

Evaluation of the Promoting Opportunity Demonstration

Client: Mathematica Policy Research; U.S. Social Security Administration

Overview

The U.S. Social Security Administration is undertaking the Promoting Opportunity Demonstration (POD) as a field test and evaluation of policy changes to the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) program. The initiative seeks to produce strong evidence about the effectiveness of potential solutions to improve the historically low rate of return to work among SSDI beneficiaries. The new rules—which also simplify work incentives—are intended to promote employment and reduce dependence on disability benefits.

The POD evaluation uses a randomized control experimental design with two treatment groups and one control group. Both treatment groups include a benefit offset, but they differ in their administration of policies involving cases that reach full benefit offset (that is, benefits reduced to zero). The research sample is anticipated to include approximately 15,000 participants from the 10 demonstration states. The evaluation will include process, participation, impact, and benefit-cost

analyses to address research questions such as the following:

- What are the effects of the POD benefit changes on beneficiaries' earnings, SSDI benefits, and total earnings and benefit income?
- Is POD attractive to beneficiaries? Do they remain engaged over time?
- How are the POD offset policies implemented, and what operational, systemic, or contextual factors pose challenges to administering the offset?
- What are the costs and benefits of the POD benefit designs relative to current law, and what are the implications for the SSDI trust fund?

As part of this evaluation, Insight worked with Mathematica Policy Research to—

- Prepare OMB and IRB packages
- Develop recruitment materials
- Conduct information webinars for stakeholders in POD catchment areas
- Provide training and technical assistance to four sites to implement the evaluation procedures
- Conduct site visits and semistructured interviews to monitor implementation quality and fidelity
- Monitor site progress and adherence to study procedures
- Conduct implementation and impact analyses

Products

Recruitment materials, stakeholder webinars, enrollment plan, early assessment, interim impact report, final impact report

