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JOB CORPS STUDENTS USE LIBRARY FACILITIES AT THE PITTSBURGH JOB CORPS CENTER.

Outcome Goal 1.2

Increase the Number of Youth Making a Successful Transition to Work

Overview

Studies reveal strong correlations among education levels, unemployment, and life-long earnings. DOL administers youth programs under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), including the Job Corps program, the youth formula grant program, and the Youth Opportunity Grant Program, as well as research and demonstration projects that address the needs of at-risk youth, both in and out-of-school, for career preparation, education, and employment.

Serving The Public

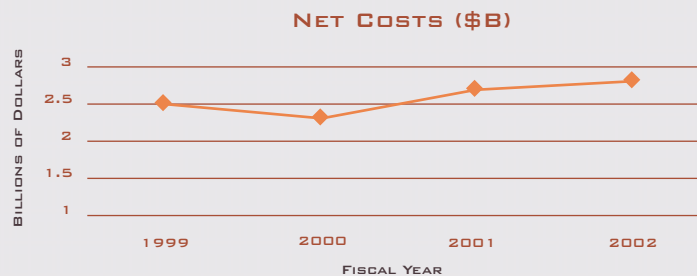
DOL's youth programs primarily serve those eligible low-income youth between the ages of 14 and 24 who are out-of-school, and those in-school youth who are at risk of dropping out, including youth with disabilities and others who may require additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment. The purpose of youth activities under the Workforce Investment Act is to assist youth in achieving academic and employment success and acquiring the skills they need to succeed in the workforce and become productive adults. DOL's youth programs provide an array of comprehensive workforce preparation services and support. Services to in-school youth help them remain in school, move into post-secondary education or advanced training, and ultimately transition into successful careers. For out-of-school youth, programs offer educational and employment training, support services and follow-up activities, providing them with the necessary skills to attain educational credentials (i.e., high school diploma or General Educational Development), participate in post-secondary training opportunities, and enter into gainful employment or a career, prepared to succeed in the workplace and transition successfully into adulthood.

WIA promotes strong public and private partnerships among diverse programs and community representatives, including employers, labor organizations and community-based youth service agencies through their participation on State and local workforce investment boards and youth councils. The Youth Council, as a subgroup of the local board, is responsible for planning and coordinating a broad array of local youth services in the community.

The Job Corps provides intensive, long-term training in a residential setting that includes a secure, drug-free learning environment; academic, vocational, and social skills development; medical care; and career and personal counseling. Job Corps students come from economically disadvantaged families, are primarily high school dropouts, and are considered the hardest-to-serve population. There are 118 Job Corps Centers located in 48 States plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. New centers have been funded and are under development in Rhode Island and Delaware. The Youth Opportunity Grants concentrate resources for a variety of youth services for all young people residing in 36 high-poverty urban neighborhoods, rural areas and Indian Reservations, and in selected migrant and seasonal farm worker communities.

Program Costs

The decrease in net costs in FY 2000 may be substantially attributed to the transition from the Job Training Partnership Act program to that under the Workforce Investment Act. The subsequent increase in costs in FY 2001 and FY 2002 reflect: (1) the increased spending by the States on program operations as the training tempo increased following the start-up activities in FY 2000; and (2) the start-up of a new youth opportunity grant program funded at \$300 million. FY 2002 costs reflect a continuation of increased spending in Youth Opportunity Grants and Youth Formula Grants.



DOL Challenges For The Future

The youth population between the ages of 15-24 years old is increasing. Unemployment levels among youth ages 16 to 24 have risen over the past two years, accounting for 53 percent of total U.S. job losses. Also, studies indicate that the rate of youth dropping out of school is increasing, apparently because youth are struggling to meet the new State standards for attaining a high school diploma.

In order to meet the challenge of serving young people most in need, DOL will continue to focus its efforts to improve the delivery of youth services under the Workforce Investment Act formula grant program, Job Corps, and the Youth Opportunity Grants. The Department will continue to assist DOL youth programs in sustaining the momentum and progress made over the last two years by focusing on these key areas:

- **Recruiting and Retaining Out-of-School Youth.** Recruiting, retaining, and providing increased services to dropouts and out-of-school youth will continue to be a priority for States and local areas. WIA services for these youth will continue to focus on the provision of educational and occupational skills training that will prepare them for postsecondary education, advanced training, and jobs with a career.
- **Providing Technical Assistance and Identifying Effective Practices.** The Department will provide technical assistance to States and local areas through academies, conferences, policy guidance issuances, and continued funding and dissemination of studies, reports, and other products that identify best practices in the field.
- **Engaging Additional Faith-Based and Community Organizations.** DOL will develop and implement creative outreach and coordination strategies, action plans, and service delivery priorities to promote greater participation of faith-based and community groups in the delivery of WIA services to eligible youth.

Assist Youth in Making the Transition to Work

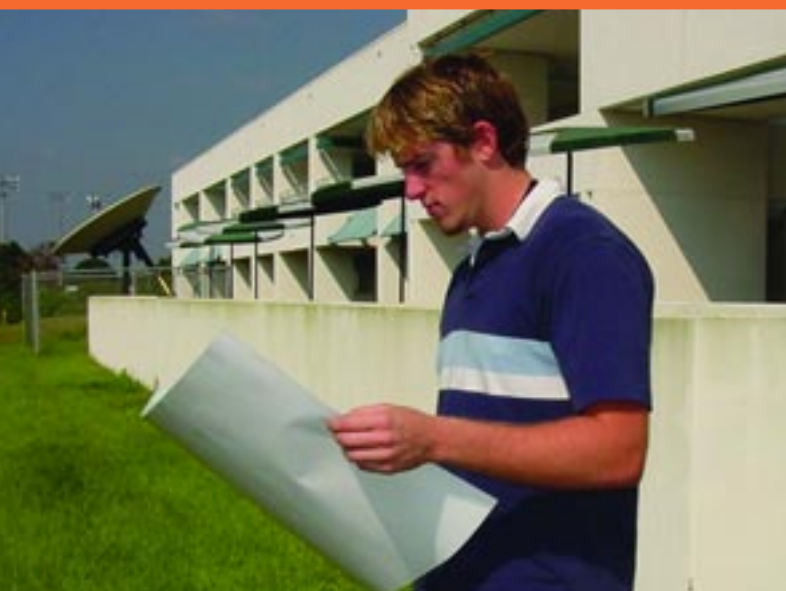
In Program Year 2001, of the 14-18 year-old youth registered under the WIA youth program, 50% will be either employed, in advanced training, post-secondary education, military service, or apprenticeships in the third quarter after program exit.

Results: This goal was achieved, with 50.2 percent of youth either employed, in advanced training, post-secondary education, military service, or apprenticeships in the third quarter after program exit.

Program Description: Title I of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) authorizes services for eligible low-income youth between the ages of 14-21 who have barriers to employment, including one or more of these criteria: deficient in basic skills; homeless, a runaway, or a foster child; pregnant or parenting; an offender; or a school dropout. The program also serves youth with disabilities and others who may require additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment. Programs and services are offered to both in and out-of-school youth. Service strategies prepare youth for post-secondary education by stressing strong linkages between academic and occupational learning, and preparing youth for employment. Local communities create opportunities for youth by providing required program elements, including: tutoring, alternative schools, summer employment, occupational training, work experience, supportive services, leadership development, mentoring, counseling, and follow-up services.

Analysis of Results: The Department established the target for this performance goal at 50 percent because the outcomes measured apply primarily to youth between the ages of 16 and 18 years old, a majority of whom are dropouts and out-of-school youth. Most 14-15 year old youth who receive WIA services are attending school, and the preferred results for this age group—the attainment of a diploma, General Educational Development (GED), or skill—are not measured by this goal. Studies have shown that the sluggish economy has taken the greatest toll among youth (ages 16-24), who account for 72 percent of the total jobs lost among all U.S. workers for the last year and a half. The drop-out status of many of the 16-18 year olds served by WIA increases the difficulty of placing them in post-secondary education, military service, or apprenticeships because they lack the requisite credentials, and the program's strategy focuses on placing these youth in employment or advanced training.

In developing the targeted level of performance for this goal, the Department considered its experience under the Job Training Partnership Act program, the predecessor to WIA, which measured the percentage of out-of-school youth who entered training, completed education, or returned to school following participation in the program. During Program Year 1999, the last year of the Job Training Partnership Act, only 44 percent of out-of-school youth enhanced their employability by returning to school or entering training, and only 57 percent entered employment at termination. The 50 percent of WIA youth between the ages of 14 and 18 who remain in employment, advanced training, post-secondary education, military service, or apprenticeships for at least nine months after their initial placement represents a significant advance over the initial placement results achieved under the Job Training Partnership Act.



Brad participated as a summer intern in the Rewarding Youth Achievement (RYA) component of Tampa's Youth Opportunity Grant Program. His internship gave him first hand experience through an opportunity "that isn't given out every day to young people who are trying to make important decisions in their lives." Brad spent five weeks rotating among seven local architecture firms. His experiences involved learning about various aspects of building and renovating local schools. He learned about all the skills needed as an architect, from drafting and design to construction. In a letter to the Tampa program, Brad affirmed how the internship "played a big part in helping me confirm my reasons for wanting to become an architect." Internships, like those in the RYA, help young people making important career decisions because they are "exposed sooner to an actual professional working environment."

PHOTO: DOL

Strategies: To improve retention for youth between the ages of 16 and 18, DOL is challenging State and local areas to use a three-pronged service strategy to address the needs of out-of school youth for employment, credentials, and advanced education:

- Helping them find gainful employment, while providing available support services;
- While employed, providing education and skills training needed to attain educational credentials, participate in post-secondary education, or become gainfully employed in a career with advancement opportunities; and
- Retaining out-of-school youth engaged in the required education/skills training activities until program completion.

Other strategies to assist out-of-school youth will include enhancing the use of One-Stop centers, developing close mentoring relationships, and identifying and disseminating effective practices for serving and retaining these young people.

Audits and Program Evaluations: The United States General Accounting Office issued a report, *Workforce Investment Act: Youth Provisions Promote New Service Strategies but Additional Guidance Would Enhance Program Performance* (GAO-02-413), on April 8, 2002. The report recommended that the Department issue guidance and provide assistance to State and local boards and youth councils to: 1) effectively recruit parents, youth, and employers to join the youth councils; 2) increase the number of responses to requests for proposals; 3) obtain and verify applicant eligibility information by sharing client information among agencies; 4) recruit and retain out-of-school youth to the WIA youth program and all youth into the One-Stop Career Centers; and 5) facilitate linkages between the board, youth council, and their required youth-serving partners. In response to these recommendations, DOL provided additional policy guidance and technical assistance to State and local areas; awarded competitive grants to 15 local boards and youth councils to develop and implement strategies to improve youth connections to the One-Stop system, and disseminated the resulting information; and collaborated with the Departments of Education and Health and Human services to encourage the creation of cross-cutting initiatives among programs.

In a September 2002 report, *Workforce Investment Act Performance Outcomes Reporting Oversight*, the Office of Inspector General raised concerns about whether the third party data reported by States for WIA performance were accurate and supportable. The Department generally agreed with the concerns raised by the Office of Inspector General and indicated that it believed that the concerns would be addressed with the deployment of a data validity and verification policy and tools that have been under development and are scheduled to be deployed in 2003.

The specific findings and recommendations of the reports as well as additional details on DOL's actions taken in light of these recommendations can be found in Appendix 3.

Goal Assessment and Future Plans: The retention measure for 14-18 year old youth will be discontinued as a goal because the diploma/GED measure is a more appropriate outcome measure to gauge success for this age group. Likewise, by establishing the achievement of academic credentials as a goal, it communicates the national importance of this measure for America's school age youth. ■

(Goal 1.2A — FY 2001 Annual Performance Plan)

Assist Youth in Making the Transition to Work

In Program Year 2001, of the 19-21 year-old youth registered under the WIA youth program, 75% will be employed in the third quarter after program exit.

Results: The goal was achieved. 75 percent of the 19-21 year-old youth served under the Workforce Investment Act youth program who were employed in the first quarter after program exit were employed in the third quarter after program exit.

Program Description: Title I of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) authorizes services for eligible low-income youth between the ages of 14-21 who have barriers to employment, including one or more of these criteria: deficient in basic skills; homeless, a runaway, or a foster child; pregnant or parenting; an offender; or a school dropout. The program also serves youth with disabilities and others who may require additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment. Programs and services are offered to both in and out-of-school youth. Service strategies prepare youth for post-secondary education by stressing strong linkages between academic and occupational learning, and preparing youth for employment. Local communities create opportunities for youth by providing required program elements, including: tutoring, alternative schools, summer employment, occupational training, work experience, supportive services, leadership development, mentoring, counseling, and follow-up services. Program Year 2001 activities resulted in increasing the numbers of youth being served to 365,300 from 262,200 the prior year, and steadily increasing expenditure rates when compared to Program Year 2000 expenditure levels.

Analysis of Results: The Department has set a high standard for performance with the goal of a 75 percent retention rate for this youth population, and the States have now met the retention goal for a second year in Program Year 2001. Program Year 2001 marks the first year when reported performance relied almost exclusively upon youth who entered the program and received services under the WIA program design, as compared to Program Year 2000 when many youth registrants were carried in from the prior Job Training Partnership Act program. Approximately half of the States exceeded their negotiated level of performance for this measure. The Department is encouraged by the sustained performance against this measure, since research shows that youth suffer a disproportionate and rapid impact during economic downturns when national unemployment rises overall.

Strategies: The Department presented strategies for enhancing program performance in numerous conferences and forums across the country, and worked directly with States experiencing data collection and reporting problems to resolve such issues. In an effort to improve the quality of youth programs, particularly in the area of performance management, Federal staff began conducting comprehensive onsite assessments of at least half of State and local programs to determine program effectiveness, identify technical assistance needs, and to identify and share effective practices. Preliminary indications point to the following major challenges remaining at the State level: 1) capacity to monitor local programs; 2) capacity to provide needed technical assistance and training; and 3) problematic management information and reporting systems. At the local level, the predominant issues include: 1) low performance outcomes in the older youth credential rate and the younger youth diploma or General

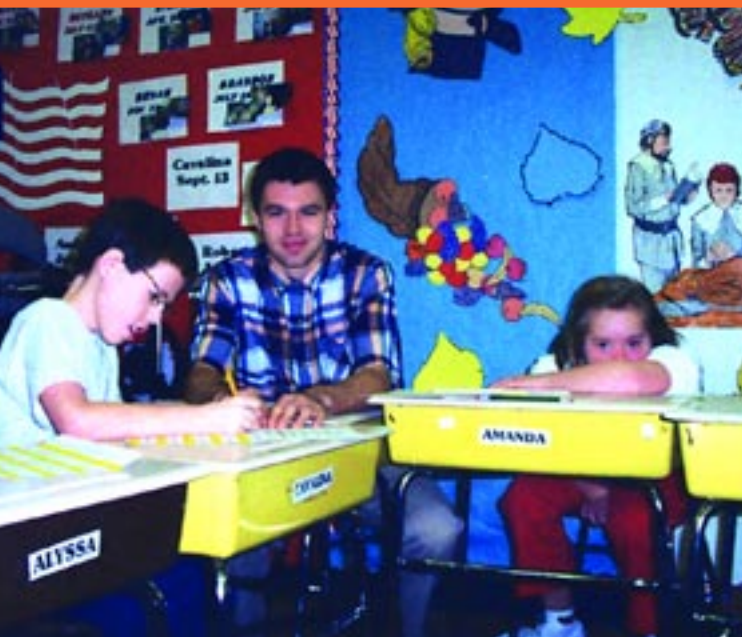


PHOTO: DOL/ETA

Jeremiah is an excellent example of how youth with disabilities can make a successful transition from a supported living environment to self-sufficiency and work. After joining the Southwest Training Services, Inc. Youth Employment Program in April 2000, Jeremiah began a paid work experience as a teacher's aide. His ability to relate to a lot of the students made him a very useful addition to the life skills class. That work experience led to a substitute aide position for the Intermediate Unit I at the school. After much help and support from One-Stop system partners, Green County Association for Retarded Citizens, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Public Welfare, and Southwest Training Services, Inc., Jeremiah's dream has become a reality. Now a twenty-year-old, Jeremiah has been hired as a full-time permanent teacher's aide. Jeremiah's perseverance gained State recognition and he was given the 2002 Governor's Achievement Award for Outstanding Performance in Workforce Investment Act Programs as the Youth Program Participant of the Year.

Educational Development (GED) rate; 2) ensuring that each of the 10 required program elements are available; and 3) inadequate services for youth in the One-Stops. A few of the promising practices identified include: State-funded youth One-Stops, Statewide youth councils, strong linkages to schools in local areas, and jointly funded projects that include WIA, HHS, juvenile justice, and education funds.

During Program Year 2001, States and local areas focused on more effective and targeted strategies for improving retention and placement of out-of-school youth based on the challenges identified in Program Year 2000, which included: 1) co-locating or connecting programs to community centers that offer a range of recreational and cultural activities; 2) developing close mentoring relationships with out-of-school youth; 3) providing engaging follow-up activities to keep out-of-school youth interested in career opportunities and connected to employment sources; and 4) enhancing out-of school youth use of One-Stop Career Centers.

Audits and Program Evaluations: The United States General Accounting Office issued the final report on *Workforce Investment Act: Youth Provisions Promote New Service Strategies but Additional Guidance Would Enhance Program Performance* (GAO-02-413) on April 8, 2002. The report recommended that the Department issue guidance and provide assistance to State and local boards to: 1) effectively recruit parents, youth, and employers on youth councils; 2) increase responses to requests for program funding proposals; 3) obtain and verify applicant eligibility information by sharing information among agencies; 4) recruit and retain out-of-school youth; and 5) facilitate linkages among the board, youth council, and required partners.

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The specific findings and recommendations of this report, as well as the status of the Department's response to these recommendations, can be found in Appendix 3.

Goal Assessment and Future Plans: In addition to this retention measure, the Department will institute an additional measure for the older youth population that will measure placement in employment in the first quarter after program exit. The goal for Program Year 2002 includes targets of 63 percent for placement in employment and 77 percent for retention in employment. ■

(Goal 1.2B — FY 2001 Annual Performance Plan)

Enhance Job Placement, Placement, Retention, and Average Wages for Job Corps Graduates

In Program Year 2001, 85% of Job Corps graduates will get jobs with entry average hourly wages of \$7.25 or be enrolled in education; 70% will continue to be employed or enrolled in education six months after their initial placement date. (Placement and Retention)

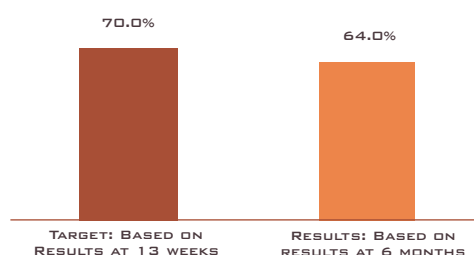
Results: The goal was substantially achieved. 90 percent of Job Corps graduates obtained jobs at an average hourly wage of \$7.96 or were enrolled in education, exceeding the targets for both of these indicators. 64 percent of graduates continued employment or were enrolled in education six months after their initial placement date.

Program Description: DOL's Job Corps program is an intensive, primarily residential training program for severely disadvantaged youth ages 16 to 24. Job Corps provides occupational skills and academic training, social education, and other support to some 68,000 participants at 118 centers. In accordance with the Workforce Investment Act, DOL continues to expand Job Corps' scope to provide career support services to program graduates for up to 12 months after graduation.

Analysis of Results: In Program Year 2001, the Department succeeded in placing Job Corps graduates into employment or further education. The graduate placement rate exceeded its target by five percentage points. Similarly, the average hourly wage rate exceeded the target by 71 cents per hour, virtually mirroring the prior year's hourly rate of \$7.97. Although placement and wage results for both program years were similar, the results are reflective of consistent strong performance in these areas.

Job retention six months after initial placement did not reach the 70 percent target. The Department established an indicator for the first time in Program Year 2001 to measure the six-month retention of Job Corps graduates in employment or education. Results from a 13-week retention period were relied upon for a baseline, on the assumption that six-month retention results would be comparable. For the previous year, the Department had measured retention for a 90-day period, and 67 percent of graduates remained in employment or educational programs for this length of time, below the target of 70 percent.

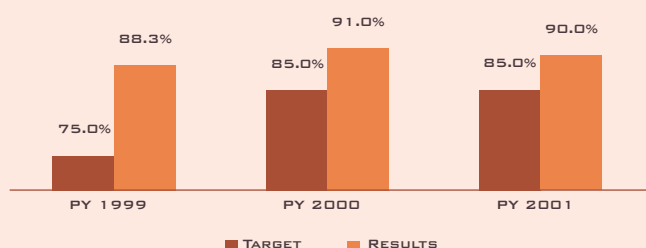
**JOB CORPS SIX MONTH PLACEMENT
PY 2001**



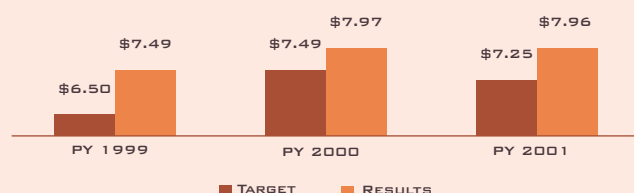
NOTE: THIS WAS THE FIRST YEAR FOR THIS MEASURE. THE PREVIOUS RETENTION MEASURE WAS FOR 13 WEEKS AFTER INITIAL PLACEMENT AND SERVED AS THE BASELINE FOR THE TARGET.

Several factors may have contributed to the placement retention results. Actual baseline data was not available to establish the six-month placement retention goal. The Department developed a new data collection system for this measure, and refined it during this first year of implementation. Further, DOL may have set a high target in light of economic conditions that could have influenced "new hire" activity among employers. DOL has restructured the service delivery system for Job Corps graduates, enhancing services to meet their broader career transition needs. While the retention results reflect a national average across all Job Corps centers, many

JOB CORPS GRADUATE PLACEMENT



JOB CORPS GRADUATE AVERAGE HOURLY WAGES AT INITIAL PLACEMENT



centers performed at or above the target. Job Corps' efforts to improve placement retention have placed greater focus on retaining students in the program to maximize academic achievement and skills attainment; customizing service delivery to meet individual student needs; and partnering with businesses to meet labor market demands and expand career exploration, work-based learning, and long-term employment opportunities.

The Office of Job Corps' Student Pay/Management Information System serves as the source for this data. This comprehensive data collection system is rigorously designed to ensure data reliability and integrity. Further, the system is monitored and reviewed by Job Corps national management, an independent research contractor retained to provide data verification services, and the Office of Inspector General.

Strategies: To maximize the benefits of the Job Corps program, the Department emphasizes a number of strategies to ensure students' long-term success. These strategies primarily focus on improving program quality and providing individualized services to meet students' needs. To improve program quality, strategies include integrating performance measurement into the competitive procurement process and maintaining partnerships with employers, communities, and educational institutions to create growth opportunities for graduates. Services to address individual needs include academic programs (including high school diploma programs), competency-based vocational training, work-based learning at employer sites, employability skills development, information technology skills training, counseling/support services, driver's education, child care support, and support for placement and transitional services after departure.

In the future, to address graduates' long-term attainment, the Department will continue to emphasize academic and vocational credential attainment, high quality placements and wages, enhanced career offerings that better meet

labor market demands, improved career transition services, and strong partnerships to support graduates' career advancement.

The quality and effectiveness of performance improvement strategies is assured through formal on-site assessments, detailed action planning at the service delivery level, and rigorous and frequent performance monitoring of data and key activities. For example, vocational training programs are evaluated continuously and intensively to ensure the highest quality of instruction and the incorporation of state-of-the-art equipment and industry standards. DOL, along with private consultants and industry, regularly assesses the Job Corps program's vocational outcomes and continues to make changes in vocational offerings where performance is less than satisfactory. Moreover, new, innovative vocational offerings that are identified through labor market research and/or business advisory groups continue to be offered to enhance the job placement and job retention results of Job Corps graduates.

Academic performance is being enhanced by Job Corps' High School Diploma Initiative. The positive relationship between labor market success and the attainment of a high school diploma is well documented. Since the inception of this initiative, the number of high school diplomas attained has already increased.

Goal Assessment and Future Plans: In Program Year 2002, the targeted performance levels for placement in employment or education will increase to 90 percent and for average hourly wages at placement to \$8.20, while the six-month employment retention target will be 65 percent. A new indicator will also be introduced pertaining to the attainment of high school diplomas by Job Corps students, to measure the outcomes of an interagency agreement with the Department of Education. ■

(Goal 1.2C — FY 2001 Annual Performance Plan)

Wendy was born in McAllen, Texas but raised across the border in Reynosa, Mexico until she was sixteen. Her brother Christian was enrolled at the Gary Job Corps center and suggested to Wendy that she might like to go to school there as well. She spoke little English, but was positive and determined to succeed. After earning her G.E.D. in the Business Office Technology program, Wendy accepted a Work Based Learning assignment with RS Information Systems, which led to a permanent job as their webmaster. Although Wendy went on from there to earn a bachelor's degree and launch her own IT company, she still states enthusiastically, "Everything I am and everything I have is through Job Corps".



JOB CORPS STUDENTS ATTEND CLASSES LEADING TO A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA.

PHOTO: MICHAEL CARPENTER