MFIP Participants: Strengths and Barriers to Employment

Participants in the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), the state’s cash assistance program for families, are required to participate in employment services to help them find and maintain employment. Employment counselors use the DHS-developed Employability Measure (EM) to assess a person’s employment strengths and barriers. The EM looks at 11 areas of life functioning that have been shown to be related to getting and keeping a job. Each area is scored from 1 (lowest – a barrier) to 5 (highest – a strength).

The EM was implemented statewide in 2009. As of January 2013, 62,415 EMs have been completed statewide. These assessments provide a picture of the employment strengths and barriers of MFIP participants. Figure 1 shows that the areas of greatest strength (highest percentage of scores 4 or 5 among all EMs) are Safe Living Environment (safe household and neighborhood), Child Behavior (supports or does not limit employment), and Legal (no legal issues affection employment).

The areas that pose the greatest challenges (highest percentage of scores 1 or 2 among all EMs) are Financial (family income not adequate for basic expenses) and Education (less than high school). Nearly as high were Transportation (problems getting to work or child care), Social Support (limited or none), Workplace Skills (poor self-management and job-seeking skills), Health (physical, mental, or chemical health of anyone in family interfering with work), Dependent Care (arrangements unreliable or absent), and Housing (unstable or unsafe).

For details about the Employability Measure, please see the EM and manual at www.dhs.state.mn.us (County and Tribal Workers / Manuals / Employment Services Manuals / Employability Measure & User’s Guide). For more information other aspects, visit www.mn.gov/dhs and search for “economic supports,” or contact the DHS Transition to Economic Stability Division’s Research Unit at 651-431-4028.