that clients and potential workers are prepared for work but also ensure that employers have workers with the skills they need. Current research supports the observations of key informants in that participants of programs targeted to industry needs had a higher probability of finding work.⁴⁴

7.1.4 Health Benefits

Singles and childless couples would benefit if the Alberta Adult Health Benefit was available after leaving Income Support.

AHRE key informants were divided on the issue of gaps in health benefits. There were those of the opinion that the Alberta Health Benefits provided to adults and children were sufficient and meeting client needs, while others indicated that qualifications for health coverage was too exclusive.

Of those who indicated a gap in health benefits, informants felt strongly that the Alberta Adult Health Benefit should be available to single and childless couple working ETW clients after leaving Income Support. Further still, some were of the opinion that health coverage should have fewer eligibility requirements and should be available to all low-income Albertans. It was felt that providing more Albertans with health benefits would encourage job maintenance and decrease the number of Albertans who seek social assistance in the future.

7.1.5 Supplementary Benefits

The transportation supplement may need to be increased.

AHRE key informants pointed out few gaps in supplemental benefits provided to ETW clients. The one recurring issue was that of transportation. AHRE informants commented that a supplement for transportation would be of benefit for clients who were looking for work. Currently, eligible working ETW clients can receive a supplement to obtain a bus pass once they are employed. Some key informants mentioned that the transportation subsidy should be increased for those looking for work, or working in rural areas where there is no public transit system available.

Key informant views on transportation are echoed in social assistance programming research. Studies point out that providing transportation supports to clients is critical to their success in finding and keeping employment.^{45 46} Many SA recipients do not have a personal vehicle though public transportation has been found to be impractical for them due to the distance between work and home and the fact that the costs associated with

⁴⁴ Fay (1996). Enhancing the Effectiveness of Active Labour Market Policies: Evidence from Programme Evaluations in OECD Countries.

⁴⁵ HRDC (1999). Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market.

⁴⁶ Fay (1996). Enhancing the Effectiveness of Active Labour Market Policies: Evidence from Programme Evaluations in OECD Countries.

transportation may exceed the benefits accrued from employment. Further, transportation supports are necessary to reduce spatial barriers to work, as low rent accommodation and low wage employment are often not co-located.⁴⁷

7.2 Suggestions for Improvement in Service Delivery

AHRE key informants offered many suggestions for improvement in programs and services including service delivery. AHRE key informants identified two areas for improvement that apply to all five areas of AHRE programming:

- staff training and knowledge; and
- discretionary powers of frontline staff.

One area of improvement that was continually expressed by AHRE informants was the need to increase staff training and knowledge of the programs and services available to clients. For example, it was noted that there is not a clear understanding of the function of the Employment Maintenance Allowance and subsequently it was not being accessed when clients were eligible. Others stated that there was a lack of knowledge about providing counsel-to-quit to underemployed ETW clients which results in inconsistent application of this service. Further, it was pointed out that if workers were more knowledgeable about the programs and services, in turn their clients would also be educated about the variety of services. Once both workers and clients have this type of education, it should increase efficiency of service delivery.

Another recurring improvement issue was the need to provide frontline workers with more discretionary powers when issuing benefits to working ETW clients. It was strongly felt that by allowing workers to access discretionary funds without the Director's approval, clients' needs could be met more quickly which is particularly important in times of emergency.

7.2.1 Employment and Training Services

Office hours for the Employment and Training Services should be more flexible to better accommodate clients.

Concerning service delivery, AHRE key informants noted a need for increased flexibility in the office hours for working ETW clients accessing Employment and Training Services. According to respondents, the current office hours require clients to leave their work or training in order to speak with AHRE workers. Others pointed out that the limited hours of service had the potential to affect clients' ability to maintain their job. It was suggested that offices hours be extended to include some weekday evenings or weekends.

⁴⁷ HRDC (1999). Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market.

7.2.2 Child Support Services

Few respondents had suggestions as to how to provide improvements to the Child Support Services.

7.2.3 Programs and Services Available from Other Government Departments

Co-ordination of services and communications between government departments could be improved.

It was noted among AHRE key informants that many AHRE clients require the services of other government departments such as Alberta Children Services, Alberta Education, and Alberta Justice. As such, key informants were of the strong opinion that a number of improvements could be made in regards to interdepartmental relations. For example, communication between AHRE and other government departments could be improved. Currently, AHRE staff are often unaware of other needs assessments that have been completed for working, ETW clients in other departments. This can result in duplicate work being conducted and makes it difficult to assign working ETW clients to the appropriate programs and services without knowledge of the other needs assessments. Key informants also felt that other departments required a clearer understanding of AHRE programs and services. It was noted that clients are often inappropriately referred to AHRE programs and services, which is time-consuming for both AHRE staff and the client. It was suggested that there should be better coordination of services between the departments. This could include a single-window service delivery, where clients can complete applications for multiple departmental services.

7.2.4 Health Benefits

AHRE key informants had no suggestions for improving service delivery of health benefits.

7.2.5 Supplementary Benefits

Increasing the Employment, Training and Transitional Support funding would further assist working ETW clients.

There was strong opinion among AHRE informants that the current level of funding for Employment, Training and Transitional Supports (\$300) was insufficient and should be increased. It was mentioned that the current amount available does not allow some clients to purchase the clothing and equipment required to work. An increase in the supplement would be of particular use for clients in trades positions or the oil field who require tools and special work clothing such as work boots, fire retardant clothing and other materials. Some informants mentioned that the supplement should be raised to \$500.00 with front line workers having discretionary power to increase this amount.

As discussed above, key informants noted that the Employment Maintenance Allowance requires a better description, as clients often do not understand its purpose or how to obtain it. Furthermore, it was also noted that this allowance requires more attention by

the workers, so as to administer it more often. It was suggested that Employment Maintenance Allowance could be automatically distributed to working ETW clients after a certain amount of time has passed.

SECTION 8: DISINCENTIVES WITHIN CURRENT SUPPORTS

The following section outlines findings from AHRE key informant interviews and ETW client surveys in regards to disincentives to self-sufficiency within the current supports offered by AHRE. AHRE informants were asked about attitudinal barriers or perceptions of ETW clients to finding and maintaining employment and becoming independent from Income Support. Both key informants and ETW survey respondents were also asked whether current employment earnings exemption levels encouraged them to work while receiving Income Support and benefits. ETW respondents also identified the wage rate they required to leave Income Support.

8.1 Personal Barriers of Working ETW Clients

AHRE key informants described similar personal barriers among ETW clients to working and to becoming independent from Income Support. One of the most commonly listed barriers of ETW clients was low self-confidence. AHRE informants pointed out that many ETW clients do not have work experience or have had negative experiences when working. Often mentioned with the issue of low self-confidence was ETW clients' fear of not being able to support themselves sufficiently once off Income Support. Key informants noted that ETW clients are often concerned that they will not be able to 'get back on Income Support once they have left it. Consequently, some clients stall leaving the program.

Key informants were also of the opinion that some ETW clients lack life management skills needed to participate in labour force. It was commented that the lack of life management skills was often an intergenerational issue. For some clients, their family had been on support for many generations and consequently, knowledge and skills needed in the work world were not passed on.

For the most part, key informants knew of very few cases in which clients chose not work because they would lose their Income Support and/or benefits. There were those who noted that, in the past, there seemed to be more clients unwilling to work for this reason. Similarly, 96.0% of ETW survey respondents reported that, while on Income Support, they had never refused a job because it would decrease the amount of assistance they receive. When asked if they had ever turned down extra hours at work because it would decrease the amount of financial assistance received, 90.7% of ETW respondents indicated they had not.

8.2 Earnings Exemption Levels

Overwhelmingly, AHRE key informants felt strongly that the current employment earnings exemption levels encourage most ETW clients to work while receiving benefits. It was noted, however, that it is difficult to determine what an appropriate level of exemption is, and different exemptions levels in the past have discouraged clients from working. Other informants commented that it is difficult to explain the concept of

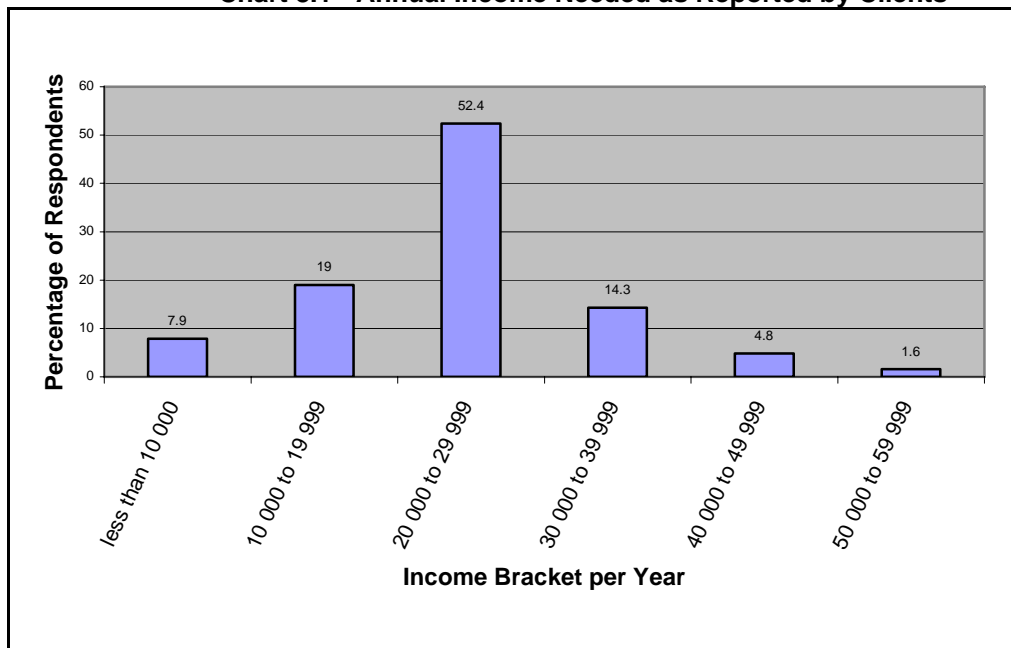
employment earnings exemption. Consequently, some clients believe they will have less income if they work. Articulating how the exemptions impact client earnings can be problematic for frontline workers.

It appears that for most working ETW clients, the employment earnings exemption levels do not impact their decision to work. Sixty-eight percent (68.6%) of ETW respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the earnings exemption encouraged them to work while receiving Income Support. However, 18.6% of working ETW survey respondents disagreed which suggest that earnings exemption levels may be a disincentive for a sub-group of working ETW clients.

8.3 Wage Needed to Leave Income Support

Working ETW survey respondents were asked what annual income they would require for it to be equivalent to Income Support and associated benefits to earn in order to be self-sufficient. Respondents were first asked to report the wage required on either an hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, or annual basis. They were then asked to state how many hours per week/days per month/weeks per month/month per year they would need to work in order to come off Income Support and benefits. An automatic calculation of the annual salary reported was performed by the CATI system and then confirmed with the working ETW respondent.⁴⁸ Just over half of the respondents (52.4%) stated that they would require an annual salary between \$20,000.00 and \$29,999.00 per year in order to leave Income Support and benefits. Reported annual wages ranged from less than 10,000 to 59,999.00 per year (Chart 8.1).

Chart 8.1 - Annual Income Needed as Reported by Clients



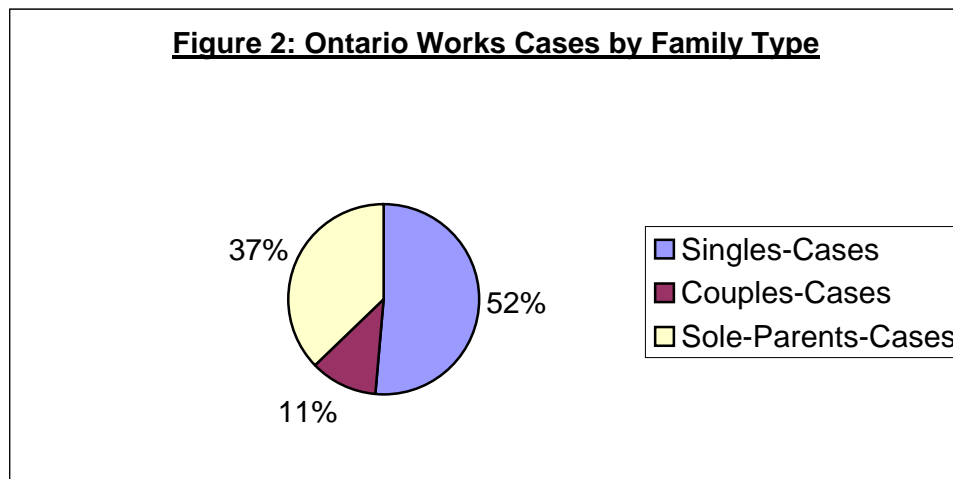
⁴⁸ Eighty-four percent of respondents confirmed the annual wage that was calculated. Those who did not agree with the calculated wage were asked to report what yearly salary would be required to leave Income Support.

SECTION 9: PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS

The literature review investigates other provincial programs and services delivered through their provincial offices for each of the following provinces: Ontario, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Québec, as well as Great Britain.

9.1 Ontario

The Ontario Works program provides employment help and financial assistance to people in temporary financial need. As of September 2005, Ontario's largest group of recipients for Ontario Works programs were unmarried individuals, who make up just over 51% of cases. Sole-Support parents were the second largest type of recipients (see Figure 2). Over 37% of cases on income support are sole support parents. It should be explained that these are case numbers only. In other words, a case refers to a single individual or a family unit on social assistance. If we are to examine the beneficiaries, we see that the number of beneficiaries is the largest among the sole support parents units comprising of 52.5% of all beneficiaries of Ontario Works.⁴⁹



Service delivery in Ontario is dependent upon the community in which the individual lives. Although Ontario Works does have base-programming available in all areas, the Ontario Works program is delivered by 47 Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) who collect their own information about best practices.⁵⁰

Similar to Alberta, Ontario Works delivers a wide range of aids to help clients find employment.

⁴⁹ Ontario Works (2005). Ontario Social Assistance: Quarterly Statistical Report.

⁵⁰ Correspondence with Ontario Works – policy. February 2006.

These aids include:

- Finding a job: Workshops on searching for work, resume writing and preparing for an interview. Referrals for job counseling or training. Access to telephones, faxes, computers and job banks.
- Earnings Incentives: If employed, only half of the employment income may be deducted from the Ontario Works payments. Furthermore, employment supports are available to aid making the transition back to work by providing help with childcare, health and other work related expenses.
- Basic Education: Ontario Works aids with completing high school, improving language skills and upgrading reading, writing or math.
- Job Skills Training: Training for a specific job, on the job or co-op training, special skills programs or special certificate course.
- LEAP- Learning Earning and Parenting: A program devised for young single parents aiding them in completing their education and obtaining employment while still receiving supports.
- Community Placement: Provides a chance for a person to practice skills, improve confidence and develop up to date job references and contacts.
- Work-related expenses: Full-time Employment Benefit of up to \$500 to aid work-related expenses. Health benefits including prescriptions last for six months after exiting Ontario Works, or until the employer starts paying benefits.⁵¹

As mentioned above each municipality will have a variety of centres in which they can provide the service delivery with specialized components for their own communities.

It should also be noted that Ontario Works is currently implementing recommendations as provided in a Review of their Ministry. The document, titled “The Matthews Report”, provides a wide range of recommendations for improvement in service delivery. The implementations should be complete in Spring 2006.

9.1.1 Childcare Supports

Ontario Works provides funding for informal and formal childcare. Informal childcare is usually an interim option pending formal (i.e. licensed) childcare arrangements, where a friend, relative or neighbour provides the childcare. Informal childcare is most often offered when formal childcare is unavailable or childcare is needed only temporarily (e.g. for short-term training). Funding for informal childcare is available for three months, but may be reviewed for extension in exceptional circumstances. To ensure one-stop client shopping for services, maximize the cost efficiency of services, and to hold clear lines of accountability for program outcomes, the Ministries of Community and Social Services and Children’s Services Division jointly distribute funding for childcare⁵².

⁵¹ Ontario Works. Participants: Ontario Works provides the help you need.
<http://www.cfcs.gov.on.ca/CFCS/en/programs/IES/OntarioWorks/Publications/broch-participants.htm>

⁵² Ontario Works (1999). Ontario Works Child Care Service Delivery Protocol.
<http://www.toronto.ca/socialservices/Policy/ChildCare.htm>

9.1.2 Health Care Supports

Health benefits for *Ontario Works* participants are provided through Trillium Health coverage. There are mandatory benefits that are covered for *Ontario Works* participants as well as several discretionary benefits that are covered depending on an individual's personal situation.⁵³ The mandatory benefits include:

- *Prescription Drug Benefits* for participants, their spouse and their dependent children;
- *Dental Care* for participants, their spouse and their dependent children;
- *Vision Care* for participants, their spouse and their dependent children covering the purchase and repair of lenses and frames;
- *Diabetic Supplies, Surgical Supplies and Dressings* are covered for the participant, their spouse and their dependent children;
- *Medical Transportation*;
- *Costs Related to the Assistive Devices Program*;
- *Guide Dog Allowance*;
- *Prosthetic Appliances*;
- *Batteries and Necessary Repairs for Mobility Devices*, and;
- *Special Diets*

Once an individual leaves *Ontario Works* for employment, health benefits (including the drug plan) remain in place for the first six months or until the individual receives health benefits from their employer.

9.1.3 Child Support Services

Ontario Works helps single parents and parents of blended families file court orders for child support payments. The court order or agreement is filed with the Family Responsibility Office (FRO), which is part of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The role of the FRO is to enforce child support orders.

9.1.4 Other Supports

Several other resources and programs are offered through *Ontario Works* which are available for single parents, though not targeted specifically at them including:

- *Winter Clothing and Back to School Allowances* are available once every twelve months for families with dependent children;
- *Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefits* when it is for the health and welfare of the person to leave their previous place of residence and establish a new permanent residence in the community,
- *Employment Start-Up Benefits* for initial costs or expenses associated with approved participation and/or employment;

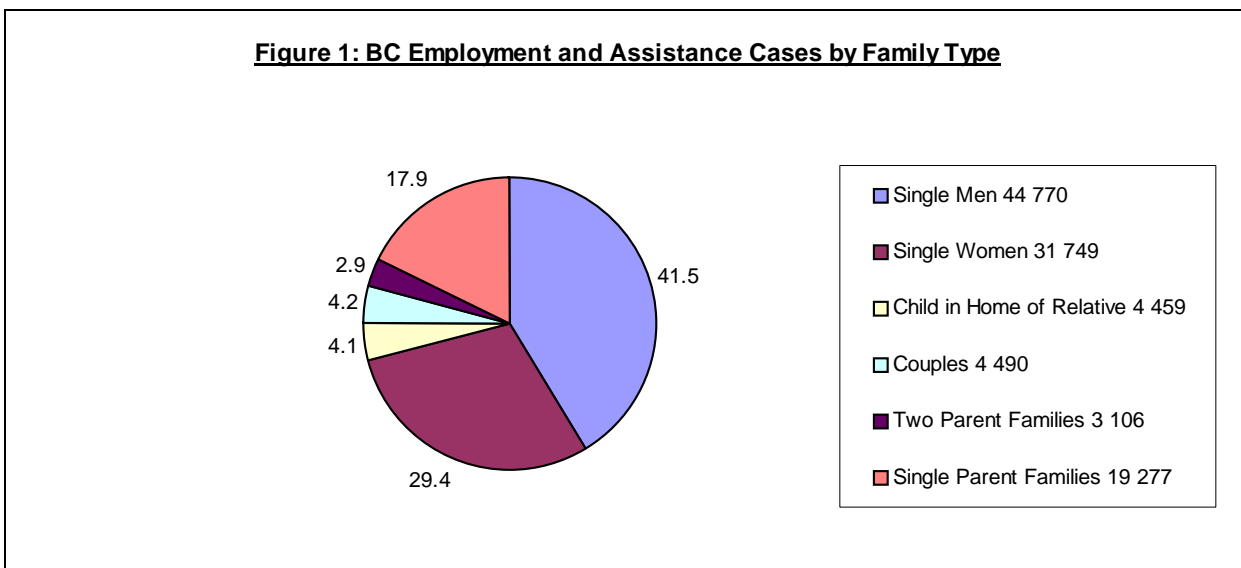
⁵³ Ontario Works. Provision of benefits, Directive 31.0
http://www.cfcs.gov.on.ca/NR/MCFCS/OW/English/31_0.pdf

- *Employment Assistance Expenses* in addition to the mandatory employment start-up benefit to cover ongoing costs associated with participation in employment assistance activities (including childcare); and
- *Northern Allowance*.

9.2 British Columbia

British Columbia’s Ministry of Employment and Assistance (BCEA) provides services to individuals requiring assistance with income and employment. The Ministry provides services, which transition people to sustainable employment and assisting individuals and families in need. The goal of the ministry is to “assist people to move beyond temporary shelter to more stable housing, greater self-reliance and long-term employment.”⁵⁴

The largest proportion of cases receiving employment assistance in BC is single men, followed by single women, and single-parent families (see figure 1). Single parents compose 17.9% of all cases for Employment and Income Assistance in British Columbia.



British Columbia provides an initial assessment and orientation process for clients. This assessment can be accessed via the Internet, and be self-completed for people prior to coming to the offices. This ensures individuals have the appropriate paperwork completed prior to visiting the BC Employment and Assistance (BCEA) office. The website is accessible in a wide variety of languages. Considering the population profile of British Columbia, the availability of multiple languages increases success of service delivery.

British Columbia provides a variety of services for their population. Similar to AHRE, they have generalized and specialized programming dependent upon the client group. Some generalized programs include self-directed programs such as the Independent

⁵⁴ Ministry of Human Resources, British Columbia. 2004/2005 Annual Service Plan Report.

Work Search Kit, which applies to all clients of Income Assistance. Programs such as Community Assistance Programs (CAPS) is slightly more specialized in its programming for individuals who have multiple barriers. These barriers include: mental illness, substance abuse, less than grade 10 education, any age group with high unemployment and homeless individuals. Other programs such as BRIDGING, is a specialized program for women who have experienced violence/abuse. This program has three streams of programming for their wide variety of clients. Although it is not available in all B.C. communities it does stretch across a large portion of British Columbia.

Other programs and services provided in British Columbia include:

- Identification Fees, the cost of obtaining identification for the purposes of BC Employment Assistance will be covered on your behalf;
- Emergency Moving Benefit;
- Security Deposits- covering the cost of deposits for rental accommodation these benefits are repayable to the ministry at \$20 per month;
- Christmas Supplement;
- School Start-Up Supplement, money to buy back-to-school supplies;
- Camp Fees, dependent children may get money to pay part of all of the fee to attend a recognized camp; and
- Crisis Assistance, when an unexpected emergency may affect the health or safety of the adult of child.⁵⁵

In 2004/05 fiscal year, the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance focused on programs that ensure self-reliance and employment of clients. Since this change in focus, the average number of cases decreased by 7.0% compared to the previous fiscal year.⁵⁶

9.2.1 Child Care Subsidy Program

Through the Ministry of Children and Family Development, British Columbia offers the *Child Care Subsidy* program. This collateral support subsidy is a monthly payment that can be used to help pay for the following types of care: licensed or license-not-required family childcare facilities, licensed group child care centres, licensed out-of-school programs, licensed preschool programs, or care in the child's own home⁵⁷.

In addition to subsidies for childcare, there is also the *Child Care Resource & Referral Program*. This program combines collateral supports and short-term labour market attachment strategies as it provides information on choosing childcare, types of childcare available, applying for childcare subsidies, referrals to local caregivers, and parent education opportunities (e.g. workshops)⁵⁸.

⁵⁵ <http://www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/programs/OtherBen.htm>

⁵⁶ Ministry of Human Resources, British Columbia. *2004/2005 Annual Service Plan Report*.

⁵⁷ Ministry of Children and Family Development. http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/subsidy_promo.htm

⁵⁸ http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/cc_resource.htm

9.2.2 Health Care Subsidy Program

BCEA recipients who meeting the Ministry of Health residency requirements are provided with premium free medical coverage through the Medical Services Plan, and no deductible PharmaCare. Specified health supplements are provided to all BCEA recipients who meet the eligibility criteria for each supplement. Basic dental benefits are provided to income assistance clients who are least likely to become financially independent – Persons with Disabilities and Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers.

Children from low-income families in British Columbia receive medical coverage under the *Healthy Kids* program. *Healthy Kids* helps families cover the costs associated with basic dental care and prescription glasses for eligible parents and dependent children less than 19 years of age. Only families approved for premium assistance by the Medical Services Plan (MSP), through the Ministry of Health, are eligible for the *Healthy Kids* program. The Ministry also provides a *Neo-Natal* program which ensures that expectant mothers and mothers with young infants are provided with appropriate nourishment for the development of their children.

9.3 Québec

Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité Sociale provides the services for the Employment-Assistance Program under the Sécurité du revenu department. Meanwhile Emploi-Québec provides employment services. The Government of Québec, in collaboration with Departments and Ministries, has developed a government action plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion. This Action Plan reviews the basic values supported by the Government, such as confidence in citizens' ability to assume responsibility for their lives, commitment to social justice, and the conviction that sustainable economic development is needed. Québec acknowledges the need to ensure that the marginalized groups who cannot reap the benefits of a productive economic boom require additional assistance so as to ensure that they can become active and included within society.⁵⁹

The employment assistance program is delivered through the 150 local employment centres (CLEs). At these centres, assessments are performed for Québec residents requiring income support determining the type and amount of financial assistance required and whether or not the resident can be admitted to the employment assistance program.

Financial assistance available to residents equates to the difference between recognized needs and the client's resources. In addition to financial benefits for basic needs, health benefits including eyewear and dental are included for people receiving assistance. Individuals who are pregnant or nursing may also receive additional benefits to aid in meeting dietary needs. School expenses are also provided for the dependents of individuals on assistance. The school expense benefit is available once a year.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Government of Quebec (2005). Government Action Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion: Year One Report.

⁶⁰ Government of Quebec (2005). Employment Assistance (social assistance): General information on the Employment Assistance Program.

If individuals have dependent children under the age of 18, they receive the RRQ child assistance or the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB), which is composed of the Child Tax Benefit and the National Child Benefit Supplement. The Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité Sociale provides adjustments for families with dependent children over the age of 18. Similar to other provinces Québec also decreases benefit amounts by the amount of child support the parent receives from the other parent. However, unlike other provinces, the first \$100.00 of the child support is not calculated in the decrease. Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité Sociale also provides services to ensure that missing child support payments are obtained from the paying parent.⁶¹

As stated above, Emploi-Québec provides services universally for all Quebecers regardless whether or not they are on social assistance. The employment-assistance officer works with clients to determine the measures, services, or other activities that meet the needs of the individual. More specifically, officers examine: job readiness; job integration; job creation; and job stabilization and maintenance. For people who also receive income support and start on the employment-assistance programming, they receive an additional employment-assistance allowance and reimbursement of additional expenses. Additional expenses include transportation and childcare.⁶²

Similar to other provinces, Québec targets programming to clients of particular demographics. In the 2005 Action Plan, the government of Québec acknowledged, "it is important to customize action based on the composition of the groups most affected by poverty or at high risk of becoming poor. The measures of the action plan aimed specifically at prevention among young people and families strive to eradicate poverty within these groups."⁶³ As such the department provides programs targeted at these groups. Specifically, the government targets programming at youth 18 to 24, employable adults under the age of 30, and young single parents.

Solidarité jeunesse is a program designed for youth between the ages of 18 and 24 who apply for financial assistance. The program assesses the youth's strengths, educational background and work experience. The program aids in focusing the youth's action plan around returning to school, job integration or obtaining employment. The program collaborates with other youth organizations that provide coaching, support and follow up. The program ensures that this age demographic still remains connected with the community.⁶⁴

Place à L'Emploi is a program for individuals under the age of 30. The worker aids the client in providing intensive quick assistance so they can enter the labour market. The program provides assessments for the client and continued support in their job

⁶¹ Government of Quebec (2005). Employment Assistance (social assistance): General information on the Employment Assistance Program.

⁶² Government of Quebec (2005). Employment Assistance (social assistance): General information on the Employment Assistance Program.

⁶³ Government of Quebec (2005). Government Action Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion: Year One Report. p. 19.

⁶⁴ Government of Quebec (2005). Employment Assistance (social assistance): General information on the Employment Assistance Program.

searching efforts. The program is mandatory for those who are receiving assistance. Failure to comply may result in reduction of assistance provided.⁶⁵

Ma Place au Soleil is a program targeted to young mothers particularly single parents, who have not completed secondary school and would like to complete their education. Participants study at their own pace to obtain their secondary school diploma. Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale collaborate to ensure that childcare facilities and childcare expenses are paid. Included with these expenses are transportation expenses, registration and school materials.⁶⁶

Unlike other provinces, Québec compartmentalizes the services of income assistance and employment assistance. However, similar to other provinces they do have targeted programs to their higher populated subgroups namely, youth and single parents.

9.4 Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan Community Resources and Employment provides services to ensure that the people in Saskatchewan are able to “build better lives for themselves through economic independence, strong families, inclusive communities and active involvement in Saskatchewan’s labour force and economy.”⁶⁷ The Employment and Income Assistance department within Saskatchewan Community Resources and Employment provides the programs and services to aid individuals who are having difficulty in maintaining self-sufficiency.

The Employment and Income Assistance department provides programs and services through 20 offices across the province. These offices provide career and employment services. Those seeking work assistance can use the employment website: www.sasknetwork.ca. This site provides advice on job searching, resume writing and locating career counsellors. Residents of Saskatchewan can utilize this resource to find information about job postings, as well as post their own resumes for employers to view.

The 20 offices act as a referral source to individuals requiring assistance in regards to programs for both employment and assistance. The offices refer eligible individuals to training programs for specific jobs that are currently available. The program, JobStart/Future Skills, combines both short-term work placements with classroom training, which then links to future jobs. There are also basic education and literacy programs to aid people in receiving basic skills.

Employment Programs assist unemployed people on social assistance find training and work experience. There are three specific components for this program: Community Works, Bridging Program, and the Self Employment Program.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Government of Quebec (2005). Employment Assistance (social assistance): General information on the Employment Assistance Program.

⁶⁶ Government of Quebec (2005). Employment Assistance (social assistance): General information on the Employment Assistance Program.

⁶⁷ Government of Saskatchewan (2005). Saskatchewan Community Resources and Employment: Annual Report 2004-2005. p. 5.

⁶⁸ <http://www.sasknetwork.gov.sk.ca/html/Home/cansask/programs.htm>

The Community Works component assists individuals in acquiring fundamental skills needed to fully participate in the workforce and then link them to employment. The program supports community organizations to complete projects that will enhance local services and facilities.⁶⁹

The Bridging program provides more in-depth assistance. The requirements for the funding include, a needs assessment, which is completed to ensure service delivery to those in need of skill upgrading. The program addresses educational skills such as: academic upgrading and literacy. Employment services and supports are also provided such as: career counselling, job readiness skills, employability skills, entry level skills, work experience, job coaching, job development services, and employment related supports. Finally, more general services are provided such as life skills and mentoring.⁷⁰

The Self-Employment Program provides up to 40 weeks of training for unemployed individuals who want to create their own business. This program ensures that the development of business skills and plans, and the start of the business occurs while the participant is still with the program. There are three core areas to the training: I: Business Plan Development; II: Start-up; and III: Business Operations.⁷¹

9.4.1 Saskatchewan Employment Supplement

The *Saskatchewan Employment Supplement* (SES) is a collateral support which provides monthly payments that supplement the income earned by low-income parents from employment as well as from child/spousal maintenance programs. The supplement is intended to assist parents with the child-related costs of going to work.⁷²

9.4.2 Child Support Services

Social assistance recipients in Saskatchewan are expected to try to get support for their children. The Saskatchewan Department of Justice, Maintenance Enforcement Office (MEO) registers support order and agreements, records and monitors payments, and enforces the collection of maintenance payments. The social assistance recipient is assisted by their caseworker to complete a Maintenance Enforcement Office Registration form to submit to the MEO.

9.4.3 Health Benefit

Recipients of social assistance are eligible for supplementary health coverage through the Saskatchewan Department of Health. Specific to families, Saskatchewan's *Family Health Benefit* (FHB) is a collateral support that provides supplementary health coverage to ensure that families do not resort to social assistance to meet the health needs of their children, and also to help families on social assistance transition to employment without

⁶⁹ <http://www.sasknetwork.gov.sk.ca/html/Employers/financialhelp/communityworks.htm>

⁷⁰ <http://www.sasknetwork.gov.sk.ca/html/Employers/financialhelp/bridging.htm>

⁷¹ <http://www.sasknetwork.gov.sk.ca/html/Home/cansask/selfempprog.htm#part>

⁷² Government of Saskatchewan (2005). Saskatchewan Community Resources and Employment: Annual Report 2004-2005.

losing their benefits. Children receive the following care: most dental services; eye examinations once a year; basic eyeglasses; emergency ambulance; medical supplies (some items require prior approval); chiropractic services; and formulary drugs (alternatives to prescription drugs). Parents or legal guardians are covered for chiropractic services, an eye examination every two years, drug coverage with \$100 semi-annual family deductible and 35 per cent consumer co-payment thereafter.

9.4.4 Saskatchewan Child Benefit

The *Saskatchewan Child Benefit* (SCB) is a collateral support delivered as a monthly allowance paid to low-income parents to aid with the costs of raising children. The SCB is intended to prevent a parent from falling back onto social assistance in order to meet their child's basic needs⁷³. This benefit is integrated with the federal *Canada Child Tax Benefit* and *National Child Benefit Supplement* so parents receive one monthly child benefit payment. The amount of funding a parent can receive depends on their current income and the number of children they have.

9.4.5 Provincial Training Allowance

The *Provincial Training Allowance* (PTA) is a long-term labour market attachment strategy that provides a monthly payment, not associated with social assistance, which is intended to help individuals and families access basic adult education or similar courses.

9.4.6 Child Day Care Subsidies and Child Care Saskatchewan

The *Child Day Care Subsidies* and *Child Care Saskatchewan* are both collateral supports that help low-income families pay for accredited childcare. *Child Care Saskatchewan* is the largest investment in childcare in the province's history and will create 1,200 new accredited childcare spaces by 2007. These programs are intended to provide low-income parents with access to subsidized licensed daycare facilities if the parents are working, looking for work, attending educational training programs, or if either the parent or child has a special need.

9.4.7 Jobs First and the Transitional Employment Allowance

Jobs First and the Transitional Employment Allowance is a combination of short-term labour market attachment strategies and collateral supports which provide individuals support while they look for employment. Specifically, participants are given a general living allowance that covers food, clothing, household needs (e.g. furniture), personal needs, transportation (including public transportation and personal vehicles), and shelter (e.g. rent, mortgage, taxes).

9.4.8 Other Collateral Supports

⁷³ Saskatchewan Community Resources (no date) Welfare Redesign – Building Independence.
http://www.dcre.gov.sk.ca/financial/welfare_redesign/

A pilot program in Regina, Saskatchewan, involving the collaboration between the city and the province was made to ensure that transportation is not a barrier for those of low income. Specifically, a plan was devised to provide subsidized transportation. The program reduces the cost of a bus pass per month from \$54 to \$15 for low income individuals.⁷⁴ This program started in 2003 and has been successful. The number of people accessing the program has increased over time.

9.5 Social Assistance In Great Britain

In Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is responsible for providing social assistance (SA). The national employment rate in Great Britain is 74.5%, while the single parent employment rate is 56.5%⁷⁵. The DWP promotes employment as the best form of social assistance. Thus, the DWP focuses many of its SA programs on helping individuals find and/or maintain employment, while also supporting those who are unable to work⁷⁶. Social assistance and benefits are provided mainly through the *Jobcentre Plus* and *Child Support Agency* branches of the DWP.

9.5.1 Jobcentre Plus

Jobcentre Plus is an integration of Great Britain's *Jobcentres* and social security offices, which aims to "provide work to those who can and to support those who cannot"⁷⁷. This is accomplished by: helping disadvantaged people into work, providing financial support to people of working age while not employed, addressing issues of inequalities of opportunity, protecting the integrity of the benefits system, and working with employers to address labour market shortages⁷⁸. *Jobcentre Plus* is responsible for the delivery of *Income Support* and the *New Deal* programs and services, as well as the *Jobseeker's Allowance*.

9.5.2 Income Support

Income Support is available to all low-income individuals aged 16-59 years who are not working, or who are working on average less than 16 hours per week. Income support is not available for people who regularly attend their local *Jobcentre*, as they are eligible for the *Jobseeker's Allowance* (see below). Single parents (as well as people who are sick, disabled, legally blind, and unable to work because they are caring for someone) are not expected to regularly attend a *Jobcentre*⁷⁹.

⁷⁴ <http://www.gov.sk.ca/newsrel/releases/2005/12/19-1148.html>

⁷⁵ National Statistics. Lone Parents In Employment. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=409>

⁷⁶ Department for Work and Pensions. *About the Department*. <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/aboutus/>

⁷⁷ Department for Work and Pensions (2005). *Jobcentre Plus Annual Report And Accounts*.

http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Aboutus/Publications/Annual_Report_2004_-_05/index.html

⁷⁸ Department for Work and Pensions (2005). *Jobcentre Plus Annual Report And Accounts*.

http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Aboutus/Publications/Annual_Report_2004_-_05/index.html

⁷⁹ Department for Work and Pensions. *Income Support Fact Sheet*.

<http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Customers/WorkingAgeBenefits/Incomesupport/>

However, single parents are required to attend an annual work-focused interview to help them think about employment. Many single parents continue to prepare themselves for employment after these meetings by joining the *New Deal for Lone Parents* program (discussed below)⁸⁰. Currently, the DWP is piloting an incentive program where single parents who engage in work-related activities with a personal advisor are paid a premium on top of their *Income Support*⁸¹.

The specific level of *Income Support* one is entitled to is determined on a case-by-case basis and is influenced by marital status, the presence of children, and an individual's or their partner's current level of employment. Though not geared specifically for single parents, pregnant women and people with children aged less than five years receive free milk and vitamins if on *Income Support*. Recipients can also access funding to help pay housing costs. Single parents who are attending an educational or training institute may be able to receive *Income Support* while they are on course.

9.5.3 New Deal

The *New Deal* is a set of government programs that aim to help unemployed people find and maintain employment. There are distinct *New Deal* programs for young people, lone (single) parents, musicians, 25 plus, disabled people, 50 plus, and for partners of people receiving *Jobseeker's Allowance*. The *New Deal for Lone Parents* is a voluntary program that helps single parents achieve job readiness through a range of services (discussed below). The *New Deal for Lone Parents* is available for single parents who are not working, or working on average less than 16 hours per week, and whose youngest child is less than 16.

Once a single parent joins the *New Deal* program they are given a personal advisor who takes them through the necessary steps to find and apply for employment. Further, the personal advisor may offer tips on finding childcare and training or educational opportunities, as well as explain how an individual would be better off working and how working will affect their benefits. As a final service to single parents, providers of the *New Deal* also publish a magazine entitled "Solo", which provides useful information and anecdotes regarding single parents seeking employment.

The *New Deal for Lone Parents* is highly effective in that one in every two single parents moves into employment with the support of their personal adviser⁸².

⁸⁰ Department for Work and Pensions (2006). A New Deal For Welfare: Empowering People To Work. http://www.dwp.gov.uk/aboutus/welfarereform/docs/A_new_deal_for_welfare-Empowering_people_to_work-Full_Document.pdf.

⁸¹ Department for Work and Pensions (2006). A New Deal For Welfare: Empowering People To Work. http://www.dwp.gov.uk/aboutus/welfarereform/docs/A_new_deal_for_welfare-Empowering_people_to_work-Full_Document.pdf.

⁸² Department for Work and Pensions (2005). Jobcentre Plus Annual Report And Accounts. http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Aboutus/Publications/Annual_Report_2004_-_05/index.html.

9.5.4 Jobseeker's Allowance

The *Jobseeker's Allowance* (JSA) provides support for individuals who are capable of working, are available for work, and are actively seeking work though are currently not working or are working on average less than 16 hours per week. If an individual regularly attends their local *Jobcentre* they can apply for a *Jobseeker's Allowance*.

When an individual claims the JSA, they must schedule a Jobseeker Interview with an advisor at their local *Jobcentre*. During the Jobseeker Interview, recipients and the advisor discuss the rules of the JSA, the kinds of work they are looking for and the best ways to find a job. Advisors will also provide information about jobs, education/training, and any other available opportunities. Recipients usually come back to the *Jobcentre* every 2 weeks to provide an update on how their search is going and to discuss any ways the advisor can provide help. Recipients must also sign a Jobseeker's Agreement which details their ability to work, the type of work they are seeking, what they will do to find employment, how they will improve their chances of finding work, how *Jobcentre Plus* will help them achieve their goals.

Parents (including single parents) are not eligible to receive the JSA unless they can show they will suffer hardship from not receiving the JSA in addition to their other benefits (known as the Hardship Provision).

9.6 Child Support Agency

The *Child Support Agency* (CSA) is responsible for assessing, collecting and paying child support, ensuring that children whose parents are separated are financially supported. Child support is usually pursued if a parent is receiving *Income Support* or the *Jobseeker's Allowance*. Otherwise the CSA will only become involved if asked by a parent⁸³.

If a single parent begins working, increases the amount they work, or gets an increase in wages, they may be eligible for a one-time payment of £1,000 known as the *Child Maintenance Bonus*. If a single parent is on *Income Support* or receives the *Jobseeker's Allowance*, they may be eligible for the *Child Maintenance Premium*, a payment of up to £10 a week in addition to the *Child Support Maintenance*. Single parents receiving *Income Support* or the *Jobseeker's Allowance* who begin working, or increase the amount they work to more than 16 hours per week are eligible for the *Lone Parents Benefit Run-on*, where they will continue to receive benefits until they are paid from their job.

⁸³ Child Support Agency. Child Support Maintenance Fact Sheet.
http://www.direct.gov.uk/Parents/YourMoney/YourMoneyArticles/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4003043&chk=2jFRr7

9.7 Other Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Supports

Several other resources and programs are offered through the DWP which are available for single parents, though not targeted specifically at them, including⁸⁴:

- *Housing Benefit* – helps pay a portion, up to the full amount, of monthly rent for low-income earners. This is especially helpful to single parents as most non-working single parents in Great Britain live in low-income housing⁸⁵. Recipients do not have to be receiving other benefits.
- *Council Tax Benefit* – assistance toward paying council tax (similar to property tax) for low-income earners, whether they own or rent their residence, or live rent-free. Recipients do not have to be receiving other benefits.
- *Funeral Payment* – helps pay funeral costs for low-income earners (not based on the financial situation of the deceased).
- *Cold Weather Payment* – automatically given for people on *Income Support* or receiving the *Jobseeker's Allowance*. Available to 60+, for children under 5, if they have a disability or care for a child with a disability. This benefit is given automatically when the actual weather, or forecasted weather, is below 0°C for seven consecutive days.
- *Budgeting Loans* – interest-free loans that are available for people receiving *Income Support* or the *Jobseeker's Allowance*. These loans are to be used for non-regular expenses that an individual cannot afford (e.g. furniture, household equipment, footwear, clothing, moving expenses, travelling expenses, home improvements). *Budgeting Loans* must be repaid.

9.8 HM Revenue and Customs

HM Revenue and Customs is responsible for the collection of tax revenue and the distribution of the *Child Tax Credit* and the *Working Tax Credit* in Great Britain.

The *Child Tax Credit* is a benefit available for all parents, regardless of their personal income, to help cover the costs associated with raising children⁸⁶. Parents are eligible for the *Child Tax Credit* if they have a child under the age of 16 years, or a child up to 19 years of age who is registered in an educational or work-based training program.

The *Working Tax Credit* is a payment that tops up the earnings of low-income workers, including those who do not have children. The *Working Tax Credit* is intended to make employment more appealing for low-income earners⁸⁷. There is additional funding provided along with the *Working Tax Credit* to support people with a disability and to

⁸⁴ Department for Work and Pensions. Managing on a Low Income.

http://www.dwp.gov.uk/lifeevent/famchild/fc_managing_on_a_low_income.asp

⁸⁵ Department for Work and Pensions (2006). A New Deal For Welfare: Empowering People To Work.

http://www.dwp.gov.uk/aboutus/welfarereform/docs/A_new_deal_for_welfare-Empowering_people_to_work-Full_Document.pdf.

⁸⁶ HM Revenue and Customs (2005). Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit: A Guide.

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/leaflets/wtc2.pdf>

⁸⁷ HM Revenue and Customs (2005). Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit: A Guide.

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/leaflets/wtc2.pdf>

help cover the costs of approved childcare. To receive the childcare element a single parent must be working at least 16 hours per week, while couples must each work at least 16 hours per week (unless one partner is incapacitated, in a hospital or in prison). The childcare element of the *Working Tax Credit* will cover up to 70% of accredited childcare costs until the child is 15 years old.

9.9 Childcare

England, Wales and Scotland are all responsible for their own childcare provisions and strategies. Childcare in England is the responsibility of *Sure Start*, which is a subsidiary of the Children, Young People and Families Directorate of the Department for Education and Skills. There are presently several types of accredited childcare available in England⁸⁸:

- Crèches – which provide occasional care for children under eight;
- Toddler groups - informal groups of parents and carers that meet locally with their children on a regular basis, usually including children who are under five;
- Pre-schools and playgroups - provide play time and often early education to children under five;
- Day nurseries - provide care for children from birth to four or five and beyond, often integrated with early education and other services;
- Out-of-school or 'kids' clubs - offer children aged four to 12 a safe and stimulating environment in which they can play and learn outside school hours;
- Childminders - usually look after children under 12 in the childminder's own home and often collect school-aged children from a nearby school;
- Home childcarers - registered childminders who work in the parent's own home. Parents' homes need to be registered as a childcare setting in order to use home childcarers; and
- Nannies – who provide childcare in parents' homes and can look after children of any age.

Sure Start, along with the government of Scotland, has funded the *ChildcareLink* which is a hotline and website that provides information on, and locations of the different types of childcare in England and Scotland. *ChildcareLink* is funded in part by the *National Childcare Strategy* (discussed below).

9.9.1 Childcare Supports for Parents Returning to Work

Parents wishing to return to work have several childcare supports available to them including early years education, parental leave and flexible working schedules, a *Job Grant*, as well as the *Child Tax Credit*, *Working Tax Credit*, *Child Maintenance Bonus* and *Child Maintenance Premium* (discussed above)⁸⁹.

⁸⁸ UK Government. Types of Childcare Fact Sheet.

http://www.direct.gov.uk/Parents/Childcare/ChildcareArticles/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4016058&chk=b3NaB/

⁸⁹ UK Government. Benefits And Help For Parents Going Back To Work.

http://www.direct.gov.uk/Parents/Childcare/ChildcareArticles/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4016029&chk=wFUs0I/

Early Years Education

All three and four year olds in England are entitled to five two-and-a-half hour daily sessions a week with a registered childcare provider such as a school, nursery or playgroup, for three terms per year⁹⁰. There are also some large employers who provide registered early years education at the workplace. Parents also have the option of using a registered childminder, as long as they are part of an approved childminding network.

Parental Leave

Working parents can take up to 13 weeks of parental leave for each of their children, until their fifth birthday⁹¹. Parents usually have to take time off in blocks of at least one week, up to a maximum of four weeks per year, though employers may chose to grant shorter leaves at their discretion. Employers do not have to pay for the time off, though some choose to do so. Employers have the right to delay the time off for a period of up to six months if they feel an individual's absence will disrupt their business. Finally, to be eligible for parental leave, an individual must have been at their place of employment for at least one year.

Flexible Working Schedules

Parents with children under six years (or under 18 years if disabled) have the right to request a new work schedule to make it easier to care for their child(ren)⁹². Parents can apply for a changed work schedule once a year. To be eligible, the parent must have been at their place of employment for at least 26 weeks.

Job Grant

Recipients of *Income Support*, *Jobseeker's Allowance*, *Incapacity Benefit*, or the *Severe Disablement Allowance* are eligible to receive a tax-free lump sum payment when they begin full-time work (at least 16 hour per week), known as a *Job Grant*. Eligible recipients must be at least 25 years old, and have been receiving their benefit for at least 26 weeks.

9.9.2 National Childcare Strategy

In 2004, the British government released their plan for the future of childcare titled "Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: A Ten Year Strategy for Childcare"⁹³. This document laid out the future direction of childcare provisions in the country over the next decade. The government aims to ensure that all children are given the best possible start in life, that programs respond to changing patterns of employment and

⁹⁰ UK Government. Benefits And Help For Parents Going Back To Work.

http://www.direct.gov.uk/Parents/Childcare/ChildcareArticles/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4016029&chk=wFUs0I

⁹¹ UK Government. Benefits And Help For Parents Going Back To Work.

http://www.direct.gov.uk/Parents/Childcare/ChildcareArticles/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4016029&chk=wFUs0I

⁹² UK Government. Benefits And Help For Parents Going Back To Work.

http://www.direct.gov.uk/Parents/Childcare/ChildcareArticles/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4016029&chk=wFUs0I

⁹³ HM Treasury (2004) Choice For Parents, The Best Start For Children: A Ten Year Strategy For Childcare. http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/426/F1/pbr04childcare_480upd050105.pdf

ensure that parents (particularly mothers) can work and progress their careers, and that parents are provided with more choice on how to balance their work and home life. "Choice for Parents" outlined four major goals for future childcare in the UK, which are: increasing the choice and flexibility, availability, quality, and overall affordability of childcare⁹⁴.

Increasing Choice And Flexibility

There will be an extension of paid maternity leave to 9 months by April 2007, and to twelve months by the end of the next Parliament. Legislation will also be introduced allowing mothers the right to transfer some of their paid leave to fathers. Finally, the government aims to provide easy access to integrated services through *Children's Centres*, for families in every community. *Children's Centres* will provide information, health support, family support, childcare and other needed services for parents and children. The goal is to create 2,500 *Children's Centres* by 2008, and 3,500 by 2010.

Increasing Availability

The government aims to provide affordable, flexible, high quality childcare for all families with children up 14 years old in a childcare location that meets their needs⁹⁵. This will be achieved through the development of a new tax in 2008, which will help ensure a sufficient supply of childcare spaces. The government also intends to provide 20 hours a week of free childcare for up to 38 weeks for all 3 and 4 year olds by 2010. Finally, by 2010, an out of school care program will be in place for all children aged 3 to 14 between the hours of 8am and 6pm each weekday.

Increasing Quality of Care

It is the goal of the government to ensure high quality childcare is provided at every centre, for every child. This will be achieved in part by ensuring that all childcare settings are professionally led. Furthermore, the government will develop a Transformation Fund of £125 million annually starting in April 2006, which will be used to invest in high quality, sustainable, affordable childcare provisions. Finally, increased quality will be achieved through a reform of the workforce through new qualifications and standards, as well as a reform of the regulation and inspection regime to improve standards and give parents better information.

Increasing Affordability

The government recognizes that families need to be able to afford flexible, high quality childcare that is appropriate for their needs⁹⁶. Following this goal, the maximum proportion of childcare costs that can be claimed with the *Working Tax Credit* will be

⁹⁴ HM Treasury (2004) Choice For Parents, The Best Start For Children: A Ten Year Strategy For Childcare. http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/426/F1/pbr04childcare_480upd050105.pdf

⁹⁵ HM Treasury (2004) Choice For Parents, The Best Start For Children: A Ten Year Strategy For Childcare. http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/426/F1/pbr04childcare_480upd050105.pdf

⁹⁶ HM Treasury (2004) Choice For Parents, The Best Start For Children: A Ten Year Strategy For Childcare. http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/426/F1/pbr04childcare_480upd050105.pdf

increased from 70% to 80% in April 2006. The government's longer-term goal is to further reduce the childcare costs paid for by families, thus increasing the affordability of care. Finally, in April 2006, £5 million will be directed to a pilot project, which will address childcare affordability issues in London.

9.9.3 Programs of Note

In the review of the provinces, it is of note that all provinces prescribe to a mixture of programming to best support the client's return to employment. In all provinces, the importance of a needs assessment is crucial to determining the delivery of services. The most pressing concern is the method of engaging the client back into the workforce. There are two schools of thought on this method. The first is to have the client return to the workforce immediately with minimal supports. The second is to have the client undergo more intensive education/training prior to returning to work.

Work first, or training first, is a controversial topic regarding the unemployed. From a government perspective, it is beneficial to have a minimal number of people on the caseload. Therefore, there is a tendency to "move" clients as quickly as possible into a working environment. However, the complexity of this issue is much larger than simply the issue of the person working. If moving immediately into a working environment the client may be working at a low paying position, causing them to continue on in poverty while working. Also, moving individuals immediately into work without the client have appropriate skills puts the client at risk of falling back to the system for assistance.

Research has found that there are three main benefits of programs delivering both intensive counselling and job-search assistance. These benefits, however, are not realized until the client has reached the fourth and fifth year of their program start date. These benefits include: reduced caseloads for government departments, higher employment rates, and an increase in total annual earnings. The research specifies two programs in particular that have resulted in these findings: Portland's *Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS)* and Canada's *Self Sufficiency Project (SSP)*.

Another comparative measure study suggests that the varying employment and social assistance program models are dependent upon the level of need of the client base when determining the effectiveness of the program. For example, if looking at clients with numerous barriers they tend to earn more if they start work immediately as opposed to education. However, when examining clients with few barriers, having them begin with employment or education is unimportant as they will have increased earnings in either program style. The National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies (NEWWS) examined and compared 20 programs across the United States. According to a report by the National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies (NEWWS), to ensure that programming has the most impact on the broadest range of people, clients need to be engaged in mixed programming.⁹⁷ Although mixed programming is found to be effective, it should be noted that it is not actually either the work program or the education program, which determines the success. Rather, it is any programming that ensures the

⁹⁷ Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (2000). National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies- What Works Best for Whom: Impacts of 20 Welfare-to-Work Programs by Subgroups – Executive Summary.

engagement of the client as opposed to allowing the client to have the ability to not attend either training or education.

Alternative to the normal education or training models of service delivery, two other programs were reviewed: reThinking unEmployment and Neighborhood Youth Center Job Placement Pilot Project. These two programs were suggested in the literature reviewed as well as by key informant interviewees. Currently, reThinking unEmployment is to be implemented in Alberta, while Neighborhood Youth Center Job Placement Pilot Project was tested in central Alberta in 2003.

reThinking unEmployment is an American based program, which has been tested within Ontario and evaluated, and is being piloted and evaluated in Alberta as the Hard-to-Employ program. The Hard-to-Employ program combines cognitive skills training with marketing skills to assist Income Support clients who are chronically unemployed. The objective of the cognitive skills training is to alter the behaviour of the client by focusing on changing 'impulsive' thinking and teaching ways of retaining their jobs. The marketing skills teach the client how to sell themselves as solutions to employer's problems and post-employment support teaches staff how to work with prospective employers to find a productive job for difficult-to-place clients by focusing on employer needs. The Ontario pilot of the program found that 76% of clients who completed the program reporting having secured a job placement.⁹⁸ Should the Alberta pilot meet with success, it is expected that long-term savings will be achieved as clients become independent from Income Support.

The Neighbourhood Youth Center Job Placement Pilot Project was an Alberta pilot in 2003. It targets high-risk youth aged 18 to 22. The project allowed the client's wages to be paid during the first three months; AHRE worked with the employers and the client group. Although only a small number of youths participated in the program, of the 8 ETW clients, 6 were either employed or in school one year afterwards. Due to the intensive proactive support to both clients and employers, and ensuring any conflicts were handled through a third party (front line worker), the program proved to be successful.

⁹⁸ Robinson, D. et al. (1999). reThinking unEmployment: Client Profiles and Program Performance. p. 15.

SECTION 10: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the key findings of the *Working Expected to Work Project*, the Consultant has provided the following summary and recommendations.

10.1 Working ETW Client Profile

Working ETW clients are predominantly single parents, female, between the ages of 20 to 39 years with an education of grade 12 or less. Supporting survey data collected from working ETW clients shows that approximately one-quarter of working ETW clients identify themselves as having a disability, a higher proportion than among the general public. Approximately one-quarter of working ETW clients also identify themselves as being Aboriginal or belonging to a visible minority, which are groups that historically have faced greater employment barriers and social marginalization.

10.1.1 Employment Outcomes

Just over half of working ETW clients are employed full-time, with single ETW clients more likely to be employed full-time than clients who are single parents. Working ETW clients are most commonly employed in food and beverage services and cashier occupations. Specifically, the working ETW client survey showed that almost half of all ETW clients worked in sales and service occupations, making less than \$25,000 per year, regardless if they were still receiving Income Support or not. A large percentage of working ETW clients do not receive employer benefits.

10.1.2 Barriers of Working ETW Clients

AHRE key informants emphasize the importance of addressing working ETW client barriers prior to focusing on getting the client to work. Significant emphasis is placed on the fact that many of the barriers working ETW clients face to obtaining and maintaining employment are not specifically related to employment skills, but rather relate to life management skills, health and family issues and personal issues. Common skill deficiencies include a lack of soft skills such as self-management and poor understanding of the work environment expectations.

Loss of health benefits appears to be significant barrier to leaving Income support. Key informants generally agreed that the loss of medical benefits by working ETW clients that are either single or in a childless couple serves as a barrier to leaving income support. Supporting this, working ETW survey respondents commonly cited loss of health benefits (14.5%) and/or health problems (42.7%), which can be assumed to require health benefits, as key difficulties in gaining independence from income support.

Also, problems with childcare arrangements proved to be a significant barrier for most working ETW survey respondents to leaving Income Support. A high proportion of those who reported problems with childcare also indicated they had been fired from a job

previously. This finding could reflect the clients' need for greater childcare support while working.

10.2 What Programs and Services Do Working ETW Clients Find Useful?

An element of the research project was to identify the programs and services used by working ETW clients to find and maintain employment. Both AHRE key informant interviews and the survey of working ETW clients were asked to specify useful programs and services.

In regards to Employment and Training Services, both AHRE informants and working ETW respondents felt that Labour Market Information Centres, Career and Employment Assistance Services, and Alberta Learning Information Service were the most useful services for finding and maintaining employment. This finding is supported by research conducted in OECD countries. Generally, employment services have been found to be very effective in getting clients to work.⁹⁹

AHRE key informants overwhelmingly felt that Child Support Services were essential to finding and maintaining employment for working ETW clients. Specifically, these services allow working ETW clients who are single parents or of blended families to obtain a child support order and register it with the Maintenance Enforcement Program. Once the order is in place and being enforced, the child support payments are a valuable source of additional income to former working ETW clients. Research shows that collateral policies to obtain and enforce court ordered child support payments by non-custodial parents increase success of the client finding work and leaving assistance. Further, the collection of child support payments helps lower costs associated with running social assistance programs and services.¹⁰⁰

AHRE key informant frequently mentioned programs and services provided through other government departments such as the Child Care Subsidy Program, Maintenance Enforcement Program, and the National Child Benefit Supplement. The key characteristic of these programs in helping working ETW clients find and maintain employment is that they provide additional income.

The Alberta Adult Health Benefit and the Alberta Child Health Benefit were both felt by AHRE informants to be effective in allowing working ETW clients to find and maintain employment. Specifically, the health benefits allow clients to address any health problems that may prevent them from working. Further, the benefits are beneficial as they lessen anxiety for clients and allow them to focus on work.

In regards to supplementary benefits, AHRE informants and working ETW survey respondents felt that child care funding, Employment Maintenance Allowance, Utility Connection/Reconnection Deposit, and Employment, Training, and Transitional

⁹⁹ Betcherman, Olivas, and Dar (2004). Impacts of Active Labor Market Programs: New Evidence from Evaluations with Particular Attention to Developing and Transition Countries.

¹⁰⁰ 2000 House Ways and Means Green Book (2000). Child Support Enforcement Program.

Supports, are the most useful for allowing working ETW client to find and maintain employment.

10.3 Which Programs and Services are Effective for Working ETW Clients?

Another aspect to the project was to identify the programs and services that were effective for getting working ETW clients off Income Support. Generally, AHRE key informants felt that the programs and services available were effective for working ETW clients to become independent. AHRE informants did note that individualized help and child support are key to helping clients get off Income Support.

Further, informants identified that an effective mix of programming was to combine individualized assessments with education and job training activities, in addition to childcare support and health benefits. In particular, tailoring the program to the client type (e.g. single parent, multi-barriered) may be the best approach for helping individuals with complex problems. Key informants recognized that in order to best serve working ETW clients, it is not sufficient to just determine eligibility and administer payments and programs. Rather, the application of various services and programs is intended to help clients become independent.

10.4 Independence from Income Support

An interesting finding from the working ETW client survey is the alignment between the respondents' estimated annual income needed to leave Income Support compared to the respondents' actual reported annual income. Specifically, just over half of working ETW respondents stated they would require an annual salary between \$20,000 and \$29,999 to become independent from Income Support. This finding is supported when compared to the annual income reported by working ETW clients who currently receive Income Support. Almost all clients still on Income Support reported an annual income below \$25,000. This finding, supported by additional research, could be used in exploring earnings exemption levels or wage supplements.

10.5 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings from AHRE key informant interviews and the survey of working ETW clients.

1 Child support orders and agreements should be obtained for all working ETW single parents and blended families. Key informants noted that obtaining a child support order or agreement is critical for working ETW single parents and blended families. However, of the working ETW clients surveyed, only 51.9% of respondents with children where a parent lived outside the home had obtained a court order or agreement. This discrepancy points to the need to ensure that child support orders are in place whenever possible. Obtaining and registering a child support order requires a minimal amount of time on the part of the client and increases the likelihood of success of the client finding work and leaving assistance. Further, the collection of child support

payments helps lower costs associated with running social assistance programs and services.¹⁰¹

2 Extending Child Support Services to all low-income Albertan families should be explored. While key informants noted few gaps in Child Support Services, it was suggested that extending these services to all low-income Albertan families could potentially reduce families seeking assistance in the future. Currently, Child Support Services is provided to low-income Albertans when it will not reduce or delay services to applicants receiving Income Support, AISH, or AAHB. Only when there is no existing support order are Child Support Services provided to other Albertans. The importance of providing child support services is upheld by the literature review. Research has demonstrated that services to obtain and enforce court ordered child support payments helps lower costs associated with running social programs and services.¹⁰² However, in most provinces and in Great Britain, child support services are most often offered to those receiving social assistance, while those outside this programming must actively request assistance. For example, in Saskatchewan, the services offered by the Saskatchewan Maintenance Enforcement Office are free of charge to all claimants and respondents.

3 The Alberta Adult Health Benefit should be available to all ETW clients after leaving Income Support. Currently the Alberta Adult Health Benefit is not available to all ETW clients after leaving Income Support. Key informants and the literature reviewed stressed that extending this benefit to those that have left income support would help to encourage job maintenance among single and childless couples.¹⁰³ In support of benefit extension other Canadian jurisdictions have opted to extend health benefits to support the transition from income support to employment. Thus, Ontario Works recipients continue to receive health benefits (including a drug plan) for the first six months after becoming employed, or until the individual begins to receive health benefits from their employer.

4 The transportation supplement should be increased for working ETW clients. Literature suggests that transportation is a key spatial barrier for social assistance recipients to obtaining and maintaining work.¹⁰⁴ Low-rent accommodation and low-wage job opportunities and employment are often not co-located consequently making transportation a critical issue for many Income Support clients. As suggested by key informants, transportation supplement levels can negatively impact job search, emphasizing the need for an increase in the transportation supplement amount.

5 Expanding job maintenance programming in order to better support clients in their transition to the workforce should be investigated further. The importance of providing job maintenance programming is highlighted by research showing that clients often cycle on and off assistance over time.¹⁰⁵ Job maintenance strategies can assist

¹⁰¹ 2000 House Ways and Means Green Book (2000). Child Support Enforcement Program.

¹⁰² 2000 House Ways and Means Green Book (2000). Child Support Enforcement Program.

¹⁰³ HRDC (1999). Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market.

¹⁰⁴ HRDC (1999). Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market.

¹⁰⁵ HRDC (1999). Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market.

clients in attaining self-sufficiency by providing long-term support by consolidating their hold on the labour market. The Hard-to-Employ program, piloted in Alberta, makes use job maintenance strategies by offering a post-employment support program to staff on how to work with prospective employers to find a productive job for difficult-to-place clients by focusing on what the employer's needs are. Providing job maintenance that includes on-going support and counselling to working clients who have left Income Support may help to encourage long-term success in ETW clients.

6 Office hours for the Employment and Training Services should be more flexible to better accommodate clients. Key informants felt that working ETW clients could be better served if program and service office hours were more flexible. It was suggested that extending office hours a few days a week and/or being open on the weekend would help better meet the needs of working ETW clients who continue to use programs and services.

7 Improved co-ordination of services and communications between government departments is required to better serve ETW clients. Currently multiple provincial departments provide services to ETW clients, emphasizing the need for stronger communication interdepartmentally to reduce duplication of work and decrease the time spent by ETW clients in applying for services. A possible solution would be the development of single-window service and program delivery, which, in addition reducing overlap and increases efficiency, would allow for better co-ordination of policy and program development. While single-window service speeds the transition from intake to training to job placement, successful implementation of such service can be challenging. A research study on governments implementing single-window service delivery found that in some jurisdictions the merging of social assistance with other services was beneficial and proceeded very smoothly, while in other jurisdictions the integration was very challenging, most often around administrative issues. For example, uniting staff from different departments and order of government are key issues when transitioning to single-window service delivery.¹⁰⁶

8 Providing training and/or employment programs that allow working ETW clients to obtain higher paying jobs should be explored. Almost half of all working ETW survey respondents indicated that they required additional income, which could be achieved through the acquisition of better-paid employment. Literature supports this suggestion. Because the cost of running employment and training programs is high, ensuring that participants obtain better paying jobs not only increases the client's ability to become self-sufficient but also helps to improve the cost-benefit ratio of running such programming.¹⁰⁷ Further research into providing more targeted training to clients in order to obtain higher paid employment should be investigated.

9 Staff training and knowledge of AHRE programming and services may need to be increased. Key informants noted a need to increase staff training and knowledge of the programs and services available to clients. Specifically, lack of clarity among staff about the function of the Employment Maintenance Allowance and when to provide

¹⁰⁶ HRDC (1999). Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market.

¹⁰⁷ HRDC (1999). Lessons Learned Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market.

counsel-to-quit to underemployed working ETW clients has resulted in inconsistent application of these services. Providing additional training such as workshops or information bulletins would help keep staff up-to-date on current programming as well as serve as a reminder of the scope of services offered. Increasing AHRE workers' knowledge base would also be of benefit to Income Support clients as the clients would be more knowledgeable about the variety of services and programs available.

10 Additional research should be conducted with current and former working ETW clients. To get a more complete sense of the effectiveness of the Income Support Program and associated benefits for working ETW clients, additional research should be conducted with a larger sample of clients. Based on the November 2005 working ETW client base provided by AHRE, 350 working ETW clients should be surveyed in order to achieve a margin of error of +/- 5.0%. To be of greatest benefit, the sample should be large enough to allow for a comparison between working ETW clients currently receiving Income Support and those who have left.

Draft Research Framework for the Working ETW Project

Research Question	Indicator(s)	Data Source(s)
1. What Income Support benefits and non-financial benefits are currently available to working ETW clients?	-Description of Income Support benefits and non-financial benefits.	-Document and literature review
2. How are program benefits used by ETW clients to improve their employment situation?	-Clients report having used Employment and Training Services, Supplementary benefits, and Child Support Services and Health Benefits. -Clients report improved employment situation due to program benefits. -Stakeholders report effectiveness of program benefits to improve client employment.	-Stakeholder interviews (20-25) -Client Survey (75)
3. Are the benefits and services provided to working ETW clients consistent with HRE's current mandate?	-Comparison of services and benefits to the mandate.	-Document and literature review
4. What are the characteristics of working ETW clients? (e.g. age, gender, marital status, education level, rural/urban)	-# of clients by age, gender, marital status, education level, rural/urban.	-Client Profiling
5. What is the number of hours worked and the length of time working ETW clients have remained at their current employment?	-Employment patterns (e.g., number of hours worked, length of time working at current employment, occupation and industry)	-Client Survey (75)
6. What are the wages earned by working ETW clients, changes in wages if any, over time, and benefits provided by employers?	-Wages earned (e.g. salary, hourly, etc.) -Type and amount of benefits provided by employer.	-Client Survey (75)
7. How many working ETW clients identify as an Aboriginal, an immigrant, disabled, a youth, or older worker?	-# of Aboriginal, immigrant, disabled, youth and older worker ETW clients.	-Client Profiling

Research Question	Indicator(s)	Data Source(s)
8. How effective are the benefits available to working ETW clients in helping them become independent from Income Support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Stakeholders report on the effectiveness of benefits in getting clients off income support. -Clients report improved employment situation due to program benefits. Clients report improved employment situation due to program benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Stakeholder interviews (20-25) -Client Survey (75)
9. What are the best practices in other provinces and comparable jurisdictions? Is there a model that is particularly successful and applicable to the Alberta context?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Stakeholder identified best practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Document and literature review
10. What are the gaps present with the supports and services for working ETW clients?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Client identified gaps in services and supports. -Stakeholder identified gaps in services and supports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Stakeholder interviews (20-25) -Client Survey (75)
11. What are the challenges or barriers for this client group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Client identified challenges or barriers (e.g. language, education). -Stakeholder identified challenges or barriers for clients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Stakeholder interviews (20-25) -Client Survey (75)
12. Are there any disincentives within the current supports to becoming self-sufficient?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Stakeholder identified wage rates for clients to leave income support -Stakeholder identified disincentives to becoming independent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Stakeholder interviews (20-25) -Client Survey (75)

Working Expected to Work Client Survey for AHRE
Version 3

INTRODUCTION

Hi, my name is *(interviewer name)*, I am calling on behalf of Alberta Human Resources and Employment from Malatest, a professional research company. May I please speak with *(name from file)*?

1. Yes **(proceed)**
2. No, client is not available **(go to call-back page)**
3. No, refuse to complete.

(REPEAT INTRODUCTION ABOVE IF CLIENT WAS NOT THE ONE WHO ANSWERED THE PHONE)

You should have recently received a letter from Alberta Human Resources and Employment explaining that a survey is being done to help us understand if the government programs offered help people find a job and leave income support assistance. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and failure to participate will not negatively affect you in any way. All the information you provide will be protected under the Provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The survey will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Is now a good time?

1. Yes **(go to A1)**
2. No **(terminate and schedule appointment for later)**
3. Would like more information/did not receive Introduction letter **(read Project Summary. Proceed to A1)**

Project Summary:

R.A. Malatest & Associates is working on behalf of Alberta Human Resources and Employment. We are conducting a research study on how to improve the Income Support Program. This is a confidential survey of clients who have been receiving Income Support from Alberta Human Resources and Employment. You have been randomly selected and your participation in this short survey is completely voluntary, but we hope you will agree to take part in this important research. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your status or eligibility to receive benefits.

The survey will ask you about whether the income support payments and benefits you use make your work situation better. The information you give will help us understand how to improve the Income Support Program. It will also help identify strengths in the program, which will bring effective solutions to our attention.

May I do the survey with you now?

1. Yes
2. No.

SECTION A: Confirming Client Status

A1: Our records show that as of November 2005 you were employed. Is this correct?

1. Yes
2. No

3. Unsure

SURVEYOR: If respondent still says No or Unsure, please ask for a detailed explanation:

SECTION Bi: Employment History

I'd to ask you questions about your current and past work experience. I would like to remind you that all the answers you provide to me will be kept private and none of this information is passed on to any government agency where you will be identified. (NOTE: Please stress confidentiality)

B1a. What is your current employment, education or training status? Are you: **(READ LIST)**

1. Employed
2. Self-employed
3. In school/training
4. Unemployed
5. Unemployed and waiting for school/training
6. Employed and in school/training
7. Self-employed and in school/training
8. Don't know
9. No response

B1b. (Ask if B1a=4 or 5) People may be unemployed for a number of reasons such as still looking for a job, illness or family needs. Why are you not currently employed? **(Multiple response, surveyors obtain top three responses)**
(DO NOT READ LIST)

1. Personal illness or disability
2. Family responsibilities
3. No work available/still looking
4. Lack of education
5. Went/going back to school
6. Maternity leave/had a baby
7. Laid off
8. Lack of funding
9. Quit job
10. Need to improve English
11. Moved
12. Applied for course/waiting for acceptance
13. Lack of experience
14. Waiting for job to start
15. Retired
16. Other (please specify)_____
88. Don't know
99. No response

[Respondents who answered B1a=3, 4, or 5 should move to SECTION Bii at this point]

B2a. (Ask if B1a=1, 2, 6, or 7) Are you currently employed in more than one job?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

B2b. (Ask if B2a=1) How many jobs do you currently hold? _____

B3. (Ask if B1=1, 2, 6 or 7) When was the approximate start date of your current employment...**(FOR THOSE WITH MORE THAN ONE JOB OBTAIN THE START DATE FOR ALL JOBS)**

- (mm/yy) 88. Don't Know .99. No response
- (mm/yy) 88. Don't Know .99. No response
- (mm/yy) 88. Don't Know .99. No response

The next questions ask about your main job, that is, the job you work the most hours at, on average.

B4. Which of the following best describes your current job?

- 1. Permanent (i.e. No expectation of layoff)
- 2. Temporary (i.e. Short term contract or fixed end date)
- 3. Seasonal
- 8. Don't know
- 9. No response

B5. What is your job title? **[4 Digit NOC Coding]**

-
- 88. Don't Know
 - 99. No Response

B6. In what kind of business, service or industry do you work? (If 'product' only mentioned such as oil, computers, clothing, probe: Is that manufacturing, distribution or retail sales?) **[4 Digit NAICS Coding]**

-
-
- 88. Don't Know
 - 99. No Response

B7. What kind of work do you do? What are your main responsibilities?

-
-
-
- 88. Don't Know
 - 99. No Response

B8. How many hours do you usually work per week?

- _____ Hours
- 888. Don't Know
 - 999. No Response

B9. What was the gross salary or wage from this job, before deductions and not including tips and gratuities?

(RECORD PER HOUR, PER WEEK, ETC.) (SURVEYOR NOTE: Make sure we are getting gross wages and not net wages.)

- 1. Hourly

2. Daily
3. Weekly
4. Biweekly
5. Monthly
6. Yearly
7. Other (C9other)
8. Don't know
9. No response

[PROGRAMMING NOTE: INSERT RECODE COMMAND TO CALCULATE ANNUAL & HOURLY INCOME]

yearly recode = \$ _____ / Year

hourly recode = \$ _____ / hourly earnings

SURVEYOR NOTE: Confirm the above yearly earnings or hourly earnings with the respondent. If the respondent does not agree with the earnings calculation, please probe to find out the reason for discrepancy (e.g., overtime).

B10a. In your position do you receive any Tips/Gratuities?

1. Yes **(If Yes go to B10b)**
2. No **(If Yes go to B11)**
8. Don't Know
9. No response

B10b. On average how much do you receive per shift in tips/gratuities? _____

B11. Does your employer provide you with any benefits (medical, sick days, vacation days)?

1. Yes **(If Yes go to B12)**
2. No **(If No go to C1)**
8. Don't Know
9. No response

B12. Which benefits do they provide to you (please check all which apply):

1. Medical
2. Dental
3. Paid Sick Days
4. Training
5. Vacation Days
6. Cover Alberta Health Care
7. Clothing Allowance
8. Drug Plan (i.e. prescription)
9. Other **(Please specify _____)**
88. Don't Know
99. No response

SECTION Bii: Employment History

[ASK THIS SECTION ONLY IF B1A=3,4 OR 5]

The next questions ask about the last job you had.

B13. (Ask if B1a=3, 4 or 5) When was the approximate start date of your recent employment...**(FOR THOSE WITH MORE THAN ONE JOB OBTAIN THE START DATE FOR ALL JOBS)**

- (mm/yy) 88. Don't Know .99. No response
- (mm/yy) 88. Don't Know .99. No response
- (mm/yy) 88. Don't Know .99. No response

B14. Which of the following best describes your most recent job?

1. Permanent (i.e. No expectation of layoff)
2. Temporary (i.e. Short term contract or fixed end date)
3. Seasonal
8. Don't know
9. No response

B15. What was your job title? **[4 Digit NOC Coding]**

-
- 88. Don't Know
 - 99. No Response

B16. In what kind of business, service or industry did you work? (If 'product' only mentioned such as oil, computers, clothing, probe: Is that manufacturing, distribution or retail sales?) **[4 Digit NAICS Coding]**

-
-
- 88. Don't Know
 - 99. No Response

B17. What kind of work did you do? What were your main responsibilities?

-
-
-
- 88. Don't Know
 - 99. No Response

B18. How many hours did you usually work per week?

_____ Hours

- 888. Don't Know
- 999. No Response

B19. What was the gross salary or wage from this job, before deductions and not including tips and gratuities?

(RECORD PER HOUR, PER WEEK, ETC.) (SURVEYOR NOTE: Make sure we are getting gross wages and not net wages.)

1. Hourly
2. Daily
3. Weekly
4. Biweekly
5. Monthly
6. Yearly
7. Other (C9other)
8. Don't know
9. No response

[PROGRAMMING NOTE: INSERT RECODE COMMAND TO CALCULATE ANNUAL & HOURLY INCOME]

yearly recode = \$ _____ / Year
 hourly recode = \$ _____ / hourly earnings

SURVEYOR NOTE: Confirm the above yearly earnings or hourly earnings with the respondent. If the respondent does not agree with the earnings calculation, please probe to find out the reason for discrepancy (e.g., overtime).

B20a. In your position did you receive any Tips/Gratuities?

- 1. Yes **(If Yes, go to B20b)**
- 2. No **(If No, go to B21)**
- 8. Don't Know
- 9. No response

B20b. On average how much did you receive per shift in tips/gratuities? _____

B21. Did your employer provide you with any benefits (medical, sick days, vacation days)?

- 1. Yes **(If Yes go to B22)**
- 2. No **(If No go to C1)**
- 8. Don't Know
- 9. No response

B22. Which benefits did they provide to you (please check all which apply):

- 1. Medical
- 2. Dental
- 3. Paid Sick Days
- 4. Training
- 5. Vacation Days
- 6. Cover Alberta Health Care
- 7. Clothing Allowance
- 8. Drug Plan (i.e. prescription)
- 9. Other **(Please specify _____)**
- 88. Don't Know
- 99. No response

SECTION C: Current Program Use

While receiving Income Support from Alberta Human Resources and Employment you may have been referred to a program or service to help you find or keep jobs. I would like to ask you a few questions about the programs that you participated in, how you felt about them and if you thought they were helpful. Please remember, that all answers will be kept private.

C1. I am going to read you a list of employment and training services that may have been available to you from AHRE for each service please tell me if you used the service.

Did you use the.....

- a. Labour Market Information Centres or the Career in Motion a mobile labour market information centre

(Interviewer Note: LMICs have job market and career information, books, newspapers, software, audio/visual materials and, in some locations, staff to assist clients with questions and free access to computers, the Internet, telephones, fax machines and photocopiers for work search purposes).

1. Yes
2. No
8. Don't Know
9. No response

b. Career Information Hotline

(Interviewer Note: The hotline has career advisors to give answers to questions about searching for work, planning a career, getting money for education, job descriptions and other resources. In Edmonton: 780-422-4266, Outside Edmonton: 1-800-661-3753).

c. Canada Alberta Job Order Bank Service (JOBS)

(Interviewer Note: A list of available jobs for Albertans looking for work.)

d. Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS)

(Interviewer Note: A website with information about career planning, post-secondary education and training, funding, job searching, and trends in the job market.)

e. Youth Connections

(Interviewer Note: For Alberta 16 to 24 years old, it provides career and employment information and assistance.)

f. Career and Employment Assistance Services

(Interviewer Note: A service that helps people transition from school to work, or from unemployment to employment by helping Albertans with career plans and advice, how to search for jobs, and individual counseling.)

g. Job Placement Services

(Interviewer Note: Matches unemployed Albertans with employers who need to fill jobs).

h. Work Foundations

(Interviewer Note: Helps Albertans get adult academic upgrading and basic skills such as English as a Second Language.)

i. Training for Work

(Interviewer Note: Helps Albertans get job skills through work experience or classroom training.)

j. Self-employment programs

(Interviewer Note: Provides training to Albertans who are unemployed and want to learn how to start their own business.)

k. Alberta Job Corps

(Interviewer Note: For Alberta Works Income Support clients, this program gives clients a chance to work and earn a wage while learning job skills. Available in Northern Alberta, Calgary, Edmonton and Medicine Hat).

l. Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP)

(Interviewer Note: This program helps Albertans looking for temporary work in the spring and summer months. This service is often used by high school and post-secondary students.)

m. Disability Related Employment Supports (DRES)

(Interviewer Note: This program helps Albertans with disabilities enter the job market. This could include giving job advice, educational supports such as sign language readers, note takers, and technology supports such as special computers or software.)

n. First Nations Training to Employment Program

(Interviewer Note: This program helps First Nations people find and keep jobs.)

C2. For each of the services you used I would like you to tell me if the service helped you find or keep a job.

Using a one to five scale, where one is Strongly Disagree, 2 is Disagree, 3 is Neutral, 4 is Agree and 5 is Strongly Agree, would you agree or disagree that the <<recall C1a-n if =1>> helped you find or keep a job.

- 1. Strongly Disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Neutral
- 4. Agree
- 5. Strongly Agree
- 8. Don't know
- 9. No Response

C3. Do you have any other comments about how the employment and training services you used helped you find or keep a job?

C4. Are you currently receiving income support?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 8. Don't know
- 9. No response

C5a. Do you have any children?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

C5b. (Ask if C5a=1) How many children do you have? _____

C5c. (Ask if C5a=1) Are those children....(Read list, check one response)

- 1. living with me most of the time
- 2. living with me part-time
- 3. not living with me

C6. (Ask if C5a=1) Does a parent of your children live outside your home?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

- C7. (Ask if C6=1) Do you think having the other parent of your children pay child support has or will help you and your family?
1. Yes
 2. No
- C8. (Ask if C6=1) Do you have a court order or agreement for child support payment for your child/children?
1. Yes
 2. No
- C9. (Ask if C4=2 and C8=2) People may not have a court order or agreement for child support for a number of reasons. For example, you may still be trying to obtain child support or it may be difficult to afford a lawyer or a parent may choose not to receive child support. Why do you currently not have a court order or agreement for child support?
1. Still trying to get child support from the other parent
 2. Cannot afford a lawyer
 3. Chose not to receive child support
 4. Have some of other agreement for child support (e.g. gifts, clothes, tuition)
 5. Other, specify (_____)
 8. Don't know
 9. No response
- C10. (Ask if C4=2 and C8=1) Are you receiving regular child support payments for the full amount of the order or agreement for child support?
1. Yes
 2. No
- C11a. (Ask if C10=2) Do you receive any child support at all?
1. Yes
 2. No
- C11b. (Ask if C11a=1) How often do you receive the full amount of the child support order or agreement?
1. All of the time
 2. Most of the time
 3. Some of the time
 4. Never
 8. Don't know
 9. No response
- C12. (Ask if C10=1 or C11a=1 AND B1a=1, 2, 6 or 7) Has receiving child support helped you keep working?
1. Yes
 2. No
 8. Don't know
 9. No response
- C13. (Ask if C10=1 or C11a=1 AND B1a=3, 6, or 7) Has receiving child support helped you stay in school or training?
1. Yes
 2. No
 8. Don't know
 9. No response

C14. Do you use the Child Care Subsidy Program? **(Interviewer Note: The Child Care Subsidy Program helps eligible Alberta families pay for child care services.)**

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 8. Don't know
- 9. No response

C15. (Ask if C14=1) Using a one to five scale, where one is Strongly Disagree, 2 is Disagree, 3 is Neutral, 4 is Agree and 5 is Strongly Agree, would you agree or disagree that the Child Care Subsidy Program helped you to find or keep a job? **(Interviewer Note: Having child care allowed the client to overcome a personal situation that was making it difficult for them to work or look for work. E.g. No one available to take care of the kids while working.)**

- 1. Strongly Disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Neutral
- 4. Agree
- 5. Strongly Agree
- 8. Don't know
- 9. No Response

C16. Do you have any other comments about how the child support services or child care subsidy available to you and your family helped you to find or keep a job?

C17. (Ask if C4=2) Do you access the.....

a. Alberta Adult Health Benefit

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 8. Don't Know
- 9. No response

b. Alberta Child Health Benefit

C18. Using a one to five scale, where one is Strongly Disagree, 2 is Disagree, 3 is Neutral, 4 is Agree and 5 is Strongly Agree, would you agree or disagree that the <<recall C17a-b if =1>> helped you to find or keep a job? **(Interviewer Note: The health benefits helped the client overcome a personal situation that was making it difficult for them to work (e.g. medical condition of client or family members).)**

- 1. Strongly Disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Neutral
- 4. Agree
- 5. Strongly Agree
- 8. Don't know
- 9. No Response

C19. Do you have any other comments about how the health benefits available to you and your family helped you overcome personal situations that were making it difficult for you to work?

Sometimes clients of Income Support who are currently working still use supports to help them transition from Income Support to being fully independent.

C20. I am going to read you a list of supplementary benefits that may be available to you from AHRE.

Did you receive the benefit.....

a. Additional Shelter

(Interviewer Note: Funding allowed for households of 6 or more persons when suitable accommodation cannot be found for the core shelter allowance).

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 8. Don't Know
- 9. No response

b. Children's School Expenses

(Interviewer Note: Funding for families with children in school up to Grade 12).

c. Community Living StartUp Allowance

(Interviewer Note: Funding for those leaving an institution as a result of a disability or mental illness).

d. Damage Deposit

(Interviewer Note: Funding for leaving an abusive situation or in a one time need situation).

e. Emergency Allowance

(Interviewer Note: Funding for those who are having an emergency that: (1) presents a severe health risk; (2) cannot wait until the next benefit period; or (3) situation due to unforeseen circumstances beyond their control. E.g. Emergency costs of additional food, clothing, shelter, medical transportation, essential major appliance repairs, essential house repairs, utility arrears, etc).

f. Employment Maintenance Allowance

(Interviewer Note: Funding for employed or self-employed clients with dependent children to help with the costs of working).

g. Child Care

(Interviewer Note: Funding for childcare while clients are working, looking for work, in approved training or treatment).

h. Earnings Replacement Benefit

(Interviewer Note: For clients temporarily unable to work because of illness or family care responsibilities).

i. Escaping Abuse Benefit

(Interviewer Note: To help with the costs associated with establishing a new home after leaving an abusive situation).

j. Handicap Benefit

(Interviewer Note: For clients assessed as severely handicapped as defined by the Assured Income for Severely Handicapped (AISH) program).

k. Medical and Surgical Supplies

(Interviewer Note: Funding for medical or surgical supplies not paid for by Alberta Aids to Daily Living or any other community resource).

l. Medical Extraordinary Transportation

(Interviewer Note: For those who require regular access to medical services for severe health problems.)

m. Relocation Allowance

(Interviewer Note: For those who need to move for full-time employment, because they are leaving an abusive situation or to another province or territory for financial or family support).

n. Natal Allowance

(Interviewer Note: An allowance to cover the cost of basic items needed for a new baby).

o. National Child Benefit Supplement Replacement Benefit

(Interviewer Note: Funding for those not receiving full federal National Child Benefit Supplement).

p. Non Emergency Travel

(Interviewer Note: Funding to cover the costs of return transportation, accommodation, food and child care when travel is required to receive non-emergent health services, residential substance abuse treatment, appear in court or for court ordered DNA testing).

q. Personal Needs Supplement

(Interviewer Note: For those Income Support clients who are not expected to work).

r. Special Diets

(Interviewer Note: For clients who require a special diet as confirmed by a doctor, dietician or public health nurse).

s. Utility Connection/Reconnection/Deposit

(Interviewer Note: Costs required to secure, or regain, water, heat or power services).

t. Employment, Training and Transitional Supports

(Interviewer Note: Funding to purchase goods and services needed to look for or take a job or to attend training)

u. AADAC Allowance
(Interviewer Note: An allowance to help people access residential treatment for substance abuse or gambling problems).

v. Other, please specify. _____

C21. Using a one to five scale, where one is Strongly Disagree, 2 is Disagree, 3 is Neutral, 4 is Agree and 5 is Strongly Agree, would you agree or disagree that the <<recall C19a-v if =1>> helped you overcome personal circumstances that were making it difficult for you to work.

- 1. Strongly Disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Neutral
- 4. Agree
- 5. Strongly Agree
- 8. Don't know
- 9. No response

C22. Do you have any other comments about how the supplementary benefits available to you and your family helped you overcome personal situations that were making it difficult for you to work?

SECTION D: Service Needs

D1. I would like you to think of the help you currently receive or have received while on Income Support from Alberta Human Resources and Employment while you are working. Is there any additional help that you need to get off and stay off Income Support? (probe)

- 1. Yes **If 1 go to D2**
- 2. No **If 2 go to Section E**
- 8. Don't know
- 9. No response

D2. What additional help would find useful?

SECTION E: Challenges or Barriers for Leaving Income Support

E1. There are many things that can make it hard for someone to leave income support. For example, some people find that they do not have the required skills or education, they may not understand how to apply or find for a job, or they may have personal issues.

Have any of the following situations made it difficult for you to get off income support currently or in the past?

- a. Not enough job/work experience.
 - 1. Yes
 - 2. No
 - 8. Don't know
 - 9. No response
- b. No high school diploma.
- c. Difficulty reading or writing.
- d. A learning disability.
- e. Lack of confidence.
- f. Problems with the law.
- g. Problems with child care arrangements.
- h. Previously was fired from a job.
- i. Addiction to drugs or alcohol.
- j. Loss of health benefits.
- k. Health problems.
- l. Family violence.
- m. Lack of safe or affordable or stable housing.

E2. Are there any other difficulties that you experienced that I did not mention?

- 1. Yes, **(please specify)** _____
- 2. No

SECTION F: Disincentives and Income Support

People can work while receiving Income Support. Only a portion of their employment earnings are taken into account when their benefits are calculated. This is called an earnings exemption. The amount of the earnings exemption varies depending on an individual's family situation and client category.

(Surveyor: If respondent asks what the earnings exemption levels are, please use:)

Family Type	Earnings Exemption on net income
Single	\$115 a month + 25% of additional earnings
Couples (with or without children)	\$115 a month + 25% of additional earnings for <i>each</i> working adult
Single Parents	\$230 a month + 25% of additional earnings

F1. Using a one to five scale, where one is Strongly Disagree, 2 is Disagree, 3 is Neutral, 4 is Agree and 5 is Strongly Agree, would you agree or disagree that the employment earnings exemption has encouraged you to work while receiving income support?

- 1. Strongly Disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Neutral
- 4. Agree
- 5. Strongly Agree
- 8. Don't know
- 9. No response

- F2. Since receiving financial assistance from the Income Support program...
 (a) have you ever not taken a job because it would decrease the amount of financial assistance you receive?
 1. Yes
 2. No
 8. Don't know
 9. No response
 (b) have you ever turned down extra hours at work because it would decrease the amount of financial assistance you receive?
- F3. Since receiving any benefits from Alberta Human Resources and Employment, have you ever not taken a job because it would affect your benefits (e.g. access to medical or dental care, bus passes)?
 1. Yes
 2. No
 8. Don't know
 9. No response
- F4. Thinking of the income support and benefits you receive now, what wage would you need in order to come off income support and benefits? **Surveyors: Respondent may report wage on an hourly, weekly, monthly or yearly basis.**
 1. _____ per hour
 2. _____ per day
 3. _____ per week
 4. _____ per month
 5. _____ per year
- F5a. At this <<insert hourly, daily, weekly, monthly>> wage, how many <<insert hours per week, days per month, weeks per month, months per year>> would you need to work in order to come off income support and benefits?
 1. _____ hours per week
 2. _____ days per month
 3. _____ weeks per month
 4. _____ months per year
- [PROGRAMMING NOTE: INSERT RECODE COMMAND TO CALCULATE TO AN ANNUAL SALARY]
yearly recode = \$ _____ per year
- F5b. According to our calculations, your annual salary would be <<insert yearly recode>>. Is this the yearly salary you need to come off income support and benefits?
 1. Yes
 2. No
 8. Don't know
 9. No response
- F5c. (Ask if F5b=2) What yearly salary would you need to come off income support?
 _____ per year

SECTION G: Client Demographics

The last few questions are to help us group your answers with those provided by others who have taken part in the survey. All information you provide will remain private.

- G1. In what year were you born? _____
- G2. What is your current marital status? (Read list, check one response)
1. Married
 2. Cohabiting Partner
 3. Widow/Widower
 4. Single
 5. Separated from Cohabiting Partner
 6. Separated from Spouse
 7. Divorced
 8. Don't know
 9. No response
- G3. What is the highest level of education or training you have completed? (**DO NOT READ LIST**)
1. No Formal Education
 2. Grade School (**Please specify grade**) _____ (**enter 13 to 24**)
 3. Some Post-Secondary (No degree, diploma or certificate)
 4. Trades/Vocational/Technical Certificate or Diploma
 5. University/College Diploma or Certificate
 6. University Degree
 13. Grade 1
 14. Grade 2
 15. Grade 3
 16. Grade 4
 17. Grade 5
 18. Grade 6
 19. Grade 7
 20. Grade 8
 21. Grade 9
 22. Grade 10
 23. Grade 11
 24. Grade 12
 97. Other (**please specify**) _____
 88. Don't know
 99. No response
- G4. Do you consider yourself to be a member of any of the following groups: Aboriginal, Metis, or Inuit?
1. *Aboriginal*
 2. *Métis*
 3. Inuit
 4. None of the above
 8. Don't know
 9. No response

- G5. Do you consider yourself to be a member of a visible minority? (**Surveyor Note – The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour”.**)
1. Yes
 2. No
 8. Don't know
 9. No Response
- G6. Do you consider yourself to be a person with a disability (that is, someone with a long-term physical or mental condition that limits the kind or amount of paid work that they can do)?
1. Yes
 2. No
 8. Don't know
 9. No Response
- G7. Were you born in Canada?
1. Yes
 2. No
 8. Don't know
 9. No Response
- G8. (Ask if F8=2) In total, how many years have you lived in Canada? (Read list)
1. 0 to 3 years
 2. 4 to 5 years
 3. 6 to 10 years
 4. Over 10 years
 8. Don't Know
 9. No Response
- G9. What is the language that you first learned at home in childhood and still understand?
(DO NOT READ LIST)
1. English
 2. French
 3. Punjabi
 4. Hindi
 5. Cantonese
 6. Mandarin
 7. Vietnamese
 8. Japanese
 9. Taiwanese
 10. Italian
 11. Portuguese
 12. Filipino (Tagalog)
 13. Ukrainian
 14. German
 15. Greek
 16. Spanish
 17. Polish
 18. Arabic
 19. Dutch
 20. Creole
 21. Native North American (Cree/Ojibway)

- 22. Romanian
- 23. Persian/Farsi
- 70. Other European
- 71. Other Middle Eastern
- 72. Other African
- 73. Other Asian
- 97. Other **(please specify)** _____
- 88. Don't know
- 99. *No response*

G10a. Do you currently live in a town, city or rural area? **(Interviewer Note: A rural area is defined as 10,000 people or less)**

- 1. Town
- 2. City
- 3. Rural area
- 8. Don't Know
- 9. No Response

SECTION H: FINAL CLIENT COMMENTS

H1. Do you have any other comments you would like to make?

Thank you very much for your participation in this survey.

**Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE)
Working Expected To Work (ETW) Project**

Key Informant Interview

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview for the *Working Expected to Work Project*. The *Working Expected to Work Project* will provide Alberta Human Resources and Employment with information on the existing benefits and services received by working Expected to Work clients, the barriers this client group faces in becoming independent from income supports and any gaps in the current supports and services.

Alberta Human Resources and Employment has commissioned R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. to conduct this project. Your participation in this research is voluntary. Every effort will be made to ensure that the information collected is accurately recorded and used. Any information you provide will be kept confidential, and used only for research purposes.

Thank you for your time and input into this important research. If you have any further inquiries about this project, please contact Maryanna Basic or Shannon McInnes, of R. A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. at the information given below.

Toll free phone: 1-888-254-4047

Toll free fax: 1-866-684-3453

Email: m.basic@malatest.com or s.mcinnnes@malatest.com

Name:

Date and Time:

Phone:

Address:

In-Person/Telephone:

Section A: Programs and Services Available to Working Expected to Work Clients

This section asks about the range of programs and services potentially available to working Expected to Work Clients in Employment and Training Services; Supplementary Benefits; Child Supports Services and Health Benefits.

Employment and Training Services
Labour Market Information Centres (LMIC)
Career Information Hotline
Canada-Alberta Job Order Bank Service (JOBS)
Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS)
Youth Connections
Careers in Motion (the mobile LMIC)
Career and Employment Assistance Services
Job Placement Services
Work Foundations
Training for Work
Self-Employment Programs
Alberta Job Corps
Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP)
Disability Related Employment Supports (DRES)
First Nations Training-to-Employment Program
Supplementary Benefits
AADAC Allowance
Additional Shelter
Children's School Expenses
Community Living StartUp Allowance
Damage Deposit
Emergency Allowance
Employment Maintenance Allowance
Employment, Training and Transitional Supports
Child Care
Earnings Replacement Benefit
Escaping Abuse Benefit
Handicap Benefit
Medical and Surgical Supplies
Medical Extraordinary Transportation
Relocation Allowance
Natal Allowance
National Child Benefit Supplement Replacement Benefit
Non Emergency Travel
Personal Needs Supplement
Special Diets
Utility Connection/Reconnection/Deposit
Health Benefits
Alberta Adult Health Benefit
Alberta Child Health Benefit
Child Support Services
Negotiating new agreements or obtaining court orders
Registering existing agreements and orders with Maintenance Enforcement Program for enforcement

Programs/Services Available from Other Government Departments
<u>Child Care Subsidy program (Alberta Children's Services)</u>
<u>Maintenance Enforcement Program (Alberta Justice)</u>
<u>National Child Benefit Supplement (NCBS) (federal government)</u>

A1a. Based on your experience, what **Employment and Training Services** are the most effective to assist working Expected to Work clients to find or maintain employment? Please specify the program characteristics that you feel encourage success (e.g. program structure, pre/post intervention support such as counseling, cost-effectiveness etc.)

A1b. In your opinion, what **Supplementary Benefits** are the most effective to assist working Expected to Work clients to find or maintain employment? Please specify how these Supplementary Benefits encourage success (e.g. program structure, pre/post intervention support such as counseling, cost-effectiveness etc.).

A1c. What type of **Health Benefits** are the most effective for working Expected to Work clients to find or maintain employment? (E.g. optical, prescriptions) Please specify the program characteristic that you feel encourage success (e.g. program structure, pre/post intervention support such as counseling, cost-effectiveness etc.).

A1d. What benefits does the **Child Support Services** program offer to single parents and blended families to assist them to begin or maintain employment? Please specify the program outcomes that you think encourage success. (e.g. getting a new support order or agreement, registering the agreement/order with the Maintenance Enforcement program, receiving the child/adult support income)

A1e. What **Programs/Services Available from Other Government Departments** are the most effective for working Expected to Work clients to find or maintain employment? Please specify the program characteristic that you feel encourage success (e.g. program structure, pre/post intervention support such as counseling, cost-effectiveness etc.). (Municipal, provincial or federal)

A2a. How effective are the current programs and services in terms of getting Working ETW clients off of income support?

A2b. In your opinion, which mix of programs and services are most effective for getting working Expected to Work clients off income support?

A3. How could program delivery be improved to better meet the needs of working Expected to Work clients receiving:

a. Employment and training services?

b. Supplementary benefits?

c. Health benefits?

d. Child Support Services?

e. Programs/services available from Other Government Departments?

A4. Do you think there are gaps in the services and programs provided by Alberta Human Resources and Employment for Working, ETW clients? If yes, what other types of programs and services may be of benefit to Working Expected to Work clients in order to help them become independent from Income Support?

a. Employment and training services?

b. Supplementary benefits?

c. Health benefits?

d. Child Support Services?

e. Programs/services available from Other Government Departments?

Section B: Barriers and Disincentives of Working ETW Clients

This section asks about the barriers experienced by Working Expected to Work clients.

B1. What are the key barriers for working Expected to Work clients in:

a. obtaining and maintaining employment?

b. leaving income support?

B2. Are there any additional barriers faced by specific sub-groups of working Expected to Work clients?

B3. In your opinion, have the barriers experienced by working Expected to Work clients been appropriately addressed by the programs and services provided by the Income Support Program when it comes to:

a. finding or maintaining employment? Why or why not?

b. leaving income support? Why or why not?

B4. Among working Expected to Work clients, are you aware of any attitudinal barriers or perceptions that limit their ability to find or maintain employment? If yes, what are these attitudinal barriers or perceptions?

B5. Among working Expected to Work clients, are you aware of any attitudinal barriers or perceptions that limit their ability to become independent from Income Support? If yes, what are these attitudinal barriers or perceptions?

B6. How important are benefits (e.g. health benefits) to clients, when looking for work? Which benefits are the most sought after?

B7. How important are child support services to clients when looking for work? How important is having child support income to supplement employment income?

B8. In your opinion, do the current employment earnings exemption levels encourage clients to work while receiving income support and benefits? Why or why not?

B9. In your experience, are there examples of clients who did not take a job because they would lose their Income Support and/or benefits? If yes, please describe the situation.

Section C: Final Comments

C1. Please describe any best practices you are aware of in other provinces/jurisdictions that meet the needs of the working Expected to Work client group? How have these models been particularly successful?

C2. Are there any further comments you wish to make in regards to this research?

Thank you for your participation.