

**Evaluating the Bucks County Opportunity Council's  
Economic Self-Sufficiency Program**

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*The findings and conclusions presented are solely by the authors. We wish to thank Barbara Eklund, M.Ed., for providing feedback and a template for us to produce this report.*

### **Researcher Biography**

This project is led by Dr. Christine Leow, Senior Director of Research and Evaluation at The Hope Center, with a joint appointment as Assistant Research Professor at the Lewis Katz School of Medicine, Temple University. Dr. Leow has over 20 years of experience conducting research projects on social programs from end-to-end. Her expertise is in research and evaluation studies, and how evidence from such studies can be used to inform on program improvement. Prior to joining The Hope Center, Dr. Leow was a Principal Research Scientist at Pearson where her main task was leading the efficacy research agenda (a first in the ed-tech at that time) where she helped create an efficacy research framework and then led the initial research studies focused on the efficacy of Pearson's higher education courseware on student outcomes. Hence, she is well-versed in how one can build up the evidence base of a program from scratch.

## **Abstract**

In 2025, the Bucks County Opportunity Council (BCOC) commissioned The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs at Temple University to conduct a survey of graduates of BCOC's Economic Self-Sufficiency Program (ES). In addition to the survey, The Hope Center also conducted focus groups and one-on-one interviews with a select group of graduates to understand their experiences in-depth. The goal of the project was to learn how ES graduates and their children have been doing since graduation.

Pertaining to this overarching goal, a few research questions that were addressed by this project include:

- *Did the ES graduates sustain economic independence?*
- *Did they continue their education or have additional training?*
- *Did they find employment and have they progressed in their careers after graduation?*

In addition, many clients had children during their time with the program. Hence, BCOC wanted to learn more about the children's lives and determine, through focus groups and one-on-one interview evidence, whether, in fact, the cycle of generational poverty had been broken.

## **Key Findings**

Highlights from the survey included:

- When asked which BCOC services graduates found most contributed to their success, 97% named the support of their coach; this was followed closely by listing the financial resources that BCOC provided, 96%. Food distribution/gift cards were noted by 93% of the respondents.
- 83% of graduates reported they did not need additional help from the ES Program since graduation.
- 66% ( $n=91$ ) of participants reported having stable employment and 59% ( $n=91$ ) considered their career to be on an upward trajectory (as opposed to a downward trajectory or neither an upward nor downward trajectory).
- Nearly half (45%) of respondents pursued additional education or training after graduation.
- Regardless of what year they graduated, 80% of respondents reported having stable housing.
- Graduates reported an improvement in their mental health and well-being from before program enrollment to graduation.
- The lives of the children of the graduates improved in several key areas because of their parents' growth and influence. Areas of improvement included higher educational levels, better jobs, improved physical and mental health, an understanding of financial literacy, and overall well-being.

## **Background on BCOC and the ES Program**

The Bucks County Opportunity Council (BCOC) is an anti-poverty, 501(c)3 nonprofit organization in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. For 60 years, BCOC has served low-income families by helping them to stabilize when in crisis, achieve a livable wage, gain additional education and training, and work towards economic self-sufficiency.

In the mid-1990s, the Board of Directors initiated a comprehensive study of the long-term, measurable impact of BCOC programs. The results showed that many of the individuals and families that BCOC assisted temporarily improved their circumstances but did not permanently leave poverty. They frequently came back for help as soon as they were eligible. In response to those findings, BCOC developed the Economic Self-Sufficiency (ES) Program in 1997.

The goal of the ES Program is to empower low-income families with the education, skills and resources necessary to achieve *and maintain* economic self-sufficiency without future need for cash welfare subsidies. To reach economic self-sufficiency, many participants pursued higher education or training to become competitive for jobs that pay a living wage. BCOC has a partnership with its local community college, and participants attend other colleges or training programs depending on their goals.

To be eligible for the ES Program, candidates must have an annual household income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines. Once a candidate is accepted into the program, they are assigned a Self-Sufficiency Coach who aids them in creating a strengths-based plan to meet their education and employment goals. In addition, the ES Program supports participants by helping them meet needs for: childcare, health insurance, transportation, education, budgeting, financial literacy, and establishing healthy relationships in the community.

To graduate from the ES program, participants must achieve the following benchmarks:

- Full-time employment
- Freedom from all subsidies—cash welfare, SNAP, housing, etc.
- Stable housing
- Reliable transportation
- Health insurance
- Checking and savings accounts
- Acceptable credit rating or credit repair plan
- Education and training goals completed

## **Methodology**

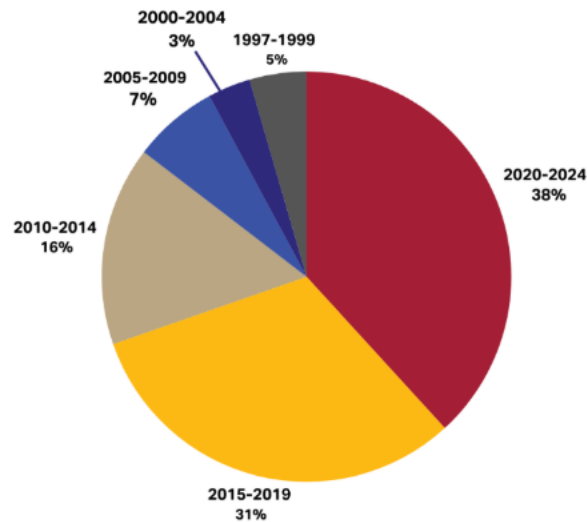
The ES program was developed in 1997, and for the purpose of this project, BCOC obtained valid email addresses and cell phone contact information for as many graduates as was possible. Among the pool of potentially 402 graduates at the time the survey was commissioned, 263 ES graduates with valid contact information were located, and 94 responded to the survey, giving a response rate of 36%. (Some respondents opted not to

answer certain questions, which accounts for some result totals being slightly less than the 94 total.)

The survey, administered through Qualtrics, was conducted from June 25 to August 7, 2025, with reminders to participate sent every two weeks. In addition to the survey, three focus groups (totaling nine graduates) and six, one-on-one interviews were conducted to uncover the experiences of the graduates. One of the focus groups consisted of graduates who had children who were now over 18 years of age to gain insight into how the adult children of graduates were doing. The two additional focus groups were selected at random from the survey respondents. The one-on-one interviews were conducted with six who graduated prior to 2014 to ascertain if respondents who graduated at least 10 years ago were still economically self-sufficient, and to learn what aspects of the program they felt helped sustain them.

Finding earlier graduates was challenging, as clients moved or changed contact information over the years. This was evidenced by the survey respondents (see Figure 1) as most respondents are graduates within the past 10 years (38%+31%=69%).

**Figure 1. Distribution of Respondents by ES Graduation Year (n=89)**

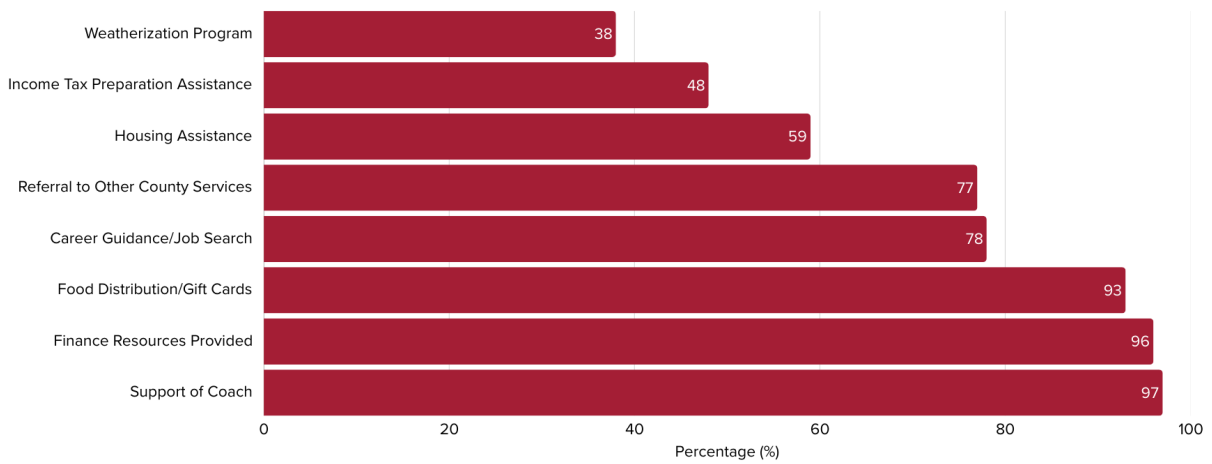


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## Survey Findings

What follows are findings from the survey organized into sections:

**Figure 2. Services that were reported as definitely helpful or somewhat helpful (n=94)**



### ***Services that were Helpful***

When asked which BCOC services graduates found most contributed to their success, 97% named the support of their coach; followed closely by financial resources, 96%. Food distribution/gift cards were noted by 93% of the respondents. See Figure 2 above for further details.

An open-ended question inviting graduates to suggest additional beneficial services elicited the following feedback:

- Wheels to Work
- Education assistance
- Help with scholarships
- Camaraderie and encouragement
- Good advice
- Emotional support

Several graduates mentioned program coaches by name and shared fond memories of their coaches:

*“[Coach J] was amazing. She saved my life and I’m forever grateful for her help at the lowest time in my life.”*

*“[Coach M] treated us like family and was extremely helpful. After graduation, I came back to teach a class which was a lot of fun.”*

**Note:** For privacy, coaches are only identified by their initials.

### **Additional Help Needed After Graduation**

Eighty-three percent (n=84) reported not needing additional help from BCOC since their ES graduation. Of those who reported asking for additional help, areas of need are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Open-ended responses from the survey on the types of additional help needed after graduation**

<b>Rent Assistance</b>	<b>One-Time or Emergency Assistance</b>	<b>Other Types of Assistance</b>
"Help with rent"	"I was pregnant and out of work with no maternity benefits. BCOC paid my mortgage and car payment"	"Tax Prep"
"I was facing a housing crisis with possible eviction and they assisted in helping prevent that"	"Received assistance to pay a propane bill which is the source for heating this rental house"	"Gift Cards"
"Rental assistance following a departmental layoff"	"Vehicle engine died. BCOC paid for the repair"	
	"Assistance with paying a bill due to being out of work from injuries"	

While 60% (n=85) reported receiving cash assistance or food stamps while enrolled in the ES program, only 19% (n=86), reported they are now receiving cash assistance or food stamps.

### **Employment and Career Trajectory**

Sixty-six percent (n=91) of participants reported having stable employment and 59% (n=91) considered their career to be on an upward trajectory (as opposed to a downward trajectory or neither an upward nor downward trajectory).

What follows is the breakdown of salary and salary increase by graduation year. Caution needed to be taken as many respondents skipped the question on salary increase (see Table 2 for sample sizes). In addition, any increase less than \$100 was deleted as such a

change in yearly salary will not increase the annual salary drastically and are treated as outliers, which if included will drastically pull the mean down.

**Table 2. Current salary and salary increase by year of graduation**

	2020-2024	2015-2019	2014 or earlier
Mean of Current Salary	\$48,258 <i>n</i> =24	\$85,435 <i>n</i> =18	\$51,613 <i>n</i> =16
Mean of Salary Increase	\$16,924 <i>n</i> =16	\$46,938 <i>n</i> =16	\$47,846 <i>n</i> =13

***Additional Education and Training***

Nearly half (45%) of respondents pursued additional education or training after graduation. Table 3 below shows some of the areas of continuing education graduates pursued.

**Table 3. Open-ended responses from the survey on the types of additional education and training pursued after graduation**

Additional Degree	Additional Certification or License	Job Training
"Applying to universities to get a bachelor's degree."	"More nursing certifications"	"Job related training"
"Took another major at another college"	"IT certification"	"Management training"
"Obtained a BSBA and an Executive MBA"	"Health Insurance license"	"Notary and specific job courses"
"Masters"	"Med Tech Certified"	"Bookkeeping Courses at BCCC"
"Masters in social work, social work state licensing, school social work certification"	"Completing a bridge program from LP to RN within the next year"	"Beauty School"
"Bachelor Degree in Criminal Justice in 2006 and Associate in Nursing 2012"	"Registered behavioral technician certificate"	"Early Child Development"

### **Housing Security**

Regardless of what year they graduated, 80% ( $n=86$ ) reported having stable housing and 35% reported purchasing a home. Table 4 below shows the percentage broken down by year of graduation ( $n=33+27+22=82$ ). As shown in the table, the majority of respondents reported stable housing regardless of graduation year.

**Table 4. Percent of respondents who reported stable housing by year of graduation**

	2020-2024	2015-2019	2014 or earlier
Reported Stable Housing	82% ( $n=33$ )	81% ( $n=27$ )	82% ( $n=22$ )

### **Changes in Physical and Mental Health Before and After ES Program**

Respondents were asked to rate their physical and mental health as well as their children's physical and mental health before and after enrollment in the ES program on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very poor.

Table 5 shows the average change in rating. On average, the graduates and their children's physical and mental health improved, particularly the graduates' own mental health.

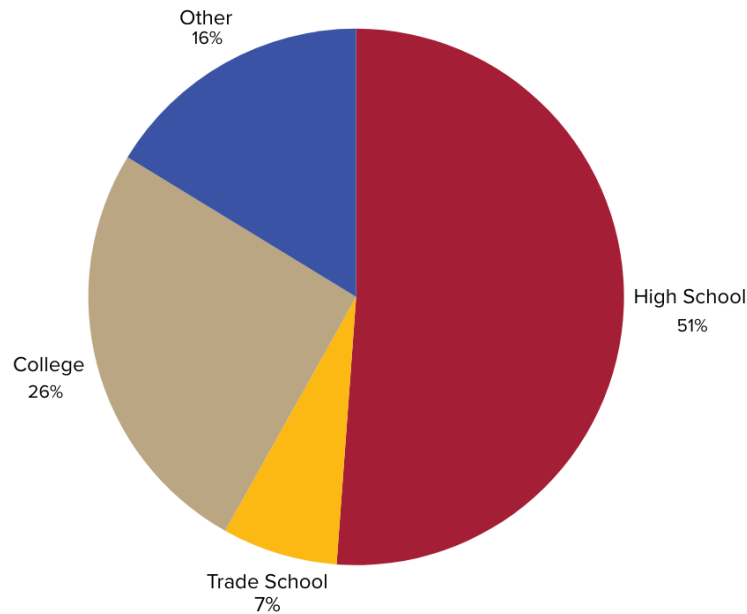
**Table 5. Improvement in physical and mental health of respondents and their children before and after program**

	Respondent	Children
Improvement in physical health	1.79 ( $n=82$ )	1.15 ( $n=71$ )
Improvement in mental health	3.30 ( $n=81$ )	1.72 ( $n=72$ )

### **Effects of the Program on the Participants' Children**

Of those who graduated over 10 years ago, 43% of the respondents reported having at least one child older than 18 years of age. Of these children, the highest education achievement of the oldest child is outlined in Figure 3 that follows.

**Figure 3. Highest education attainment of oldest child older than 18**



Survey respondents with children older than 18 also shared some detailed feedback in their open-ended responses in the survey:

*“ES was a great program that gave me the support that I needed to make sure that my children were taken care of. It provided support where I could not. Coach M was great and my biggest cheerleader during this difficult time. I cannot thank the program enough!”*

*“The program saved my son and myself. I went through a very toxic divorce and custody battle in the middle of major health issues. I'm not sure how I could have done it without the help of the program. It was the support I needed to not feel completely alone. I couldn't be more grateful for the people who worked with me and the program itself. Thank you.”*

### **Interview and Focus Group Findings**

There were some consistent trends noted from the one-to-one interviews and focus groups. Below is a discussion of what was found:

Graduates credited the program as being the only reason they were able to lift themselves out of poverty. The program provided participants with the supplemental support they needed. Without the ES program, housing and childcare would have remained a constant struggle. However, with the support and programming (specifically coaching), they were able to focus on finishing credentials that led to earning a livable wage.

*“The program had an enormous impact on my life and me being able to provide for my children. Just the fact of them assisting me was huge.”*

Participants were taught necessary life skills to better adjust and navigate the ups and downs of life. Nearly every participant that was interviewed stated that the financial literacy and soft skills that were developed are why they have remained financially self-sufficient. They consistently noted that the budgeting, money management, and financial planning learned in the program were core contributors to their success. Additionally, soft skills like self-advocacy and resiliency cultivated in the program were lauded as lifelong skills they maintain. Furthermore, while most were able to achieve financial self-sufficiency shortly after graduating, “life happened” to some.

However, even when facing unexpected challenges, they were able to rely on the “soft life skills” and advocate for payment plans or fall back on savings. Prior to the program, a similar situation could have led to housing insecurity.

*“Being part of BCOC helped me to learn that it's OK to ask for help. And I mean, they were so helpful with, you know, the resources that they provided.”*

Several participants stated the program was a key factor in improving their mental and even physical well-being. Key impacts on mental and emotional well-being were noted because of reduced stress associated with more financial security, increased confidence, and a sense of community that resulted from coaching.

Participants noted overall growth, from uncertainty prior to the program to feeling increased self-agency and resilience, due to the program. Additionally, they noted improved health because they no longer had to delay medical care or rely on food with little to no nutritional benefits. A salient trend was also an appreciation for how the program allowed participants to maintain their dignity and feel both seen and supported.

### ***Outcomes for Adult Children of ES Graduates***

Another trend that was highlighted was the positive shift among participants’ children. Generational poverty affects so many families, and the interviews and focus group interviews confirmed that there can be a positive shift among the participants’ children to break that cycle. Some participants shared that their children are still trying to thrive in an economy in which affordability continues to be a concern for many. However, several shared that their children have gone on to complete degrees and credentials.

Some children live at home but have consistent employment and are pursuing higher education. Others noted that their adult child is self-sufficient and most acknowledged their children were better positioned than they themselves had been. This was a significant finding, since many spent their childhood in impoverished homes as their parents worked towards economic self-sufficiency through the program. Children internalized financial behaviors through lived experiences, not formal instruction. It is noted that many children went on to have a strong appreciation for the value of money and maintain cautious spending habits.

Additionally, some of the interview and focus group participants shared that their children received a high school credential (either a diploma or GED) and went on to pursue additional education or employment. While some followed in their parent's footsteps in terms of education levels, it must be noted that some adult children exceeded their parent's education level and went on to be first-generation college students. Participants felt that because their children watched them complete the BCOC ES program and fight their way out of poverty, they were motivated to pursue higher education.

*"If it wasn't for the program, there's no way that my son would even be in college. I mean, he just, we just never would have been able to maneuver it to get him in and to get there and to pay for it."*

Another notable difference among adult children of participants was the decision to delay parenting. Statistics show that many impoverished households are led by young and often unwed mothers. Interviews have highlighted that some adult children of ES graduates remain child-free. For other families, the outcome was mixed; one child did become a young parent, but their other child took the opposite path and is more financially self-sufficient. The choice to delay parenthood until they are older and financially stable allowed adult children to finish degrees or prevented them from being pulled back into the poverty they left as a child.

### ***Intergenerational Impact***

Another very interesting theme from the interviews and focus groups is that parents became implicit role models, even when they did not recognize it at the time. Despite frequently underestimating their impact, when asked to reflect during these conversations, graduates recognized that their resilience and modeling had a positive effect on their children over time.

### **Conclusion**

The BCOC ES program created some positive intergenerational effects by stabilizing families during periods of acute financial crises. Because parents began to experience lower levels of chronic stress, they were better able to help their children. While the program's focus is on supporting individual participants, there is evidence that indicates that in some instances its impact can extend to participants' children—shaping their educational trajectories, financial behaviors, perceptions of work and persistence, and overall well-being. The program was able to improve outcomes for some participants and their children not just through economic stabilization, but through the ability to increase the participant's ability to be present and thoughtful parents. They were experiencing less stress and so could model healthy behaviors for their children. Many respondents appreciated the impact the program had on their lives and the lives of their children:

*"The ES Program is amazing beyond words. [Coach M] was such a savior to me. In some of my darkest moments, she pulled me to the light and always reassured me that, 'YES I CAN.'"*

*Was it hard? YES, but it was worth it. I found out that I am capable and worthy of anything I put my mind to. I would 1000000% recommend this program to anyone that needs it.”*

*“I would never have made it through college and onto a career as a nurse without the help of the BCOC.”*

### **Implications**

This study on a program that aims to empower low-income families with skills that will sustain them seemed to show promising results, even for graduates that graduated from the program decades ago. This calls for replication of the program and more research in other cities and counties. The aim is not only to expand on a promising program but also to learn if the results are generalizable beyond Bucks County.

## Open Ended Comments from Survey Participants

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked to provide any additional information, advice, or reflection they wanted to add. Below are ALL the responses provided verbatim from the survey, organized loosely around sustainability, gratitude and other feedback. No responses were excluded. As such, there might be some subjectivity as to whether a quote might fall appropriately under one category or another.

### SUSTAINABILITY

- “The program helped me enormously. The program and [Coach M] helped me obtain stable housing, furniture, school supplies for my daughter, even helped me with getting a car. Resume building was very helpful and I got two jobs at the time. Then I got better jobs a few years later. I couldn't have done it all without the help from the program! Unfortunately I went through difficult times during COVID, financially, and with my health. I am still employed, but at a low paying job and live with family and pay them rent. Times are hard, especially with prices in the grocery stores and paying on taxes I owe.”
- “[Coach D] and BCOC ES program was a tremendous help to me during my time of need. I was able to receive the necessary assistance to help get me back on track financially back then, as well as I received advice and guidance from [Coach D], on purchasing my first home in 2004. I have achieved a lot of growth. I have worked hard and was debt free, traveled to Curacao, Ireland twice, Scotland, London, and domestic travel. I began a 2nd job that I LOVE as a State Certified Med Tech. I have worked with Dementia residents and currently with an Assisted Living home. I just purchased a used Jeep Compass to visit my 2.5 month old GRANDDAUGHTER!! I have a savings that is slowly building and I believe in myself. I am SO thankful for the program and direct people to BCOC as I hear of struggles.”
- “Going through the ES Program prepared me to handle financial issues throughout my life. I learned how to handle a yearly salary of \$64,000. In 2018, I was involved in a 20-car pileup which left me disabled and I am able to live on \$23,400 in disability. The ES Program taught me how to manage what life hands to me. I wish there was more emphasis on how to save. Saving is not something I was ever taught as a child. Once I reached a yearly income of \$64,000, I struggled to save.”
- “The ES program changed my life and my sons' lives significantly. We would have been homeless if not for the training and scholarship I received to help me further my education and find a higher paying job. Because of these improvements, I have been able to find suitable housing. We moved from a 1 bedroom apartment where I slept on

the living room sofa, to a small 3 bedroom house. Additionally, I am able to better serve our community and utilize my education as a Special Education Teacher. We still have challenges, however. My younger son had a car accident and struggles with Traumatic Brain Injury and stroke. We have much to do to help him rehabilitate from these serious injuries. I am so grateful to have participated in the ES program at BCOC because of the additional education I received to find a better employment position. I would not have had the emotional well-being to help my son through his medical challenges otherwise. I greatly appreciate the support and guidance I received from my coaches at BCOC, and humbly express my thanks to all parties who contributed to make the ES program available.”

- “The program taught me that life is full of challenges and many of them are struggles. Facing adversity is a hard hit to self-confidence. Slowly but surely the program taught me to persist and to get back on track as I thought that being in the situation I was would never happen, but it did. And when it did, I had no plan to deal with it. BCOC guided me through. Because of your amazing program, I stepped into my power and became the woman I was always meant to be. Thank you!”

- “I would have never made it through college and onto a career as a nurse without the help of the BCOC.”

- “The program was very helpful to me. I finally got the job I had wanted. I am on my way to purchasing a home.”

- “The program was great. It offered so many resources. One thing I would add is a course on imposter syndrome. For me when I became a nurse and met different who were affluent or came from a good background I felt like a fraud even though I went to nursing school, passed the NCLEX and accomplished a lot.”

- “ES program had a huge impact on my life and the life of my children. Our lives have improved significantly. I am now married and our family recently purchased our first home. We came from a cramped, two bedroom apartment in an unsafe environment, a low maintenance apartment. Now we have a decent house with large backyard space for the children to play and they both have their own rooms. It's nice to have my own space as well. The program is great if you set a goal and commit yourself to accomplish it. Upon graduation of the program, I was gifted with \$2500 towards my new home which I used for upgrades and I also participated in the match savings and was able to get an additional \$2000. Overall, I was able to save \$15,000 to put towards the down payment of my house which I would not have been able to do it if it wasn't for the match savings program. My coach was very supportive and encouraged me throughout. She saw me through graduation and I'm grateful for this program and opportunity council for all of their support. I was unemployed when I

first started this program, but with the help of the job coach at opportunity council— [Coach D] I found a great job. She helped me do job search and prep me for interviews. I was able to secure a job with a high paying salary. She taught me the importance of knowing my worth in the workplace and not settling for less and to always negotiate for my salary which I did and have been doing.”

- “I've learned that economical sufficiency doesn't end with graduation. I'm forever grateful for the opportunity that BCOC was able to provide me and I'm feel thankful that I didn't give up on my own goals. What's humbling is the inability to afford a home in bucks county after living here my whole life. I've found it difficult to change the way I think as I was never shown how to save for the future I could never afford. I feel like budgeting for a future would have helped me out immensely compared to budgeting for the then present. While I am grateful for the opportunity BCOC has given me I can only say that the cost of living has gone up tremendously and what I thought was a livable wage has now come to be a survivable wage. I will never know how the millions of other people in this country are able to survive but I can only hope for the best. So for now I'll put one foot in front of the other count my blessings and learn from my mistakes. Thank you BCOC and [Coach B].”

## GRATITUDE

- “I'm so grateful for the help I received. No one else was willing to help me.”
- “The program was very helpful. I became disabled in 2004 from a car accident.”
- “My ES case manager was an amazing individual! We connected on many levels and she helped me immensely.”
- “Without the Opportunity Council's help I do not know where i would be now. They gave me the tools to get my life back on track. Never been late with my mtg or other bills, and we owe it all to Opportunity Council.”
- “The program was amazing and gave me such a great stance to secure my future with my children, and as my family grew, unfortunately certain circumstances have come up with my husband, but having what I have earned and with the program help me earn, my sense of security feels so much more secure, having it in place whether I have someone here or not to help me I feel a little bit more secure, knowing that if I'm alone, I have what I need in the resources and training and level of education to receive my income will protect me and the rest of my children, and I could never be any more grateful to be COC for guiding me and being there for this program.”

- “Yes, I'd just like to add that having a strong mentor during my time in the ES Program made all the difference. The support, guidance, and encouragement I received were incredibly valuable, especially during the transitional period before I graduated college. The program served as a steady foundation, and I'm truly grateful for that experience.”
- “The ES Program changed my life !!! Excellent Excellent Excellent !!!”
- “You saved my life!”
- “[Coach J] was amazing, she saved my life and I'm forever grateful for her help at the lowest time in my life.”
- “I appreciate everything this wonderful organization helped me with. They literally changed mine and my children's lives and I am forever grateful.”
- “Such an amazing and uplifting program I would recommend to anyone!”
- “HELLO. GOOD DAY! THE ES PROGRAM REALLY HELPED ME GAIN FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE. IT HAS HELPED ME FEEL CONFIDENT WHICH LED TO ME FEELING SAFE, SELF REFLECTION, FINDING WAYS TO CONTINUE ON TO BE PRODUCTIVE AND TO GO OUT THERE AND TO BECOME MY BEST SELF. I AM VERY GRATEFUL AND APPRECIATIVE! FOR ALL THAT THE PROGRAM DID FOR ME AND MY FAMILY. THANK YOU! MANY BLESSINGS!”
- “[Coach M] treated us like family and was extremely helpful when working with. After graduation, I came back to teach a class which was a lot of fun.”
- “The ES program really did change my life. We still struggle on occasion with the cost of food and such. The ES program taught me to stay level headed, be advantageous, and persevere during these times. So many lessons were taught and learned from this program!”
- “ES was a great program that gave me the support that I needed to make sure that my children were taken care of. It provided support where I could not. [Coach M] was great and my biggest cheerleader during this difficult time. I cannot thank the program enough!!!!”
- “The program saved my son and myself. I went through a very toxic divorce and custody battle, in the middle of major health issues. I'm not sure how I could have done it without the help of the program. It was the support I needed to not feel

completely alone. I couldn't be more grateful for the people who worked with me and the program itself. Thank you.”

- “The ES Program is amazing beyond words. [Coach M] was such a savior to me. In some of my darkest moments, she pulled me to the light and always reassured me that "YES I CAN." Was it hard? YES but it was worth it. I found out that I am capable and worthy of anything I put my mind too. I would 1000000% recommend this program to anyone that needs it. They were an awesome support system when I had no one to turn to. It was a literal life saving change for the better to my life.”

- “ES program gave me hope and encouragement to strive for a better future.”

#### ADDITIONAL PROGRAM FEEDBACK

- “Although BCOC helped, in specific instances at the end when we needed it most at the end for the transition they dropped the ball. The housing employee never filed our paperwork for our savings plan , so we never got our savings plan money that should have been use on a down payment on a house. Because of that nearly 7000\$ of savings we should have had was gone which could have helped buy a house. Due to housing prices skyrocketing as well as the interest rate increase owning a house is becoming untamable and impossible. If we would have received our savings we would have been in in a home three years. I'm disappointed and I would not ever recommend anyone to do your program.”

- “It is best to start this program BEFORE the member is established. It did not benefit me as much because I had the car, Education, employment prospect, and stability. Thank you for the opportunity.”

- “I was so excited after landing my dream job thanks to BCOC. However, I was laid off nearly 8 months after and have never been able to find stable gainful employment since then upon reaching out to BCOC for additional help I was told I would not be able to receive any other financial assistance. However, I do believe I was graduated too soon because the turnaround time for the job that I had at the time was very quick, but ended much too soon and less than a year nonetheless which put my family back into an unstable place however, I did reach back out to my social worker and she offered to continue to help me find new employment today I have still not been successful at landing a stable career.”

- “I think giving participants the option to meet other participants would be incredibly helpful. It’s always easier to go through something with others.”

- “I still struggle financially and could use help navigating aid. I feel I feel stuck in my job and currently have limited job opportunities, chances for career growth or opportunities for education.”
- “The program was wonderful but now I find myself worse off and struggling in every way.”
- “My health and children's health aren't a reflection of ES program but my husband's disability.”
- “I think this is a fantastic community support & the most impactful part of it for me was how supportive, encouraging and non-judgmental the case workers were to me, and I really appreciated the financial literacy class & community supports offered. I would highly recommend this program to anyone struggling & greatly appreciate everything that you have done!”
- “The journey and support is something I will never forget. My biggest mistake was not entering the program sooner.”
- “I would recommend to anyone who needs this type of assistance.”