AN IMPACT EVALUATION OF MOTIVATIONAL TEXT MESSAGES WITHIN NEW JERSEY'S REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines whether motivational text messages designed to reduce administrative burden can improve participation and employment outcomes for New Jersey's Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants in the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program. Administrative burden can deter individuals from accessing and sustaining participation in public benefit programs. To address these barriers and test the impact of motivational text messages, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) and the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, The University of New Jersey, designed a series of targeted text messages emphasizing available supports, simplified processes, and stress-reducing service delivery.

This study uses a two-group randomized controlled trial (pre-registered as 201568) and included 3,162 RESEA participants who opted into receiving texts. Participants were randomly assigned to a treatment or control group, with treatment group members receiving a series of motivational text messages. Of the original sample, 2,811 RESEA participants successfully matched to administrative data and comprise the analytical sample. Balance tests confirmed no significant demographic differences between the groups.

The study outcome variables included intermediate outcomes such as appointment attendance, and primary outcomes, including program completion, duration, employment, and earnings. Analyses were conducted using intent-to-treat and treatment-on-treated approaches.

Across all analyses, the motivational text messages did not generate statistically significant differences in any intermediate or primary outcomes. Attendance at the first RESEA appointment was high across all groups (around 90%), and program completion rates were similarly strong (around 88%). Employment rates in the first two quarters after program participation ranged from 30% to 40%, and median quarterly wages were approximately $8,500 to $11,000, with no meaningful variation between the treatment and control groups.

Although the motivational messages did not yield measurable improvements, several contextual factors may explain the null findings. Shortly before this study, NJDOL implemented statewide text message reminders, which likely improved participation rates and reduced the impact of motivational messages to produce additional gains for those remaining disconnected from the RESEA program. Historical trend data show increases in appointment attendance and completion around the time of study implementation.

The findings highlight the potential value of studying reminder messages separately from motivational content. Future research could also investigate targeting strategies, message timing, or integration with case management supports to better understand how to reduce administrative burden for UI claimants and enhance RESEA engagement.

INTRODUCTION

The Heldrich Center was contracted by NJDOL to conduct a component evaluation of the use of motivational text messages for New Jersey's RESEA program participants. In this design, the Heldrich Center conducted a randomized controlled trial of a text message intervention providing RESEA participants with motivational messages and informational resources. Using this methodology, the Heldrich Center was able to evaluate the efficacy of push text notifications with motivational messages to a random sample of RESEA participants who consented to receive text messages and compare their outcomes to RESEA participants who do not receive them.

To implement this study, 3,162 RESEA recipients who had opted into text message reminders from July to September 2024 were randomly assigned into a treatment or control group. A series of five motivational text messages (available in Table 4 and the appendix) were sent to those assigned to the treatment group from July 29 to October 4, 2024. The treatment text message series was informed by research on administrative burden with the intention of reducing participants' learning, compliance, and psychological costs.

This study did not find statistically significant effects of the motivational text messages on measures of RESEA participation, completion, or post-exit employment outcomes. This may be due to the implementation of reminder text messages from NJDOL in the month preceding this experiment. Future research should determine the impact of the reminder text messages on outcome measures included in this analysis.

BACKGROUND

RESEA PROGRAM OVERVIEW

RESEA is a federal initiative designed to connect UI claimants with individualized reemployment services and assessments through American Job Centers (also known as One-Stop Career Centers). Funded by federal grants and implemented at the state level, RESEA aims to shorten the duration of unemployment, reduce improper UI payments, and improve employment outcomes by combining eligibility reviews with direct reemployment assistance. Program components often include an in-person eligibility review, development of a reemployment plan, referrals to job search assistance or training, and ongoing follow-up services. RESEA builds on earlier programs such as the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) initiative and Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services systems, both of which showed positive effects on claimant employment outcomes and reductions in UI benefit receipt. As a result, RESEA represents an evidence-based approach to modernizing the UI system by incorporating data-driven profiling to identify claimants most likely to exhaust benefits and targeting them with timely interventions.

Evidence from multiple randomized controlled trials and quasi-experimental studies indicates that RESEA interventions improve key labor market outcomes. REA programs consistently increased employment rates across multiple follow-up periods, with some studies finding effects persisting up to six years after program entry (Manoli et al., 2018; Michaelides et al., 2012). RESEA-related interventions have also been shown to raise post-UI earnings, with participants in Nevada's REA initiative earning over $2,600 more in the six quarters following program entry than comparable control group members (Michaelides et al., 2012). Beyond labor market outcomes, RESEA programs reduce public benefit receipt by shortening UI duration, decreasing the likelihood of benefit exhaustion, and lowering total benefits paid out (Michaelides & Mueser, 2016; Poe-Yamagata et al., 2011). Complementary services such as job search assistance have demonstrated additional benefits, including significant increases in reemployment likelihood and modest gains in quarterly earnings (Lee et al., 2009; Corson et al., 1989). Together, these findings suggest that RESEA and related interventions represent a cost-effective policy lever for improving labor market attachment, enhancing earnings potential, and reducing reliance on UI benefits.

NEW JERSEY BACKGROUND

New Jersey's RESEA program delivers targeted reemployment assistance to UI claimants identified as most likely to exhaust their benefits. The program uses a profiling calculation and refers individuals above a set cutoff score for RESEA support. The program combines an eligibility review with individualized reemployment planning, referrals to job search assistance services, and follow-up support through New Jersey's network of American Job Centers. Building on the state's history with reemployment demonstration projects, New Jersey's current RESEA implementation continues to focus on reducing UI duration, improving labor force attachment, and connecting claimants with training and workforce development opportunities. These efforts align with federal RESEA program goals of improving employment outcomes while reducing improper payments and benefit exhaustion.

New Jersey's RESEA program has shown relatively high participation and completion in recent years. In program year 2023 (July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024), 78% of those required to participate in RESEA in New Jersey attended their first appointment, and 67% went on to complete the program. In August and September 2023, completion was 74% and 68%, respectively, illustrating some seasonal variation in participation and completion, but on average high rates of each. In August 2024, NJDOL implemented text message reminders to RESEA participants where individuals receive reminders for their upcoming appointments. During the subsequent period, which overlaps with the rollout of both the reminder text messages and the motivational text messages included in this study, first appointment attendance rose to 90% and completion rose to 83%, on average, for all RESEA participants.

NUDGING AND TEXT MESSAGE REMINDERS

Mobile phone ownership in the United States is nearly universal, with 97% of adults owning a cell phone and 85% owning a smartphone, a trend that holds across sex and geographic regions (Pew Research Center, 2021). This ubiquity makes text messaging a uniquely powerful channel for public policy interventions, with evidence showing higher engagement compared to email (Moon et al., 2017) and demonstrated effectiveness in improving health, education, and workforce outcomes. For instance, text message reminders have been shown to reduce clinic no-show rates (Geraghty et al., 2008), increase medication adherence and improve clinical outcomes for patients with chronic disease(s) (Zhao et al., 2019), boost influenza vaccination rates among low-income pediatric populations (Stockwell et al., 2012), and enhance early childhood literacy practices through programs such as READY4K! (York et al., 2019). Policy-driven implementations like Louisiana's LA'MESSAGE program have scaled this approach to public benefits administration, significantly increasing benefit renewals, including Medicaid (Smith & Soka, 2020), while randomized trials in workforce programs have shown that carefully designed messaging campaigns can increase participation in required reemployment activities by more than 14 percentage points (Darling et al., 2017). More recent research, however, indicates that text messages and other low-touch interventions may be more effective for those already connected with governmental services as opposed to a more general population (Bergman et al., 2023; Linos et al., 2022). For example, Linos et al. (2022) found that text messages about filing for and claiming the Earned Income Tax Credit did not increase uptake among those who did not file in the past. Together, these findings indicate that text messaging has great potential as a cost-effective, scalable tool for improving public service delivery, participant engagement, and compliance across diverse policy domains, but that evaluations are critical to fully understand their impact in particular contexts and for different study populations (Beatty et al., 2023).

METHODOLOGY

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the concept of administrative burden, which is central to understanding citizens' interactions with the state. Administrative burden refers to "an individual's experiences of policy implementation as onerous" (Burden et al., 2012). Unlike organizational "red tape," which emphasizes formal rules and procedures, administrative burden highlights individuals' subjective experiences of those processes (Heinrich, 2016; Madsen et al., 2022). Although the concept applies broadly to any context in which individuals seek public services (Moynihan et al., 2015), research has primarily focused on policy take-up and benefits enrollment, especially in means-tested programs, where administrative burdens are often consequential (Barnes & Riel, 2022; Bell et al., 2023; Daigneault & Macé, 2020; Fox et al., 2023; Herd et al., 2013; Linos et al., 2022). In UI programs, applicants also tend to perceive program rules and requirements as complex and demanding (Ebenstein & Stange, 2010; Mikkelsen et al., 2024). Reducing claimants' perceived administrative burden is therefore expected to increase program uptake and promote sustained participation throughout the UI claims process.

Administrative burden is categorized into three distinct costs — learning costs, compliance costs, and psychological costs — based on which aspects of citizen-state interactions generate or induce these burdens (Moynihan et al., 2015). Learning costs represent the effort required to locate, access, and understand information about public services. Compliance costs reflect the resources expended in meeting administrative requirements, such as completing forms or providing documentation. Psychological costs encompass the stress of navigating complex processes, the loss of autonomy or power in interactions with the state, and the stigma that can accompany applications for public benefits (Moynihan et al., 2015).

The promotional messages in this study were developed based on these three categories of administrative burden. Heldrich Center researchers generated a series of text messages indicating that RESEA is designed to alleviate these burdens and providing information about helpful resources to reduce each type of cost. The messaging strategy was implemented across three time points, with each message targeting a specific category of administrative burden.

The first message on Day 1 aimed to reduce individuals' learning costs by directing them to the necessary information in the orientation materials, while highlighting that assistance is available for understanding and applying this information (Message 1B).[1] The second message on Day 4 addressed compliance costs by emphasizing that the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) helps adherence to UI regulations for individuals (Message 2). The final message on Day 8 targeted psychological costs by reducing the stress of dealing with administrative processes, emphasizing RESEA's seamless service delivery and stress-free experience (Message 3A), supported by career coach assistance (Message 3B). Table 1 presents the definitions of each type of cost and the corresponding text messages.

STUDY DESIGN

This evaluation aims to estimate the effectiveness of interventions designed to assist New Jersey UI claimants return to employment and uses a two-group random assignment design to test the impact of motivational text notifications on individuals' participation in the RESEA program (defined by attending their first mandatory meeting and IEP completion), the duration of unemployment, and reemployment earnings. The random assignment process ensures that there are no systematic differences in sample characteristics between the groups. Thus, any differences between them that emerge over time can be attributed to the effectiveness of the assigned programs.

Table 1: Text Messages

Type of Cost	Definition*	Text Message
Learning costs	Costs arising from searching for information about public services and assessing relevance to individual circumstances.	[Message 1B] RESEA and your Career Coach are here to help! Review orientation materials on how to access supportive career services and search for a job.
Compliance costs	Costs associated with adhering to administrative rules and requirements.	[Message 2] Your RESEA Individual Employment Plan (IEP) provides a roadmap to find gainful employment and makes it easier to comply with UI regulations!
Psychological costs	Costs, including stress from navigating administrative processes, loss of autonomy or power, and stigma associated with participating in state benefit programs.	[Message 3A] RESEA is designed to provide a seamless service and a stress-free experience to motivated job seekers like you. [Message 3B] Remember your Career Coach is prepared to help you meet your personal short and long-term employment goals!

** The definitions of each cost were organized based on Moynihan et al. (2015).*

[1] This followed a baseline welcome message introducing the text message series (Message 1A). The baseline message is provided in Table 4.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Does providing motivational text alerts to UI claimants improve the participation of RESEA participants?

2. Does providing motivational text alerts to UI claimants reduce the average duration of unemployment compensation and/or improve employment and earnings outcomes?

STUDY OUTCOMES

Assessing workforce outcomes allows researchers to determine the relative success or failure of motivational text messages coupled with traditional NJDOL RESEA services, versus the traditional NJDOL RESEA service delivery and appointment reminder model alone. Researchers analyze the following intermediate and primary outcomes:

Intermediate Outcomes

- Participation in the Initial Meeting
- Participation in the Follow-up Meeting
- IEP Forms Completion

Primary Outcomes

- Duration of Unemployment Compensation
- Employment
- Wages

Measurement of the intermediate and primary outcomes occurred at the conclusion of the randomized control trial and relied on data transfers from NJDOL to the Heldrich Center to analyze outcomes for all study participants following study completion. This study was pre-registered through as.predicted and can be found as study #201568.

STUDY IMPLEMENTATION

Each week, NJDOL identified RESEA participants through its profiling scoring process. Following identification of participants, NJDOL sent a letter to UI claimants selected for RESEA. NJDOL then sent a list of RESEA participants who opt into text message reminders to the Heldrich Center. Participants were randomly assigned to the treatment or control group using a permuted block randomization method to ensure that the control and treatment groups were of equal sizes. More specifically, participants were randomly assigned to either the treatment or control group with a 1:1 allocation per a computer-generated randomization sequence using random block sizes. For treatment group participants, staff enrolled them in Engage by Cell[2] text messages.

Of the 3,162 individuals in the original study cohort, 1,602 were assigned to the treatment group and 1,560 were assigned to the control group. During implementation, a total of 112 members in the treatment group did not receive the full treatment. This included 17 participants for whom the cell phone number received was invalid, and 95 individuals who opted out by replying "stop" to one of the text messages. Further information on text messages and opt-outs, as well as deduplication of the original file transfers, can be found in the appendix.

Of the 3,162 participants in the original sample, 2,811 (89%) matched to Social Security Numbers when merging phone numbers and study information back to America's One-Stop Operating System. The final analytical sample for the analysis of preliminary outcomes includes those 2,811 participants, of which 1,420 are in the treatment group and 1,391 in the control group. (See Table 2.)

Table 2: Study Sample

	Treatment	Control	Significance
Total sample	1,602	1,560	Not applicable
Total matched	1,420	1,391	p = 0.64
Percent matched	89.6%	89.2%	

[2] https://www.engagebycell.com/

BALANCE TESTS

A balance test used an independent sample t-test to check the difference between the overall treatment and control groups. The test used demographic indicators, including sex, race, ethnicity, and age at the start of RESEA. While randomization ensured that the proportion of participants between the treatment and control groups remained the same, the balance test provided an additional check to see if balance was preserved across the different demographic subgroups. The results of the balance test show that there are no statistically significant differences between the groups, and thus randomization was successful based on these observed characteristics (see Table 3).

Table 3: Balance Test

Measure	Treatment	Control	Test Statistics
Sex	**1,420**	**1,391**	t = -0.65808, df = 2494.9, p-value = 0.5105
Male	624	621	
Female	644	608	
Missing	152	162	
Race	**1,420**	**1,391**	
White	710	711	t = 0.93729, df = 2315.4, p-value = 0.3487
Black or African American	230	229	t = 0.31844, df = 679.3, p-value = 0.7503
Asian	119	108	t = -0.51843, df = 273.1, p-value = 0.6046
American Indian	S	S	
Pacific Islander/ Native Hawaiian	S	S	
Choose not to answer	197	171	t =-1.1989, df = 504.51, p-value = 0.2311
Missing	S	S	
Ethnicity	**1,420**	**1,391**	t = -0.43518, df = 626.34, p-value = 0.6636
Hispanic	224	209	
Not Hispanic	968	938	
Refused	75	81	
Missing	153	163	
Age			
Mean	48.5	48.1	t = -0.64173, df = 2142.2, p-value = 0.5211
Standard deviation	14.3	14.3	

Note: S denotes suppressed.

TREATMENT

Treated participants received a series of three motivational text messages via Engage by Cell. The text messages are shown in Table 4. Further details regarding Engage by Cell, the text message delivery, and attrition can be found in the appendix.

Table 4: Text Message Series

Text Number	Delivery	Message
Text Message 1A	Day 1, 11:00 a.m.	Welcome to RESEA supportive text messages. You will receive a series of text messages related to resources and your participation in RESEA. TostopreplySTOP
Text Message 1B	Day 1, 11:01 a.m.	RESEA and your Career Coach are here to help! Review orientation materials on how to access supportive career services and search for a job. TostopreplySTOP
Text Message 2	Day 4, 11:00 a.m.	Your RESEA Individual Employment Plan (IEP) provides a roadmap to find gainful employment and makes it easier to comply with UI regulations! TostopreplySTOP
Text Message 3A	Day 8, 11:00 a.m.	RESEA is designed to provide a seamless service and a stress-free experience to motivated job seekers like you. TostopreplySTOP
Text Message 3B	Day 8, 11:01 a.m.	Remember your Career Coach is prepared to help you meet your personal short and long-term employment goals! TostopreplySTOP

DATA SOURCES

This study relied on three primary data sources. First, a file of all RESEA participants who had opted into reminder text messages by NJDOL was shared with the study team for randomization. NJDOL shared RESEA participation records for these participants, which informed meeting attendance and program completion measures. Following study completion, participants were matched to their UI Wage Records, which allowed researchers to determine if a participant was employed in the state, and their earnings for the quarter. Finally, participants were matched to UI Claims data, providing information on the duration of their benefits, as well as demographic characteristics for balance testing.

ANALYSIS

Taking advantage of the experimental design of the study, the analysis used a bivariate approach to examine the distribution of analytical groups of RESEA participants across two sets of outcomes.[3] The first set of outcomes included intermediate outcomes related to RESEA process. These were initial individual appointments, IEP reviews, appointment rescheduling, exemptions, and RESEA program completion. The second set of outcomes captured the employment and earnings after RESEA completion. For each set of these indicators, the study compared the percentage distribution or the mean of everyone in the treatment group to those in the comparison group. The study used independent sample t-tests to test for statistical significance of the treatment effects.

These bivariate analyses were completed first to examine intent-to-treat impacts of the intervention, comparing the outcomes of everyone in the treatment group to those in the control group. The analyses were then repeated, comparing those participants in the treatment group who received the motivational text messages prior to their first appointment to those in the control group. By limiting the focus to those who received the messages before their first appointment, it is possible to also examine the treatment-on-treated impact of the intervention.

[3] Regression models were run to confirm the bivariate results.

RESULTS

This section presents the outcomes of the component evaluation for New Jersey's RESEA program by using motivational text notifications. Results are divided into two subsections related to program process and program outcomes. Program process includes appointment attendance, IEP completion, and appointment rescheduling. Program outcomes include program completion, employment and earnings, and RESEA duration. These results do not reveal any statistically significant differences between the treatment and control groups on the intermediate outcomes measured for either the intent-to-treat and treatment-on-treated analyses.

PROGRAM PROCESS

Process measures include attendance at the first and second RESEA appointment, and completion of the IEP, an indicator of whether the participant ever rescheduled or was marked as noncompliant. Overall, appointment attendance was high, around 90% across groups. As shown in Table 5, there are no statistically significant differences across groups.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The following outcomes examine RESEA program completion, employment and earnings in the first and second quarter after the study implementation, and duration of claims. Employment proportion is measured as the number employed over the total cohort, which includes both those who complete and those who do not complete. Wages are measured as the median earnings within the calendar quarter. Program completion was relatively high, around 88% between the text prior treatment and control groups (see Table 6). The measures were lower for the text after treatment group; however, the sample size for this group is smaller, and the difference is not statistically significant.

As shown in Table 6, on average, 30% to 40% of participants were employed in the first two quarters after the study implementation.[4] Participants earned around $10,000 per quarter in the second quarter after study participation. Again, there were no statistically significant differences across groups for any outcome measure.

Table 5: Study Outcomes - Process Measures

	All Treated Individuals (N = 1,420)	Treatment - Text on or Prior (N = 1,035)	Treatment - Text After Appointment (N = 385)	Control (N = 1,391)	Intent to Treat - Treatment vs. Control	Treatment on Treated - Text Prior Group vs. Control
Appointment 1	89.6%	89.7%	89.6%	90.7%	p = 0.34	p = 0.39
Appointment 2	81.8%	82.4%	80.3%	81.9%	p = 0.97	p = 0.74
IEP	91.5%	92.1%	89.9%	92.2%	p = 0.46	p = 0.89
Reschedule or noncompliance	7.7%	7.1%	9.4%	8.1%	p = 0.72	p = 0.36

[4] An alternate measure of program success may be employment of only those who complete the program. When calculating employment with only completers as the denominator, the measure is higher, around 45% to 50% in quarter 2.

Table 6: Study Outcomes - Program Completion and Employment

	All Treated Individuals (N = 1,420)	Treatment - Text on or Prior (N = 1,035)	Treatment - Text After Appointment (N = 385)	Control (N = 1,391)	Intent to Treat - Treatment vs. Control	Treatment on Treated - Text Prior Group vs. Control
Completion	87.3%	89.4%	81.6%	88.6%	p = 0.29	p = 0.53
Employed Quarter 1	33.2%	35.4%	27.3%	33.2%	p = 0.79	p = 0.33
Employed Quarter 2	40.8%	43.7%	33.0%	40.3%	p = 0.54	p = 0.12
Wages Quarter 1	$8,588	$9,455	$6,162	$8,769	p = 0.73	p = 0.22
Wages Quarter 2	$10,669	$11,132	$9,422	$11,328	p = 0.27	p = 0.63
Exhaustion	17.0%	14.6%	23.6%	17.0%	p = 0.51	p = 0.30

CONCLUSION

This study shows that there were no statistically significant differences between the treatment and control groups for intermediate or primary outcome measures. Meeting attendance and program completion appear high, at 90% and 88%, respectively. There are many possible reasons that these intermediate outcomes show no statistically significant difference in the treatment group. First, NJDOL implemented text message reminders just prior to the study period, which may impact overall program participation. A review of aggregate historical data show that there was a substantial descriptive increase in appointment attendance and program completion during this period, which could be due to the reminder text messages. Future research should explore the extent to which reminder text messages, compared to motivational messages, independently influence participation and completion in RESEA. It could also examine whether specific subgroups of participants respond differently to these interventions, providing insights into tailoring outreach strategies.

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APPENDIX: KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE INTERVENTION OF PROVIDING TEXT MESSAGES TO RESEA EVALUATION TREATMENT GROUP PARTICIPANTS

The provision of text messages as part of the RESEA evaluation was conducted by the Heldrich Center from July 29 to October 4, 2024, including one test week and eight weeks in the field. During this period, the Heldrich Center utilized Engage by Cell for the provision of text messages. Program participants in the treatment group were enrolled in Engage by Cell on Mondays and were assigned to the evaluation's five-message text message series, spanning an 11-day period, including weekends (see Table A-1). Text messages were programmed to be sent on weekdays only and released at 11:00 a.m.. Text messages had 160-character limits; thus, longer messages had to be divided into two text messages. Opt-out language was required in every message sent in accordance with carrier compliance regulations. The treatment text message series was informed by burden reduction research with the intention of reducing participants' learning costs, compliance costs, and psychological costs. The series was approved by NJDOL in July 2024.

The Heldrich Center presents the following key insights from the intervention of providing text messages to individuals enrolled in the treatment group for the RESEA evaluation.

In the study design, the Heldrich Center received the names, phone numbers, and email addresses of individuals who had already consented to receive text messages through NJDOL's use of the SimpliGov system. The aforementioned information was sent from NJDOL to the Heldrich Center through a secure data transfer process using MoveIT. Heldrich Center staff then randomized individuals into the treatment and control groups. This process was replicated for eight weeks until study enrollment goals were met.

Study enrollment surpassed its intended goals of 1,371 per group and 2,742 participants total. In total, the Heldrich Center's study enrolled 3,162 participants, divided among the treatment and control groups. Eight subjects were initially observed to be duplicates with different phone numbers but the same social security number, and were dropped from the sample. See Table A-2 for the weekly enrollment breakdown. The Heldrich Center received 3,519 records from NJDOL over eight weeks; however, 347 records were identified as duplicates within and across weeks. Additionally, two individuals withdrew from the study.

Table A-1: Text Message Series

Text Number	Delivery	Message
Text Message 1A	Day 1, 11:00 a.m.	Welcome to RESEA supportive text messages. You will receive a series of text messages related to resources and your participation in RESEA. TostopreplySTOP
Text Message 1B	Day 1, 11:01 a.m.	RESEA and your Career Coach are here to help! Review orientation materials on how to access supportive career services and search for a job. TostopreplySTOP
Text Message 2	Day 4, 11:00 a.m.	Your RESEA Individual Employment Plan (IEP) provides a roadmap to find gainful employment and makes it easier to comply with UI regulations! TostopreplySTOP
Text Message 3A	Day 8, 11:00 a.m.	RESEA is designed to provide a seamless service and a stress-free experience to motivated job seekers like you. TostopreplySTOP
Text Message 3B	Day 8, 11:01 a.m.	Remember your Career Coach is prepared to help you meet your personal short and long-term employment goals! TostopreplySTOP

Table A-2: Study Enrollment Weekly Breakdown[5]

Week	Treatment	Control
Week 1	195	184
Week 2	209	193
Week 3	206	199
Week 4	188	187
Week 5	190	189
Week 6	196	196
Week 7	209	210
Week 8	211	211
Total (Weeks 1 to 8)	1,604	1,566

During the weekly transfers of participant data over eight weeks, 17 phone numbers in the treatment group were found to be invalid and text messages could not be sent to the phone numbers listed for those participants. These 17 phone numbers constituted 1% of the treatment group population. Engage by Cell flagged these phone numbers as undeliverable when the Heldrich Center team uploaded treatment group data on a weekly basis.

Over the course of the treatment, 95 individuals, or 6% of the treatment group, opted out of the text message series. Since opt-out language was required in every text message sent, individuals were able to reply "STOP" to any message in the series to opt out of the entire text message series. Researchers examined the opt-out rate by message to understand if there were any significant patterns within the opt-outs (see Table A-3).

Table A-3: Treatment Group Participant Opt-Outs by Text Message

Text Message	Number of Opt-Outs
Message 1A/1B	27
Message 2	29
Message 3A/3B	39

The opt-outs by text message is significant considering that the series saw the most opt-outs (39) in response to Messages 3A/3B, which was the conclusion of the text message series. As a result, these 39 opt-outs actually received the full treatment, leaving the number of opt-outs who withdrew from treatment before its completion at 56 individuals, or 3.5% of the treatment group.

Two individuals in the treatment group withdrew from the study. Beyond opting out of the text message series, treatment group participants were also given the option to withdraw from the evaluation altogether. In order to withdraw from the study, treatment group participants had to email the Heldrich Center's RESEA-specific email address and request to be removed from the study. The data points presented in this report, as well as subsequent analyses of intermediate and primary outcomes, reflect the two withdrawals from the study.

Using Engage by Cell, the Heldrich Center received 94 inbound text messages from treatment group participants. These 94 messages were received in addition to the text message responses containing the opt-out language of "STOP". The Heldrich Center programmed default response language to all inbound text messages. Treatment group participants who texted in any language beyond the primary keyword of "STOP" automatically received a text message directing them to the NJDOL RESEA website and were sent the Heldrich Center's email address should the participant have additional questions or concerns.

The Heldrich Center received six emails from treatment group participants, including the two study withdrawals referenced earlier. Over the course of the study period, the Heldrich Center received six emails from treatment group participants who had additional questions and/or comments.

The Heldrich Center examined and categorized the inbound text messages and emails received from treatment group participants. A majority of the inbound text messages received were messages acknowledging receipt of the treatment text messages. Participants also had specific questions, a majority of which centered around the time and modality of their RESEA appointment, inquiring when it was and if it would be in person or virtual. Other questions received via text message and email were related to

[5] Readers should note that the counts in Table A-2 include eight subjects who were found to be duplicates with different phone numbers but the same social security number. Those individuals were dropped from the sample.

programmatic questions, such as the particulars of participating in RESEA if on federal probation, the availability of hands-on training/experience, and communication issues, specifically with receiving emails and calls from the RESEA program. See Table A-4 for the categorization of inbound text messages and emails received from treatment group participants. Overall, treatment group participant questions were not related to the Heldrich Center's RESEA study, but rather were about the RESEA program and the specifics of individuals' participation within the program.

Table A-4: Categorization of Inbound Text Messages and Emails from Treatment Group Participants

Categorization of Inbound Text Messages and Emails	Text Message Frequency	Email Frequency
Acknowledgment	53	-
Assistance and requests for help	26	3
Job search progress update	9	1
Greeting	5	-
Other	1	-
Study opt-out	-*	2

** Study opt-outs via text message have been reported separately, totaling 95 opt-outs.*

The Heldrich Center further examined the category "Assistance and Requests for Help" as there was notable variety within the messages and emails received. See Table A-5 for a more precise breakdown of the requests for assistance that were received from treatment group participants.

Table A-5: Breakdown of the Inbound Text Message and Email Category "Assistance and Requests for Help"

Category: Assistance and Requests for Help	Text Message Frequency	Email Frequency
Time of appointment	8	-
Modality of appointment	4	-
Programmatic question	3	-
Communication issue	2	1
Reschedule appointment	1	1
Request for orientation or other materials	1	-
Administrative issue	1	-
Technical issue	1	1
Other	6	-

These key insights from the intervention of providing text messages to the Heldrich Center's RESEA evaluation treatment group participants highlight an intervention that reached its intended sample with minimal opt-outs and study withdrawals. The comments and questions received from treatment group participants via inbound text messages and emails were predominantly focused on the RESEA program and individuals' required participation in the program and not the Heldrich Center's study. These key insights shed light on the logistics of the Heldrich Center's text message treatment intervention. Researchers are continuing to examine the study's intermediate and primary outcomes to understand the effect of the intervention on individuals' participation in the RESEA program (IEP completion and meeting attendance), duration of unemployment compensation, employment, and wages.

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ABOUT THE HELDRICH CENTER

The Heldrich Center for Workforce Development is one of the nation's leading research and policy organizations dedicated to transforming the workforce development system at the local, state, and federal levels. Based at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, the Heldrich Center provides an independent source of analysis for reform and innovation in policymaking. The Heldrich Center employs cutting-edge research and evaluation methods to identify best practices in workforce development, education, and employment policy. It is engaged in partnerships with government, the private sector, workforce organizations, and educational institutions to design and evaluate workforce, education, and training programs. The Heldrich Center is deeply committed to assisting job seekers and workers attain the information, education, and skills training they need to move up the economic ladder.

The Center aims to accomplish its mission through four activities:

- Transforming the workforce through research,
- Empowering job seekers through technology,
- Assessing and identifying workforce best practices, and
- Strengthening public programs that promote financial stability and economic mobility.