

How to use CLEAR for decision making

Questions and Answers

QUESTION: The COVID-19 Pandemic suddenly brought a lot of pressing program and policy questions into the forefront of policymakers and program designers and implementers' minds and experiences. How does CLEAR consider these questions or produce resources that help people address pressing labor issues, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as they emerge or as they are ongoing?

ANSWER: In response to pressing labor-related issues like COVID, CLEAR introduced [Rapid Evidence Reviews](#), which pull together the best available or emerging research and evaluation evidence on a given topic. For example, during the pandemic, we conducted Rapid Evidence Reviews on topics such as [Remote Service Delivery Strategies](#), [Remote Postsecondary Education](#), and [Worker Health and Safety During the COVID Pandemic](#). Rapid Evidence Reviews are streamlined to meet a more stringent time requirement; therefore, these reviews use a different process than CLEAR's documented systematic approach. The process includes searching for the most relevant research studies, summarizing the body of evidence, highlighting gaps in the literature, and suggesting areas in which further research would help policymakers. You can find all our Rapid Evidence Reviews under the [Trending Research](#) tab on the CLEAR website.

QUESTION: How is CLEAR different from the Department of Health and Human Services' clearinghouse, Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse?

ANSWER: The Chief Evaluation Office within the U.S. Department of Labor established the Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR) in 2012 to increase the accessibility of research on a wide range of labor-related topics. With more than 25 evidence reviews conducted to-date across labor topics, CLEAR is a central source for labor-related research and evaluation evidence on a variety of interventions spanning employment and training, health and safety, worker benefits, employer compliance, and other topic areas. The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services established the Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse (Pathways) in 2020 in response to a Congressional mandate to identify supported interventions for increasing economic self-sufficiency and employment outcomes, and reducing employment challenges for public benefit recipients and low-income populations. Though the two Clearinghouses intersect with part of their target audiences, CLEAR covers labor-related topics more broadly, while Pathways has a focus on research related to self-sufficiency for low-income workers. CLEAR has completed an evidence review on [Low-income Adults](#) in collaboration with the Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse.

QUESTION: When searching for studies in CLEAR, what is the best way to format a search statement?

ANSWER: When using the [Search for Studies](#) page, it is possible to conduct a search using more than one keyword. Consider different aspects relevant to the topic of interest when selecting keywords. For example, keywords can be related to the population of interest (e.g., workers with disabilities) or specific program outcomes of interest (e.g., employment, earnings). Keywords can also be synonyms or other related terms (e.g., Hispanic, Latino, Latinx). In

addition, it is possible to restrict or narrow the search by the years of publication and to use the “Refine By” filtering options. The search tool has [Quick Help](#) and [Glossary](#) links which provide more information and tips for using the search tool. The [Topic Tagging Protocol](#), which can be accessed through the [More About Tags](#) link, provides information about how topics are categorized in CLEAR and how the filtering categories are defined. Users can also [contact CLEAR](#) with specific search questions.

QUESTION: How does CLEAR ensure the independence and quality of its study reviews? Can you tell us a little more about that?

ANSWER: To ensure independence, CLEAR reviewers are not involved in reviews of studies for which they are an author or employed by the same organization as the study author(s). When assigning reviews, CLEAR ensures a conflict of interest does not exist between the author(s) or organization that conducted the study under review and the reviewers. As of November 2022, most reviewers are CLEAR program staff employed by ICF Incorporated or Abt Associates or their sub-contractors. If a study is authored by a CLEAR contractor’s firm, to avoid any perceived or potential conflict of interest, it is reviewed by the other CLEAR contractor firm or by an independent subcontractor not employed by either firm. This approach for independent study reviews has been in place for all past contractors supporting CLEAR. Instances in which a conflict of interest was avoided using this approach are noted in individual study profiles, as appropriate.

To ensure the quality of reviews, each study goes through three stages of review by three separate reviewers. The first reviewer systematically captures information about the research question of interest, design, setting, data, methods, and key findings and evaluates it based upon the [CLEAR Causal Evidence Guidelines](#). The second reviewer independently reviews the same study and compares their conclusions with those of the first reviewer. The third reviewer (that is, the quality assurance reviewer) assesses the two reviews and conducts their own high-level evaluation reconciling any differences. Before a study profile is published on the CLEAR website, it is reviewed a fourth time to ensure the review is accurate and findings are presented as clearly as possible. Annually, CLEAR conducts a quality review to ensure consistency across reviewers.

QUESTION: Does CLEAR conduct reviews of program evaluations that primarily help with other client needs like child support, but provide employment or job services as an additional intervention or outcome?

ANSWER: To be included in CLEAR, the study must have a labor focus. To be reviewed, studies must include labor-related outcomes, such as employment and earnings or health and safety standards. However, if the study includes other related outcomes, such as health or benefits receipt, CLEAR may review those as secondary outcomes. The parameters for each evidence review CLEAR conducts are specified in a protocol. The protocol outlines the study designs and outcomes eligible for review, and gives details on the search parameters. We encourage users to view [CLEAR Policies and Procedures](#) for more information on the topic area selection process.