



RESEA Evaluation Technical Assistance Brief

Using the Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR) to Build Evidence on RESEA Programs

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WHY IS CLEAR USEFUL FOR ME?

The U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR) is a valuable tool that can help Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) staff identify and use relevant, credible evidence to inform the design and operation of their RESEA programs.

DOL established CLEAR to make research on labor-related topics more accessible to practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and the public. Resources on the [CLEAR website](#) are designed to support evidence-based decision making about labor-related policies and programs. CLEAR systematically reviews research on a variety of labor-related topics, including RESEA and other reemployment programs. Drawing on existing research from reemployment program evaluations can assist states in identifying services and practices with evidence of effectiveness.

As states continue to evaluate their RESEA programs and program components, findings from these evaluations will be added in CLEAR, and the base of evidence on effective reemployment interventions will grow. Over time, this growing body of evidence will make it easier for states and other practitioners to identify and implement effective, evidence-based reemployment practices that are relevant to their state's particular needs.

After providing a summary of CLEAR products and tools, this brief introduces specific ways that RESEA program staff can use CLEAR resources to identify evidence that supports their RESEA programs.

WHAT DOES CLEAR DO?

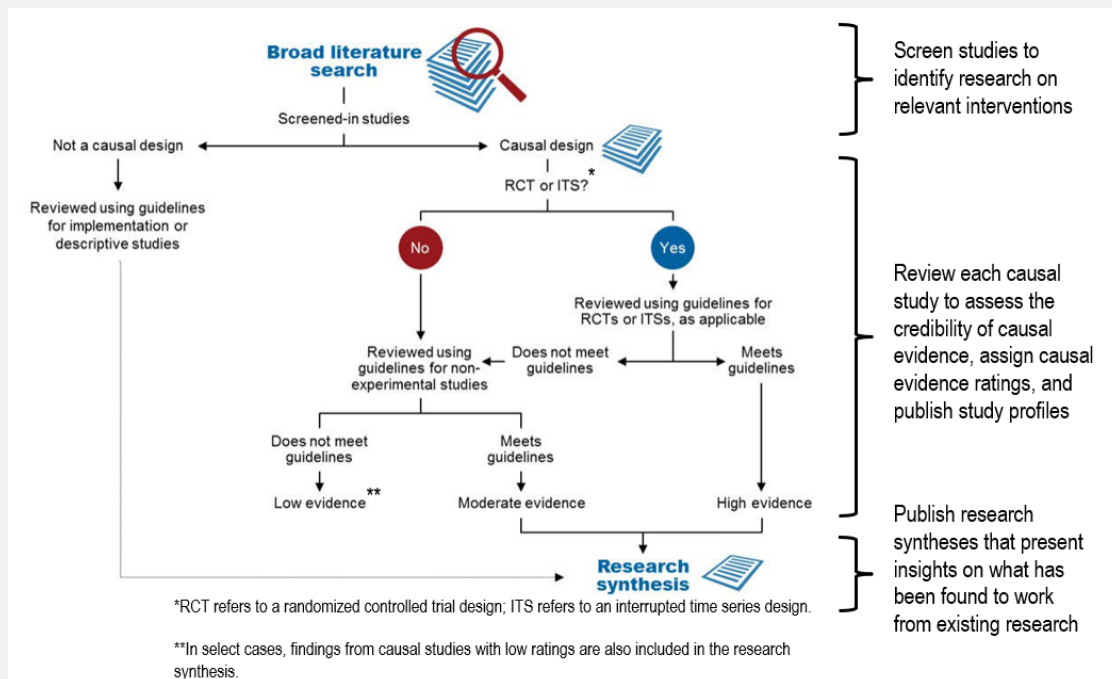
CLEAR conducts evidence reviews, provides summaries and evidence ratings for individual studies, and publishes topic area research syntheses. For RESEA-related interventions with causal impact evaluations, CLEAR also assigns intervention effectiveness ratings that can be used to identify effective, evidence-based practices. CLEAR is operated by DOL's Chief Evaluation Office, which establishes guidelines and procedures for how studies are reviewed.

Evidence Reviews

CLEAR reviews evidence across time periods and across labor topics, such as reemployment and job search assistance (see Box 1). The objective of an **evidence review** is to help policymakers and practitioners understand large and evolving bodies of research on a specific topic.

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Box 1. CLEAR Evidence Review Process



Source: [CLEAR Policies and Procedures, Version 3.1.](#)

To conduct evidence reviews, CLEAR’s study reviewers first identify a broad body of research studies within a labor-related topic area.

For each study included in an evidence review of a given topic, CLEAR reviewers draft a **study profile** that summarizes the intervention, the key findings, and the data and methods used. CLEAR-reviewed studies form an **evidence base** on a given labor-related topic. For many topic areas, CLEAR publishes **research syntheses** that summarize key findings from this evidence base.

Evidence reviews include three types of studies: causal studies, implementation studies, and descriptive studies (see Box 2). All three types of studies can generate valuable evidence that supports policy development and program improvement. In general, however, CLEAR prioritizes the review of causal impact studies because they provide the most conclusive evidence about the effectiveness of an intervention.

For this reason, as discussed in the next section, this brief focuses primarily on how CLEAR reviews and summarizes findings from causal impact studies, and how RESEA program staff might use this information.¹

¹ Additional background on implementation studies can be found in a separate RESEA brief (see Trutko et al. [2023]).

Box 2. Types of Research Reviewed by CLEAR

Causal impact studies estimate the impact of an intervention on study participants and can generate evidence about whether an intervention or program strategy was effective. Causal impact studies are assigned causal evidence ratings to indicate the level of confidence one can have in the study's findings.

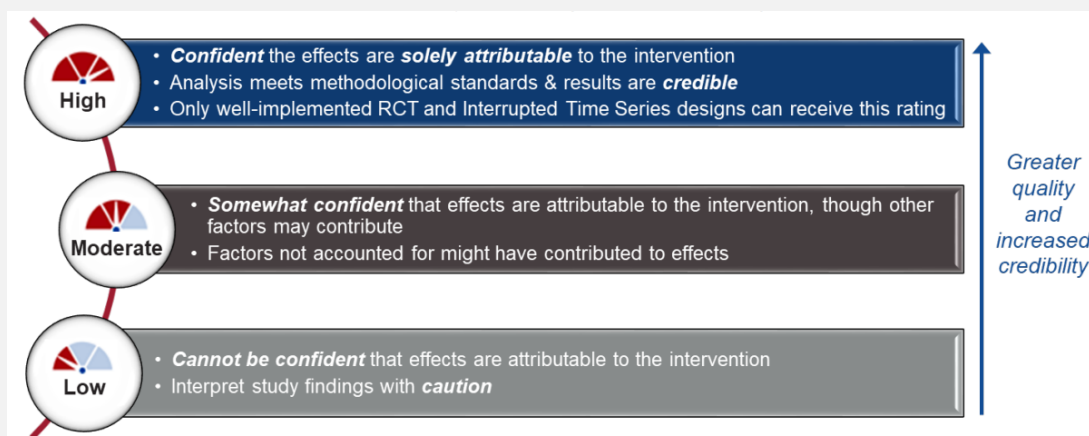
Implementation studies describe how interventions were designed and implemented. These studies can generate evidence about the inputs required to implement an intervention effectively and common issues that can impede implementation. These studies do *not* provide evidence about the impact of an intervention on participants.

Descriptive studies use quantitative methods to document study outcomes. Examples of descriptive studies include cost-benefit analyses, comparisons of outcome means and trends by subgroups, and correlational analyses. These studies do *not* assess the causal impact of the intervention studied.

Causal Evidence Ratings

CLEAR reviewers assign **causal evidence ratings** to impact studies (see Box 3). A causal evidence rating indicates the level of confidence that practitioners and policymakers can place in a study's findings. CLEAR defines a set of [Causal Evidence Guidelines](#) that study reviewers use to assign a rating of *high*, *moderate*, or *low* to each causal impact study. Studies that receive *high* or *moderate* causal evidence ratings are considered to provide **credible evidence** about an intervention. This means the intervention produces impacts that reflect the effect of the intervention on participant outcomes, rather than reflecting other factors that might also have contributed to these outcomes.

Box 3. CLEAR Causal Evidence Ratings



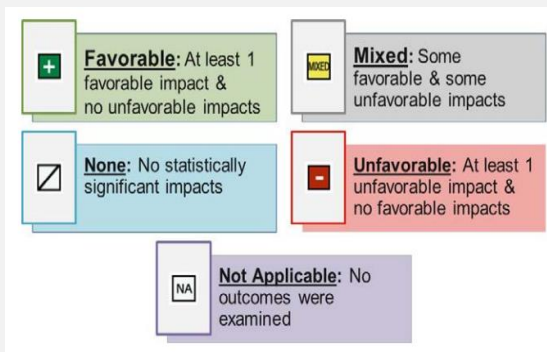
Source: [RESEA Evaluation Toolkit](#) (Mills De La Rosa et al., 2021)

Causal Impact Study Findings

In addition to causal evidence ratings that indicate the credibility of a study's findings, CLEAR also provides information about what the study's findings indicate about the **impact of the intervention**. For example, a highly rated causal impact study could produce favorable, unfavorable, or null findings about the impact of an intervention. Likewise, a single study could provide evidence on multiple outcomes, and that study might find that the intervention has a favorable impact on one study outcome, such as employment, but a null or unfavorable impact on another study outcome, such as public benefits receipt.

CLEAR represents impact findings by outcome as *favorable*, *unfavorable*, *mixed*, *none*, or *not applicable*, using the icons depicted in Box 4.

Box 4. CLEAR Study Findings Categories and Icons



Source: [CLEAR Frequently Asked Questions, Version 1.0](#)

Research Syntheses in a Topic Area

CLEAR publishes **research syntheses** for many topic areas, including reemployment strategies for Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants. These syntheses summarize existing research findings for interventions relevant to the topic and discuss gaps in the research literature. Research syntheses typically focus on findings from causal impact studies with *high* or *moderate* ratings, because we can have more confidence in the findings from these studies.

For example, as of March 2023, the current version of CLEAR's [Reemployment Synthesis](#) identified 50 studies published from 1978 to 2018 that examined the impacts of reemployment interventions on employment, earnings, or receipt of UI benefits and that received a *high* or *moderate* causal evidence rating. Drawing on this base of evidence, the Reemployment Synthesis summarizes the evidence related to five distinct reemployment interventions for UI claimants: the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) program, job search assistance services, reemployment bonuses, profiling,² and changes in employer contact requirements.

RESEA Intervention Effectiveness Ratings

For RESEA interventions, CLEAR also publishes **intervention effectiveness ratings** (see Box 5). To assess the effectiveness of an RESEA intervention, CLEAR considers findings from across all studies of that intervention that received *high* or *moderate* causal evidence ratings. RESEA intervention effectiveness ratings can change over time as new evidence becomes available. CLEAR's [Guidelines on Effectiveness of RESEA Interventions](#) provides additional information about how ratings are assigned.

² Studies of “profiling” interventions examine the impact of Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services programs.

Box 5. RESEA Intervention Effectiveness Ratings in CLEAR



High: At least two credible impact studies have found favorable effects on UI duration and employment with strong statistical significance ($p < .05$).



Moderate: At least one credible impact study has found favorable effects on UI duration and employment with modest statistical significance ($p < .10$).



Potentially Promising: At least one impact study (irrespective of study rating) found favorable impacts on UI duration or employment with modest statistical significance ($p < .10$).



No Rating: No impact studies of the intervention exist, or studies that exist do not show favorable impacts.

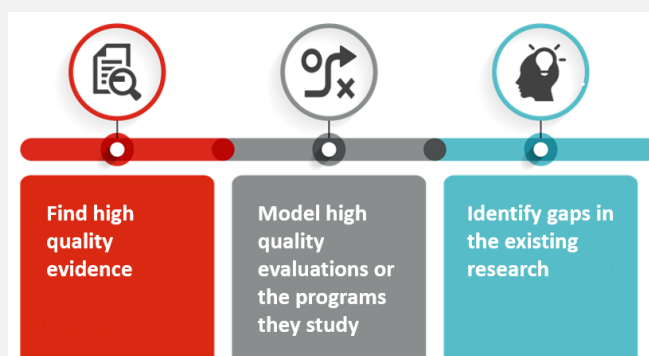
HOW CAN CLEAR HELP STATES USE EVIDENCE TO IMPROVE RESEA PROGRAMS?

The resources provided by CLEAR can be used in a variety of ways to support RESEA staff to refine and evaluate their RESEA programming.

As shown in Box 6, CLEAR materials can be used to help RESEA staff and evaluators (1) identify existing, high-quality evidence about RESEA-related interventions; (2) identify models for high-quality evaluations or highly effective interventions; and (3) identify areas where existing evidence is limited and additional evaluation would be valuable.

This section addresses how to use CLEAR to find information, refine RESEA programs, learn about evaluation standards, and identify gaps in existing research.

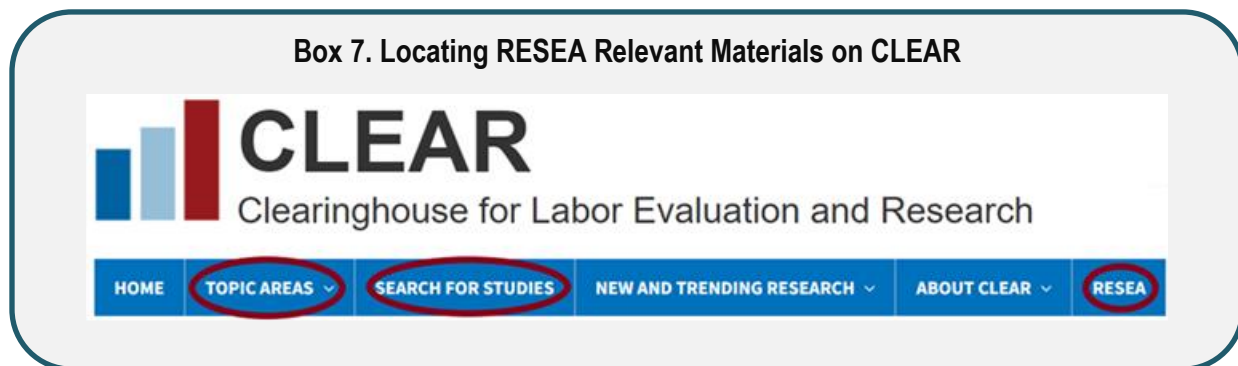
Box 6. How States Can Use CLEAR to Inform RESEA Programming and Evaluation



Source: [Using the Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research](#)

How Can I Find Relevant RESEA Content on the CLEAR Website?

Box 7 shows an image of the CLEAR landing page. Key resources on how to find relevant content are circled in red.



By clicking on the circled headers, information is provided on how to:

- **Explore Syntheses and Studies by Topic Areas:** As discussed, CLEAR organizes studies and research syntheses by topic area. Clicking on the Topic Areas tab generates a dropdown list of all the topic areas to be found in CLEAR. The [Reemployment](#) topic area focuses on studies of interventions designed to promote favorable employment outcomes for UI claimants, such as faster reemployment or higher earnings. Each topic area page on the CLEAR website links to the most recent topic area research synthesis (if one is available) and to recently reviewed studies that fall under that topic area.
- **Search for Studies:** CLEAR provides a broad library of study profiles and research syntheses. From the [Search for Studies](#) page, users can search for studies and syntheses by keywords and can refine searches to identify studies that focused on specific target populations (e.g., unemployed workers, low-skill workers), found specific results (e.g., favorable impacts on earnings, favorable impacts on employment), or received a specific causal evidence rating (e.g., *high*, *moderate*).
- **Learn more about RESEA Evidence:** CLEAR has a section specifically dedicated to RESEA. The [RESEA page](#) summarizes RESEA interventions or intervention components that have been the subject of published evaluations, reviewed by CLEAR and that have been assigned an intervention effectiveness rating. As of March 2023, three RESEA interventions have received *high* or *moderate* intervention effectiveness ratings on CLEAR: the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) program, job search assistance services, and UI claimant profiling.

How Can I Use CLEAR Content to Refine My RESEA Program?

The Reemployment topic area synthesis is an excellent place to learn about available, RESEA-relevant evidence. As in most CLEAR research syntheses, the [Reemployment Synthesis](#) includes an exhibit (referred to as “Table 1”) that describes the set of reemployment-related interventions examined in the synthesis (see Box 8).

Box 8. Using Research Syntheses to Identify Reemployment Interventions

Table 1. Key features of reemployment interventions examined

Intervention	Key features
Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) program	UI claimants selected to participate in REA receive up to three mandatory in-person sessions in which workforce staff assess their eligibility for UI benefits, provide an orientation to the American Job Center and its services, share labor market information, develop a reemployment plan, and make referrals to additional services. Failure to attend these REA sessions can affect continuance of benefits. In 2015, the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment program replaced REA, supplementing REA program services by providing direct reemployment services.
Job search assistance (JSA) services	UI claimants receive assistance and training in job search techniques, including, for example, job search workshops, preparing a resume, and interview training.
Reemployment bonuses	UI claimants receive a cash incentive for returning to work within a certain time frame.
Profiling	Sites identify UI claimants at higher risk of exhausting unemployment benefits and try to provide them with enhanced employment services. These services may include an orientation, providing labor market information, and referrals to job search training or resume training workshops.
Changes in employer contact requirements	UI claimants typically have to engage in job search and contact a certain number of employers to continue receiving unemployment compensation. Some interventions of this type represented more stringent requirements than usual practice: for example, the intervention required more employer contacts, verifying the contacts, or both. Some interventions of this type represented less stringent requirements than usual practice: for example, they required fewer or no employer contacts.

Source: [CLEAR, Reemployment Research Synthesis](#)

As shown in Box 9, a second exhibit in the [Reemployment Synthesis](#) (“Table 2”) summarizes evidence on the *effectiveness* of each intervention identified in Table 1. For each intervention, CLEAR shows the different UI claimant outcomes (e.g., reduction in UI benefit receipt, short-term employment, short-term earnings) and counts the number of studies that found favorable impacts (in green), unfavorable impacts (in red), mixed impacts (in orange), or null impacts (in grey). The Reemployment Synthesis also provides key takeaways for each intervention reviewed (see Box 10 below for an example).

Box 9. Using Research Syntheses to Learn about the Effectiveness of Reemployment Interventions

Table 2. Overview of the evidence base

Intervention	#	2		3		4		5		6	
		Reduction in UI benefit receipt		Short-term employment		Short-term earnings		Long-term employment ²		Long-term earnings ²	
REA	7	5 ^a	2 ^c	2 ^a	3 ^c	2 ^a	3 ^c	1 ^a		1 ^a	
JSA services	15	9 ^a	6 ^c	2 ^a	12 ^c	3 ^a	7 ^c	2 ^a	10 ^c	2 ^a	6 ^c
Reemployment bonuses	14 ¹	8 ^a	6 ^c	1 ^a	4 ^c	1 ^d	2 ^a	10 ^c	1 ^d	1 ^c	3 ^c
Profiling	8	6 ^a	1 ^c	1 ^b	1 ^a	4 ^c	2 ^b	3 ^a	4 ^c	1 ^b	n.a.
More stringent contact requirements	4	3 ^a	1 ^c	1 ^a	2 ^c		3 ^c		1 ^c		1 ^c
Less stringent contact requirements	2		1 ^c	1 ^b	1 ^a	1 ^c	1 ^a	1 ^c		1 ^c	1 ^c

Source: [CLEAR, Reemployment Research Synthesis](#)

Box 10. A “Key Takeaway” Example from the Reemployment Synthesis

► **Job search assistance (JSA) services had favorable impacts on all outcomes examined, but employment and earnings impacts varied over time.** A few JSA interventions had favorable impacts on employment or earnings in the short or long term. However, in most cases these impacts did not appear in all time periods examined. For example, impacts on quarterly earnings varied from quarter to quarter and could range from no significant impacts in some quarters to significant impacts of hundreds of dollars in other quarters, with no apparent pattern over time.

Source: [CLEAR, Reemployment Research Synthesis](#)

Box 11 provides an example of how all these pieces of information available on CLEAR might be used together to help identify effective program services.

Box 11. Example of Using CLEAR to Identify Effective Program Services

Suppose that staff from a state RESEA program want to learn more about the content of job search assistance (JSA) services in order to better understand how they might provide such services to their UI claimants. The [Reemployment Synthesis](#) provides a useful overview of this intervention (see Box 8) and the extent to which there is evidence of its effectiveness (see Boxes 9 and 10). However, the Synthesis contains limited information about what effective implementation of this intervention looks like in practice. What next?

Individual **study profiles** could be a good way for the state staff to develop a deeper understanding of JSA interventions. Each CLEAR study profile describes specific features of the intervention studied and presents a plain language summary of findings for each outcome included in the study. That information could help the state staff identify features of effective or promising interventions that they might wish to implement or evaluate for their own programs.

The state staff can locate relevant study profiles by reviewing the [Reemployment Synthesis Supplement](#), accessible from the [Reemployment Synthesis](#) page. The Supplement provides links to each study (including those focused on JSA interventions) that informed the Reemployment Synthesis. The Supplement is organized by intervention, making it straightforward to identify studies focused on JSA interventions.

Or the state staff could search directly for relevant study profiles from CLEAR’s [Search for Studies](#) page (see Box 7), typing “job search assistance” in the “Enter keywords” field and clicking the “Search” button. They can refine their search results to focus specifically on studies that received *high* or *moderate* causal evidence ratings and that identified a favorable impact of JSA services on reemployment outcomes.

Modeling High-Quality Evaluations and Effective Interventions

CLEAR resources can help RESEA staff and evaluators design and implement high-quality evaluations of RESEA programs or program components. As noted earlier, CLEAR publishes [Causal Evidence Guidelines](#) that CLEAR’s trained team of study reviewers use to rate studies of labor-related interventions, including RESEA and other reemployment programs. Program staff and evaluators can consult these evidence standards to ensure that their planned RESEA evaluations are likely to meet the CLEAR standards for generating credible evidence (i.e., receiving a *high* or *moderate* causal evidence rating). Program staff and evaluators might also benefit from reviewing the profiles of studies that

focused on similar interventions or similar outcomes and that also received a *high* causal evidence rating. Such studies can be useful models for states as they design and implement their own RESEA evaluations.

CLEAR also publishes guidelines for reviewing [implementation studies](#) and [descriptive studies](#), which do not attempt to assess the causal impact of an intervention.

Identifying Gaps in the Existing Research

Each synthesis of an evidence base in a given topic area concludes with a discussion of gaps in the existing research. It can be helpful to review these evidence gaps when planning a new study. When RESEA staff are interested in implementing a new intervention about which there is little pre-existing evidence, pairing an implementation study with an impact evaluation can provide an opportunity to help address identified knowledge gaps and determine what type of evaluation might be useful to consider. See Trutko et al. (2023) for more information on approaches to studying the implementation of RESEA programs.

In many topic areas, research gaps are common. As discussed in the Reemployment Synthesis, although most states have provided reemployment services for a long time, existing studies cover only a small share of the wide range of reemployment interventions that states have developed and implemented. State evaluations of RESEA programs can thus play an important role addressing gaps in reemployment research where they exist.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND EVALUATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

DOL is providing states with a range of resources to design and implement rigorous RESEA evaluations that are likely to produce high-quality evidence. Box 12 highlights several RESEA and CLEAR resources. Additional material can be found on the RESEA Evaluation and Evidence Resources page of DOL's [WorkforceGPS](#).

Box 12. RESEA Evaluation Technical Assistance and CLEAR Resources

- **RESEA Evaluation Technical Assistance Helpline:** The RESEA Evaluation Technical Assistance team is available to support states in all aspects of evaluation planning and implementation. Reach out directly with questions by emailing RESEA@abtassoc.com.
- **RESEA Evaluation Toolkit:** The Toolkit provides a comprehensive overview of evaluation design and the implementation process.
- **CLEAR Frequently Asked Questions:** This document provides answers to commonly asked questions about CLEAR and its content.
- **RESEA Webpage on CLEAR:** This page includes resources related to RESEA and CLEAR.
- **CLEAR Webinar:** This webinar provides an overview of how CLEAR supports Reemployment Services Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) programs.
- **CLEAR Contact Information:** This page includes contact information for questions or feedback about the CLEAR website.

REFERENCES

Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research. (2021). *CLEAR Frequently Asked Questions, Version 1.0*.

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ABOUT THIS SERIES

State agencies' evaluations of their RESEA interventions (i.e., the whole program or aspects of it) are integral to expanding the evidence base of effective service delivery strategies. This brief is part of a series developed to serve as a quick-reference tool for states planning, launching, and carrying out evaluations of their RESEA programs.

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