



**Ramsey County
Community Human Services**

**FAST Annual Report:
Services for Participants Enrolled, April 2011 through
March 2014**

December 2015

**Research and Evaluation
Ramsey County Community Human Services**

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Executive Summary

Families Achieving Success Today (FAST) has been operational in Ramsey County since April, 2011. Early reports on the FAST model documented higher earnings for participants in the randomly assigned FAST group over a control group with similar characteristics. The positive results from the pilot led Ramsey County and Minnesota Department of Human Services to fund an additional three years beyond the pilot. The results of FAST during the first three years of referrals into the program are included in this report.

Enrollments and Activities

- Many of the challenges of reaching and maintaining maximum caseloads were resolved during the first year of the program by modifying eligibility criteria and increasing the length of stay in the program to extend to nine months after obtaining employment.
- Enrollment continued to be an issue for many after being randomized into the FAST program with 337 enrolled in the Test and 231 enrolled in the Control through March, 2014, but an additional 130 (27.8%) were held in a pending status for the FAST Test because they were determined after random assignment to not meet at least one of the enrollment criteria for FAST. In an effort to balance the FAST Test pending, program administrators also assigned 43 participants (15.7%) to a pending status for Control participants.
- Participants and their family members are being referred for multiple services to address areas of need in greater numbers than the control group represented by their nearly 11 percentage point higher rate of participation in social services activities and more than 15 percentage point higher rate of participation in other activities, including those activities tied specifically to the IPS service model. FAST Test participants also participated in job search activities at a 5 percentage point higher rate than the Control group.
- Control group participants were about 13 percentage points more likely to be coded in assessment and nearly 12 percentage points more likely to be coded holding or sanctioned than the FAST Test group. They were also 4.5 percentage points more likely to be coded in an education activities and participated in job skills activities 6.1 percentage points more often.

Learnings from the first year of FAST

- Mental illness, primarily depression and anxiety, is one of the biggest barriers to enrollment.
- Engaging participants and their children in mental health services is an on-going challenge.
- The Supported Employment (SE) model has met with challenges in being used with FAST participants. Many FAST participants say they want to work and are referred to the SE consultant, only for the SE consultant to discover that they are not really motivated to work.

Engagement

- More than half (57.9%) of FAST participants engaged with the program within 45 days.
- About a third (32.1%) engaged in 30 days or less.

- Median days to enrollment is 39 days with a mean of 53 days due to some participants not enrolling for up to a year after referral.
- Family Fun Nights continued to be a successful method of engaging families in activities and providing families with helpful information and services, with more than 100 participants and family members attending the most recent event in July, 2015.

Demographics

- The FAST group is less white (39.8%) than the Control group (46.3%) with most of the difference being a higher percentage of Black and Hispanic participants in the FAST Test.
- On average, FAST Test group participants had slightly more children and their youngest child is about a half a year older than the Control.
- Test and Control participants were about the same age and about as likely to be United States citizens, but FAST Test participants are more likely to be male (21.1%) than Control participants (12.8%) and more likely to be two-parent families.

Some outcome measures are encouraging and are showing FAST to have promising effects on participants and their families.

- FAST participants earn more during the first year after referral to the program than the Control by about \$87. When looking at the first two years of earnings after referral, FAST participants increased their earnings edge over the control to about \$488 annually.
- FAST participants are also about 2.5 percent more likely to become employed at some point than the Control group and benefit from the ongoing support offered through FAST to remain employed.
- FAST participants are more likely to close from MFIP employment services and are able to continue to receive social services beyond their MFIP enrollment.
- Five out of eight referral cohorts to FAST achieve higher earnings than the Control.
- Participants enrolled in Social Services, Other, and Education were more success at achieving earnings than the Control, and those participants enrolled in Education were at lower rates than the Control, but they were much more likely to have earnings within 24 months of enrollment.
- Families with the youngest child over age five were much more likely to have earnings if enrolled in FAST than the Control.
- FAST enrollees experienced a much lower rate of sanction.

Other outcome measures are showing neutral or less positive impact on families.

- Fast and Control participants receive about the same MFIP cash benefits when controlling for family size.
- FAST participants collect a cash grant for the same number of months as the Control during the first year after referral and about a half a month more during the second year.
- Early referrals to FAST earned much more than the Control participants during the first and second year following referral, but referrals beginning in the summer of 2012 had a much more varied earnings experience, with Control participants earning more than FAST participants in three of five cohorts. More time and earnings data is needed to fully analyze the earnings of more current referral cohorts.
- Families with their youngest child age five or younger were more likely to have earnings if assigned to the Control and were also more likely to earn more on average.

Introduction

Families Achieving Success Today (FAST) has been operational in Ramsey County since April, 2011. Early reports on the FAST model documented higher earnings for participants in the randomly assigned FAST group over a control group with similar characteristics. The positive results from the pilot led Ramsey County and Minnesota Department of Human Services to fund an additional three years beyond the pilot. The results of FAST during the first three years of referrals into the program are included in this report.

The final cohort was referred into FAST early in 2015, marking the end of enrollment into the program that began as a one year pilot and was kept operational for more than three additional years to serve families with documented family stabilization barriers to employment. The original FAST model will expire at the end of 2015, but has already been adapted into a FAST 2 model which added culturally specific services in the African American and Native American communities to the model and shifted services to families with at least five years of MFIP services. The FAST model will also be implemented in another model during 2016 focused on participants with longer tenures on MFIP, primarily serving extended families.

This report focuses on the demographics, activities, and outcomes for participants enrolled into FAST services by the summer of 2014. The final closeout FAST report will be issued in 2016 and will include all enrolled participants in FAST.

FAST Program Description

The long-term family and economic outcomes for Family Stabilization Services (FSS) families on Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) were identified as growing concerns for Ramsey County during 2010. Most adults in FSS families faced multiple challenges that affect their short- and long-term employment prospects. Physical and mental health issues of parents and children are frequently exacerbated by unstable housing, low basic skill levels, and involvement in the legal system. In addition, the lack of coordination among professionals serving those families can overwhelm those fragile families with multiple plans with conflicting expectations and goals. Without a more effective approach to services, those families are at risk for reaching the 60 month time limit on the MFIP without meaningful opportunities to improve their health and financial circumstances.

In response to this identified need, Ramsey County developed a new initiative during 2010 and launched in 2011 with the purpose of finding better paths to employment, and ultimately family and economic stability, for their MFIP Family Stabilization Services (FSS)¹ participants. FAST

¹ About 40% of MFIP participants in Ramsey County from 2011 to 2014 qualified for Family Stabilization Services (FSS). Most families qualify for FSS because there is an adult or child in the household with a serious disability such as mental illness, developmental disability, physical disability, or IQ below 80.

has small caseloads (50 active cases) per worker and incorporates cross-disciplinary teaming with other professionals who work with the same families. The program promotes the message that every parent can work to some degree. Program staff assists parents in developing their employment goals, finding an optimal employment match, and utilizing ongoing supports to retain their job. Those unsuccessful in obtaining employment and assessed to be potentially eligible for SSI can be referred for SSI advocacy services; and their attempts at employment will strengthen their SSI case. The program also presents an opportunity to test the use of the Adult Mental Health Supported Employment model with TANF families.

The FAST program applies an evidence-based supported employment model for delivering services that has shown positive results for adults with serious mental illnesses to TANF families that qualify for Family Stabilization Services (FSS) because an adult or child in the home has a disability. These families are exempted from the TANF work participation requirement and, without FAST, might otherwise apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or sit inactive on the caseload. Integrated with the supported employment are mental health services for adults and children, health navigation services, and employment services.

The FAST partnership includes five partners:

- Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota (GWES) serves as the lead agency and provides the vocational rehabilitation, SE services, and mental health services for adults.
- HIRED's FSS Coordinators provide MFIP FSS employment services (ES).
- Open Cities Health Center (OCHC) provides medical services.
- People Incorporated (formerly Children's Home Society and Family Services) provides mental health services for children and families.
- Ramsey County Workforce Solutions serves as the administrator and coordinator of the partnership.

FAST Differs from current or other FSS practice in several key ways. From their first encounter, FAST participants experience a different MFIP service delivery program². Families meet all partnership service providers at orientation. Services and supports are directed by the participants, build upon strengths and abilities, are available with easy access, and are family-centered. The program includes:

- The services are co-located and multidisciplinary case planning is used.

² FSS services at Ramsey County have been traditionally delivered through a case management model where employment counselors (EC) work with families to identify goals and develop an Employment Plan (EP). Activities in each EP center on tasks intended to promote personal and family stability and are typically provided by community service agencies through referrals from the EC.

- An Oversight Committee, composed of leadership from all program partners, provides direction to the partnership.
- The service delivery model relies on evidence-based practices including the Adult Mental Health Supported Employment (SE) model and Motivational Interviewing (MI). Historically Supported Employment (SE) has been used with willing adults, so using SE with FAST participants is a modification of the model.
- The program combines four service areas that are designed to meet the needs of the adults and children, rather than the parent only. The service areas include mental health, vocational rehabilitation, a full-service community health care clinic, and TANF employment services.
- All partnership staff is trained in and shares a common program philosophy promoting the parent's ability to work.
- All program partners have access to a single, customized database through which the activities and progress related to the activities of FSS participants can be noted and tracked by any project partner, in real time.
- In addition, FAST and SSI Advocacy services are located in the same clinic. FAST workers have ready access to advice on whether a family member is likely to qualify for SSI so that referrals are done with input from SSI Advocates.

FAST enrollees also experience the services differently than they would if they were assigned a typical FSS employment counselor. FAST participants experience services that:

- are assigned to a HIRED FSS coordinator who coordinates and documents the participant's activities.
- are co-located in one site to increase access for families, reduce competing demands, and streamline services. Staff from the partner agencies meet regularly to review cases in common and develop coordinated plans to meet the family's needs.
- apply the IPS supported employment model: finding competitive jobs in the community that fit participants' needs and interests; fully integrating mental health services; commencing job-seeking activities (with the help of an employment specialist) as soon as participant expresses interest; and designing goals and plans that are based on individual preferences, strengths, experiences and abilities.

Program Goals

Primarily Goal:

to increase the family stability and economic stability of MFIP FSS participants by increasing their employability, involvement in paid employment and family income, and more accurately differentiating between those who would benefit from a set of integrated services focused on employment and those who are likely to be approved for Social Security Income.

Secondary Goal:

to identify gaps in services, eliminate overlaps in services, and increase access and coordination of services in a manner that meets the needs of families as opposed to individuals.

Selecting Program Participants

Ramsey County's FSS families are screened to determine whether they are in an FSS category targeted for transfer. These include:

1. Participants with documentation from a qualified professional certifying that they have one of the conditions below, and that the condition prevents them from working 20 or more hours per week:
 - Mental illness;
 - Developmental disability;
 - IQ below 80;
 - Learning disability;
 - Illness, injury or incapacity.
2. Participants with documentation from a qualified professional certifying the serious disability of a child or another adult in the household. These conditions include:
 - Participants whose presence is required in the home to care for another member of the household who is ill or incapacitated;
 - Participants with another adult in the household who has a serious and persistent mental illness, or a child in the household who has a serious emotional disturbance.
3. The third group includes participants who are applying for SSI or RSDI, regardless of whether they have documentation of a disability or are in the process of obtaining documentation.

Families that are ineligible for FAST (regardless of disability status) include those with active MFIP participants that:

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- have accrued 48 months towards the time limit;
- are a legal non-citizen residing in the U.S. for 12 months or less;
- need an interpreter;
- have family violence waiver;
- are taking the exemption from the work participation requirement for having a child under age 1;
- have already applied for SSI or Retirement Survivors Disability Insurance (RSDI).

The FAST program was developed with an evaluation plan that includes random assignment to test (FAST Program) and control groups. Once a participant is identified as a test case, s/he is always a test case; once a participant is identified as a control case, s/he is always a control case.

Those eligible for FAST (test and control groups) are MFIP FSS participants who are 22 to 59 years of age and who have been on MFIP for less than 50 months³. In addition, they:

- are not new immigrants and do not require an interpreter,
- do not have current family violence issues,
- are not taking the child under 1 exemption,
- are not currently in sanction,
- are not currently pursuing SSI, and
- are not participating in another special program or pilot project.

Beginning in April 2011, FSS cases at each of five Employment Services (ES) agencies were screened and transferred to FAST. The first step in the process involves selecting cases at an agency that meet the program eligibility criteria. That list of potential participants is forwarded to the ES agency for additional screening, primarily to determine the English language skills and to assure proper documentation of FSS status of the participants. Test and control cases are randomly selected from that screened list and the test cases are transferred to FAST.

In April 2011 the first cases were transferred to FAST. Additional cases were transferred in subsequent months as FSS Coordinators felt comfortable taking more cases and as the enrollment process was improved. See Table B in the Appendix. In January of 2012 FAST reached full capacity with 150 referrals. As of March, 2014, 337 referrals were made to FAST and are included in this report.⁴

³ This eligibility specification was changed from less than 48 months to less than 50 months in January 2012.

⁴ Participants need to be enrolled for one full year before earnings data to be included in this report. For that reason, only participants enrolled on or before the summer of 2014 are included. The final closeout FAST report will be completed during 2016 and will include outcomes on all FAST enrollees.

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Some challenges in referring FSS participants to FAST persisted from the pilot. Many of the difficulties were related to the fact that FSS participants often have overwhelming personal and family concerns (such as domestic violence and housing issues) and to the requirement and documentation issues of FSS participants, such as:

1. Lack of current documentation for their FSS disability classification;
2. Difficulty obtaining documentation because of the severity of disability – especially MH;
3. Difficulty obtaining the status of a person's SSI application; and
4. FSS participants working more than 20 hours per week and losing their FSS status.

Some FAST referrals' eligibility status changes after random selection and before enrollment so that they are no longer eligible for the program (for example, they moved out of county or took the child under 1 exemption). Those participants are removed from the FAST caseload and put into a FAST 'test pending' category. If their status changes so that they are re-eligible, they are re-referred to FAST. A similar process was completed for the control group, but was not implemented until much later and the control pending group is a much smaller percentage of referrals than the FAST 'test pending' hold. Neither pending groups are included in this analysis, but both will be included in the final closeout report to ensure any variation in selection is incorporated into the final evaluation.

During the first two years of FAST, the number of cases enrolled in FAST was assessed monthly and additional eligible FSS participants are transferred to the program to maintain an active caseload of about 150 participants. Staff turnover in subsequent years caused the caseload assessment to move to quarterly with the same goal of keeping the total enrollment at or near 150. Those new cases are either randomly selected from a pool of eligible FSS participants or the 'test pending' participants are reviewed to see if they are eligible.

In January 2012, project administrators increased the minimum length of stay at FAST to nine months⁵ where it stayed through 2015. Once a participant loses FSS eligibility, he or she can continue to receive transitional services from FAST for nine additional months, in order to assure a smooth transition into the regular MFIP program.

The Enrollment Process

The enrollment process at FAST consists of two parts: attending the orientation (where participants become familiar with the FAST services and meet all service providers) and enrolling in the FAST program (agreeing to participate in the FAST program and meeting with an FSS Coordinator to complete assessment/screening tools and develop an employment plan). In some instances an enrollment appointment is held the same day as the orientation session.

After a couple months, early in the pilot, FAST staff updated their enrollment and engagement protocol for FAST to be:

⁵ The previous length of stay was a minimum of three months.
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- 1) The first week they send a letter inviting the person to FAST orientation.
- 2) If the person doesn't attend the first orientation, the next week the person receives another letter inviting them to a second orientation. The letter also includes the date and time of a home visit by the FSS Coordinator if the person doesn't attend the second orientation.
- 3) If the person doesn't attend either of the first two orientations, FSS Coordinators follow through with the home visit.

Staff report that for most referred participants, the orientation is a positive experience. They also reported early in the pilot that some people who are not comfortable with the group orientation because of anxiety disorders; or are unable to attend because of physical disabilities. For those individuals, the FSS Coordinator meets with them at their homes and does the orientation and enrollment processes at one meeting. FAST has also purchased taxi vouchers for participants who are unable to walk to a bus stop and have no other transportation.

Between April of 2011 and March of 2014 there were 337 participants enrolled in the FAST Program. See Table B in the Appendix. FAST partners report it is easier to engage families who have been utilizing support services (transportation and child care) because they are motivated to keep those services in place.

Of the 337 participants who have been enrolled, the average time from referral to enrollment is 53 days, with a median of 39 days. Some FAST participants took much more time to enroll than the average making the median a better reflection of the typical time it took to enroll participants into the program. Nearly 60% enrolled in less than 45 days, but more than 12% took longer than 90 days to enroll. See Table A, below for a complete breakdown of referral to enrollment duration.

Table A. Time from Referral to Enrollment

Referral to Enrollment	306	100.0%
15 days or less	28	9.2%
16 to 30 days	70	22.9%
31 to 45 days	79	25.8%
46 to 60 days	45	14.7%
61 to 75 days	29	9.5%
76 to 90 days	17	5.6%
More than 90 days	38	12.4%
Median	39 days	
Mean	53 days	

FAST staff put considerable effort into engaging referred participants. They make at least monthly contacts with non-enrolled referred participants - they extend to them invitations to orientations, Family Fun Nights, PLUS Group, and other activities of interest. The most recent

Family Fun Night on July 23, 2015 was the best attended FAST event to date with more than 100 participants and family members attending. An unofficial count of attendance was nearly 150 attendees. The PLUS Group is a cohort model where participants attend a facilitated group with their children focused on parenting, family, and networking amongst attendees around a topic of interest. Adult and child therapists facilitate the PLUS group.

FAST staff also initiate efforts to sanction, if necessary and applicable. If a FAST participant gets a family violence waiver (FVW) after enrollment, he/she continues to receive services through FAST.

If a FAST participant takes the Child <1 Exemption, he/she will stay at FAST as an inactive case until the exemption expires or their FSS status changes. During that 'inactive' period of time, FAST services are available if the participant or family member requests them but the FSS Coordinator does not actively pursue engaging the participant in work-related activities.

Also continuing from the early implementation and pilot phase of FAST, FSS Coordinators report that mental illness, primarily depression and anxiety, is one of the biggest barriers to enrollment. FSS Coordinators feel that participants that have mental health issues may not be treated either with medication and/or therapy or have a strong support system, all of which can increase their symptoms and make it more difficult to engage them

FAST Participant Characteristics

The average age of the 337 FAST participants is 33.7 years; nearly half (46.3%) are black/African American and about 40% are Caucasian; 72% have at least a high school diploma; 46% have only one child; 53% have a child five years or younger in age; the majority (88.4%) are one-parent families; they average more than 2 years on MFIP (26 months); and the primary reasons for being FSS are mental illness, being ill or incapacitated for at least 60 days, and caring for an ill or incapacitated family member.

The Control has a similar profile, but there is some variation. The 231 Control participants are slightly younger on average (32.6), more white (46.3%), more likely to have just one child (49.8%) and about 71% have at least a high school diploma. See Table B for additional FAST Program and Control participant characteristics.

Table B: FAST Enrollee and Control Characteristics at Enrollment

	FAST Enrollee Group	Control Group
Females	78.9%	87.2%
Age at FAST Referral		[]
21-29	40.7%	47.3%
30-39	32.3%	30.2%
40+	27%	22.5%
Average years	33.7	32.6
Average Number of Eligible Children	1.97	1.75
Two Parent Families	11.6%	9.5%
Youngest Child Age		
2 years or younger	30%	34%
3-5 years	27.4%	27.3%
6 years or older	42.6%	38.7%
Average years	6.5	6
Median years	5.1	4.4
Race		
Asian	5.6%	5.2%
Black	46.3%	42%
White	39.8%	46.3%
Hispanic	5.9%	4.8%
Multi Race	2.1%	1.7%
Pacific Islander	0.3%	0%
Sample size	337	231

Source: WF1 or MAXIS

FAST Program participants were similar to the Control in their MFIP usage and enrollment. FAST Program and Control participants averaged about 26 months on MFIP prior to enrollment into FAST (26 and 26.9, respectively) and nearly half of each group entered FAST during their first MFIP enrollment. FAST Program participants were slightly more likely than the control to be on at least their third MFIP enrollment when they entered FAST, but Control participants were more likely to be on their second MFIP enrollment. The median number of enrollments and the

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median enrollment year into MFIP are the same for the Program and Control at two MFIP enrollments and 2011 as the median year for their current MFIP enrollment.

Table C: MFIP Enrollment and Usage Characteristics

	FAST Group	Control Group
MFIP Enrollment		
Median MFIP enrollments	2	2
One	48.7	46.3
Two	22.8	27.3
Three or more	28.5	26.4
Year of most recent MFIP enrollment		
2008 or earlier	9.8	11.7
2009	11.6	15.6
2010	22.8	19.5
2011	25.5	22.1
2012	18.7	26
2013	11.6	5.2
Median enrollment year	2011	2011
Average MFIP months	26	26.9

Program Activities, Outputs, and Outcomes

Although participants were randomly selected for the test and control groups, there is the possibility that the two groups differ on key characteristics that may impact program outcomes. The key outcome measure for the project is increased employment. Research indicates that greater education and fewer months on MFIP are associated with increased employment. Less is known about the relationship of other employment services activities to sustained employment and earnings.

FAST Program and Control participants engaged in employment services activities at varying rates throughout the first four years of program activity. FAST participants were more likely than the control to be enrolled at some point in Social Services, Job Search, and Other Activities than the Control. Control participants were more likely than those enrolled in FAST to complete an Assessment, Job Skills or Training program and were also much more likely to be in holding or sanction at some point. During the study period, FAST Program enrollees were about 2.5% more likely than the control to be coded as employed at some point. Table D provides a complete breakdown of activity during the first four years of FAST. All activities were included due to the variation in program entry and exit to account for total use of activities entered by participants. So Table D includes both activities while participants were active in FAST and activities after they had left FAST services providing a total picture of activity and impact from FAST services.

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Table D: Employment Services Activities

Activity	FAST Group	Control Group	Impact
Participated in activity (%)			
Assessment	63.2	76.3	-13.1
Job Search	59.3	54.3	5
Job Skills	11.4	17.5	-6.1
Education or Training	21.1	25.6	-4.5
Community Work Experience	11.1	10.8	0.3
Holding/Sanction	22.9	34.8	-11.9
Social Services	82.3	71.4	10.9
Other	70.8	55.2	15.6
MFIP cases coded employed at some point	40.4	37.9	2.5
Sample size	337	231	

Source: WF1

* The "FAST Enrollees" group only includes those cases that were randomly assigned to the FAST group and enrolled in the program. It does not include individuals who were determined to be ineligible for FAST after assignment and thus received no services from the FAST program.

FAST participants are hypothesized to earn more than the Control as a result of the IPS model. Further analysis of the relationship between employment services activities that FAST and Control participants engage in highlight some variation in outcomes for FAST and Control participants. FAST participants were more likely overall than Control participants to have earnings and FAST participants are more likely than the Control to be enrolled in Social Services, Job Search, and Other activities. When looking at each activity individually for FAST and Control, a pattern emerges. Data for all activities and earnings is provided in Tables E and F.

Table E: Select Activities and Earnings during the First Year after Enrollment

Enrolled at some point in:	FAST with Earnings 1st Year	FAST with no Earnings 1st Year	Control with Earnings 1st Year	Control with no Earnings 1st Year
Social Services	23.35%	58.98%	21.43%	50.00%
Assessment	19.46%	43.71%	24.56%	51.79%
Other	19.28%	51.51%	16.14%	39.01%
Education & Training	6.32%	14.76%	6.73%	18.83%
Job Search	27.92%	37.05%	23.32%	30.94%
Job Skills	3.92%	7.53%	4.93%	12.56%

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Work Experience	3.31%	7.83%	2.24%	8.52%
Holding/ Sanction	6.93%	15.96%	16.29%	18.56%

Table F: Select Activities and Earnings during the First Two Years after Enrollment

Enrolled at some point in:	FAST with Earnings 1st Two Years	FAST with no Earnings 1st Two Years	Control with Earnings 1st Two Year	Control with no Earnings 1st Two Years
Social Services	35.33%	49.62%	28.22%	44.56%
Assessment	25.56%	37.97%	34.16%	45.54%
Other	27.92%	41.89%	19.40%	30.85%
Education & Training	12.08%	9.81%	9.95%	15.42%
Job Search	33.58%	26.79%	29.85%	22.39%
Job Skills	6.42%	4.91%	8.46%	9.95%
Work Experience	6.42%	6.79%	2.99%	8.46%
Holding/ Sanction	11.70%	12.45%	19.00%	14.00%

FAST enrollees were more likely to be enrolled in Social Services than the Control by 10.9 percentage points and they were also more likely than the Control by nearly two percentage points to have earnings during the 1st year while also receiving Social Services. FAST participants were five percentage points more likely than the Control to participate in Job Search and for those that did participate, FAST participants were 4.6 percentage points more likely than the Control to have earnings during the first year. FAST participants were also more likely to participate in other activities than the Control and were more than three percentage points more likely to have earnings during the first year than the Control if they were active in Other activities at some point.

For those activities where Control participants were more likely to enroll, a similar pattern is observed. Control participants were more likely than FAST participants to engage in an assessment and those with an assessment coded, are more than five percentage points more likely to have earnings during the first year than FAST participants. Control participants were more likely to participate in Job Skills and about one percentage point more likely than FAST to also have earnings during the first year. Control participants either Sanctioned or in Holding were nearly 10 percentage points more likely to have earnings than FAST participants with

similar status. Control participants are more likely to participate in Education and Training, but the percentage with earnings was very close between FAST and the Control.

The two-year earnings and activities profiles are mostly similar to the one-year patterns, but a couple key variations emerge when participants are assessed a full 24 months after enrollment into FAST or into the Control. FAST participants widened their earnings advantage over the Control if they were enrolled in Social Services or Other activities at some point and had about the same earnings advantage for two years as they had during the first year for Job Search activities. The Control also experienced widening of their earnings advantage for Assessment and Job Skills, but experienced a narrowing of their advantage after two years for Sanctioned and Holding and a reversal for Education. FAST participants enrolled in Education were slightly less likely than the Control to have earnings during the first year of their enrollment, but after two years, FAST Education enrollees were more than two percentage points more likely to have earnings than the Control.

When controlling for engagement in specific activities, a slightly different picture emerges⁶. Control enrollees in Social Services are slightly more likely to have earnings during the first year than FAST, but FAST participants are about four percentage points more likely to have earnings than the Control over a two-year period. Control participants were about one percentage point during the first year and nearly three percentage points over two years more likely to have earnings when also completing assessment at some point than FAST participants. Other activities followed a similar pattern to Social Services, where the Control were slightly more likely to have earnings during the first year, but over 24 months, FAST participants were slightly more likely to have earnings. Education and Training participants showed the most difference between FAST and Control when enrollment rates are controlled for. FAST participants enrolled in Education and Training are nearly four percentage points more likely to have earnings during the first year and 16 percentage points over the first two years. The Control was more likely to have earnings for both the one-year and two-year for those enrolled in Job Search, Sanction, or Holding and the FAST group was much more likely to have earnings if enrolled in Job Skills when controlling for rate of enrollment into the activities.

Educational achievement in terms of years of school completed is similar between the FAST Group and the Control, but earnings achievement is showing some variation through four years of FAST. Although there is some variation during the first year of enrollment, participants with at least a high school diploma achieved earnings at about the same rate, with FAST participants doing better with more than a high school diploma, but Control participants with a high school diploma showing a slight edge. Participants with 9-11 years of education achieved earnings at a much higher rate in the Control than in the FAST Group.

⁶ Percentage of participants with earnings was the only factor considered when controlling for engagement. Variation in engagement in specific activities was not considered.

Table G: Rate of Earnings by Education Achievement, 1st Year

Education at Enrollment	FAST with Earnings 1st Year	Control with Earnings 1st Year
Less than 9th Grade	40.00%	30.00%
9-11 Grade	21.25%	44.64%
High School Diploma or GED	33.18%	35.04%
1 or 2 Years Post- Secondary	42.86%	21.74%
College Graduate	33.33%	20.00%

Table H: Rate of Earnings by Education Achievement , Two Years

Education at Enrollment	FAST with Earnings 1st Two Years	Control with Earnings 1st Two Years
Less than 9th Grade	45.45%	50.00%
9-11 Grade	35.48%	60.42%
High School Diploma or GED	48.85%	43.20%
1 or 2 Years Post -Secondary	50.00%	33.33%
College Graduate	0.00%	25.00%

The rate of earnings by education achievement over two years shows a wider gap between those with and those without a high school diploma. Over a two-year period, participants with a high-school diploma are more likely to have earnings if they are enrolled in FAST than if they are in the Control. The opposite is true for participants with less than a high school diploma. There are many potential explanations for the earnings gap with FAST services and education, and further analysis will be tied to future evaluations of IPS services in MFIP programming.

The number of children and the age of the youngest child were also considered important to participant success in the FAST model. Through four years of FAST, patterns associated with

children in the household are also emerging. Table I and Table J provide earnings rates based on number of children in the household at the time of enrollment.

Table I: Earnings and Number of Children in the Household, 1st Year

Number of Children at Enrollment	FAST with Earnings 1st Year	Control with Earnings 1st Year
One	30.77%	38.26%
Two	39.02%	28.33%
Three	26.00%	38.46%
Four or More	19.44%	53.33%

Table J: Earnings and Number of Children in the Household, Two Years

Number of Children at Enrollment	FAST with Earnings 1st Two Years	Control with Earnings 1st Two Years
One	44.83%	46.00%
Two	46.15%	41.51%
Three	46.34%	46.15%
Four or More	42.31%	53.33%

During the first year of enrollment in FAST, only participants with two children were more likely than the Control to have earnings. Over a two-year period, FAST participants with two children were still the most likely earn at a higher rate than the Control, but participants with one child and three children were about as likely to have earnings as the Control. Although the number of children warrants continued analysis the age of the youngest child at enrollment into FAST appears to have more affect on future earnings. Table K and Table L provide rates of earnings for participants based on the age of their youngest child.

Table K: Earnings and Age of Youngest Child, 1st Year

Number of Children at Enrollment	FAST with Earnings 1st Two Years	Control with Earnings 1st Two Years
Age One and Under	27.27%	44.74%
Two to Five	30.08%	45.65%
Six to Twelve	30.68%	25.00%
13 and Older	38.64%	13.64%
Unknown	37.04%	26.32%

Table L: Earnings and Age of Youngest Child, Two Years

Number of Children at Enrollment	FAST with Earnings 1st Two Years	Control with Earnings 1st Two Years
Age One and Under	47.73%	63.64%
Two to Five	43.16%	50.62%
Six to Twelve	45.59%	31.48%
13 and Older	45.00%	27.27%
Unknown	50.00%	61.11%

For earnings, the age of the youngest child in the household at the time of enrollment into FAST shows a pattern during the first year that continues through the first 24 months. Participants enrolled in FAST are more likely to have earnings during the first and second year than the Control if their youngest child is six years old or older. For the Control, the opposite is true. Participants in the Control are more likely during the first and second year to have earnings if their youngest child is under age six.

Overall earnings improvement is the primary outcome measure for FAST. Over the first four years of FAST operation, FAST participants out earned the Control during the first year, the second year, and overall. Table M provides comparison data for FAST and Control through mid-2015.

Table M: MAXIS Cash and Earnings Impact

	FAST Group	Control Group	Impact
Average number of months receiving an MFIP cash grant			
1st year after enrollment	9.4	9.4	0
2nd year after enrollment	16.5	16	0.5
h			
Average TANF payments (\$)			
Year 1 after enrollment	\$3,911	\$3,703	\$208
Average for Months Active	\$414	\$393	\$21
Percent with earnings (Wage Detail)			
Year 1 from referral date	31.5%	35.5%	-5%
Years 1&2 from referral date	45.4%	46.2%	-0.8%
Earnings April 2011 to March 2015	58.5%	54.1%	4.4%
Total Earnings			
Year 1 from referral date	\$1,892	\$1,805	\$87
Year 2 from referral date	\$4,086	\$3,685	\$401
Year 1 and 2 from referral date	\$5,978	\$5,490	\$488
*Test total of 337 participants in the first year and 269 in the first two years			
**Control total of 231 participants in the first year and 208 in the first two years.			
Total Earnings by Cohort			
Cohort 1 (Spring 2011) 1st year	\$2,343	\$1,467	\$876
Cohort 1 (Spring 2011) 2 years	\$7,057	\$3,638	\$3,419
N: Test 58, Control 33			
Cohort 2 (Summer 2011) 1st year	\$1,528	\$1,085	\$443
Cohort 2 (Summer 2011) 2 years	\$5,234	\$3,557	\$1,677
N: Test 70, Control 40			
Cohort 3 (Fall 2011) 1 st year	\$2,820	\$1,462	\$1,358
Cohort 3 (Fall 2011) 2 years	\$9,552	\$5,770	\$3,782
N: Test 25, Control 27			
Cohort 4 (Summer 2012) 1 st year	\$1,332	\$2,700	-\$1,368
Cohort 4 (Summer 2012) 2 years	\$4,719	\$6,677	-\$1,958

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N: Test 44, Control 51			
Cohort 5 (Fall 2012) 1 st year	\$1,559	\$1,824	-\$265
Cohort 5 (Fall 2012) 2 years	\$4,104	\$7,802	-\$3,698
N: Test 29, Control 36			
Cohort 6 (Spring 2013) 1 st year	\$2,250	\$1,486	\$764
Cohort 6 (Spring 2013) 2 years	\$6,205	\$4,876	\$1,329
N: Test 43, Control 21			
Cohort 7 (Fall 2013) 1 st year	\$2,033	\$1,155	\$878
Cohort 7 (Fall 2013) 2 years			
N: Test 44 Control 7			
Cohort 8 (spring 2014) 1 st year	\$1,422	\$2,696	-\$1,274
N: Test 24, Control 16			

Source: MAXIS and UI wage records

FAST enrollees and the Control had identical months of MFIP usage during the first year after enrollment of 9.4 months on average and FAST enrollees collected on average about \$21 more per month in MFIP cash benefits. FAST participants had .22 more children than the Control so their higher cash benefit is expected due to the higher number of family members active on a typical case. FAST enrollees stayed on MFIP about a half a month longer over two years than the Control, which could be related to their higher rates of education and social services plans, which tend to lead to longer tenures on MFIP initially, but are also expected to improve participant self-sufficiency and family well-being so that recidivism rates are lower. Evidence for lower rates of return and higher earnings is also available in Table K and will be further explored in the final FAST report.

Earnings rates during the first year were lower for FAST than for the Control by five percentage points, but earnings overall were nearly \$100 higher. So despite having fewer earners in the FAST Group, their earnings overall were higher. This was also true during the second year where FAST earnings rates nearly equaled the Control, but overall earnings were much higher, \$401 more, than the Control. Over the first two years of the FAST intervention, participants earned nearly \$500 more than the Control while the percent of earners is within one percent. Since the beginning of FAST, enrollees into the program are 4.4 percentage points more likely to have earnings than the Control, so the further out from enrollment, the more beneficial the FAST impact appears to be.

There is also variation within the FAST cohorts. The early pilot cohorts were the highest performing in terms of average earnings, possibly benefiting from additional services at a time when the economic recovery in Ramsey County was just beginning. Of the eight cohorts analyzed, the first three cohorts enrolled by the Fall of 2011 were the best performers. Cohorts

four and five did not do nearly as well, earning much less than that Control. Cohorts six and seven again earned more than the Control while cohort eight, at least during the first year, favored the Control.

The variation by cohorts is helpful to show the variation over the life of the FAST program, but little can be derived from the available data to explain the variation. As the economy improved and caseloads began to decline, the Control did better, but the downward trending caseload continued through the enrollment of cohorts six and seven and other unknown factors may also have affected the earnings of both the FAST and the Control. Data for the second year of Cohorts seven and eight was not available at the time of this report, but will be included in the final FAST report to be issued in mid-2016 along with data for the final two cohorts, cohort nine, and cohort 10.

Recommendations

- Selection and Enrollment continued to be an issue for many after being randomized into the FAST program with 337 enrolled in the Test and 231 enrolled in the Control through March, 2014, but an additional 130 (27.8%) were held in a pending status for the FAST Test because they were determined after random assignment to not meet at least one of the enrollment criteria for FAST. In an effort to balance the FAST Test pending, program administrators also assigned 43 participants (15.7%) to a pending status for Control participants.
 - Analysis should be of the entire randomly assigned test and control, so improved safeguards should be explored to ensure a higher rate of randomly assigned participants are eligible.
 - The test and control groups should be closer in number and consistently drawn for each cohort to be more representative of the population at the time of referral.
- Rates of enrollment into specific employment services activities varied greatly between the test and control. The variation leads to more questions about the use and value of some activities over others. A future research question could be to determine which employment service activities are most strongly correlated to earnings and to the degree possible, the causal relationship between the activity and earnings should be explored.
- Family Fun Nights and parent groups were used by FAST to bring participants together to learn from each other. The activities grew over time to become very popular with participants and are thought to have had a positive impact on participant outcomes. Incorporating group activities into other programs with an evaluation plan to tie the activities to participant outcomes would be helpful to determine if group activities should be built into future programs.
- Mental illness, primarily depression and anxiety, is one of the biggest barriers to enrollment, engagement, and increasing earnings. Social Services are accessed at a much higher rate in FAST than in the Control with some documented success. Determine what aspects of the higher social services usage rate can be replicated to the general MFIP population and measure usage patterns and increases in long-term earnings related to increased use of Social Services.

- Five out of eight referral cohorts to FAST achieve higher earnings than the Control, but three out of eight did not. It will be important to continue to evaluate which characteristics of participants are successful with the IPS model and if possible, to evaluate environmental factors that could affect individual and program success.
- Education was used less by the FAST Program than by the Control, but with greater success. What about FAST made education more successful and can the success be replicated in other parts of the employment services system?
- A key finding is that families with their youngest child over age five were much more likely to have earnings if enrolled in FAST than the Control. Specific analysis of this should be completed to determine what causes FAST to work better for parents of older children while the Control works better for parents of younger children.
- FAST enrollees experienced a much lower rate of sanction. Some concern has been expressed about the appropriateness of sanctioning FSS participants without fully understanding the depth of the families' needs. The rate of holding and sanction in the Control is higher than the MFIP average and could be looked into to ensure other activities aren't more appropriate for participants.
- A measure of improved family stabilization is essential to evaluating FAST or other similar programs targeting families with significant barriers to employment. The employability measure was not used in this evaluation because it is too inconsistently applied and completed and any measure of change or improvement in participants and/or families is not a reliable measure; its five-point scale does not differentiate small changes. As a result, more service outcome and service engagement data needs to be collected for on-going services in order to provide more specific information on how services are affecting participants and their family members.

Appendix I: FAST Logic Model

