

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Committee on
Education and Labor, House of
Representatives

February 2008

DISCONNECTED YOUTH

Federal Action Could
Address Some of the
Challenges Faced by
Local Programs That
Reconnect Youth to
Education and
Employment



Highlights of [GAO-08-313](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

While most young people successfully transition to adulthood, a significant number of youth are disconnected from school and employment. These youth are more likely than others to engage in crime, become incarcerated, and rely on public systems of support. Several federal agencies oversee a number of programs and grants that assist local programs in serving this population at the local level. GAO reviewed the following: (1) characteristics of locally operated programs that serve disconnected youth, (2) the key elements of locally operated programs to which directors attribute their success in reconnecting youth to education and employment, and (3) challenges involved in operating these programs and how federal agencies are helping to address these challenges. GAO interviewed officials from four federal agencies, experts, and directors of 39 local programs identified by agencies and experts as helping youth meet educational and employment goals.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Department of Labor (Labor) work with states and workforce investment boards to better ensure they have the information and guidance needed to develop and implement contracts that allow local programs to serve youth who are in need of more assistance than others while still achieving performance goals. Labor agreed with our recommendation and identified several steps it plans to take to implement it.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-313](#). For more information, contact Cornelia Ashby at (202) 512-7215 or ashbyc@gao.gov.

DISCONNECTED YOUTH

Federal Action Could Address Some of the Challenges Faced by Local Programs That Reconnect Youth to Education and Employment

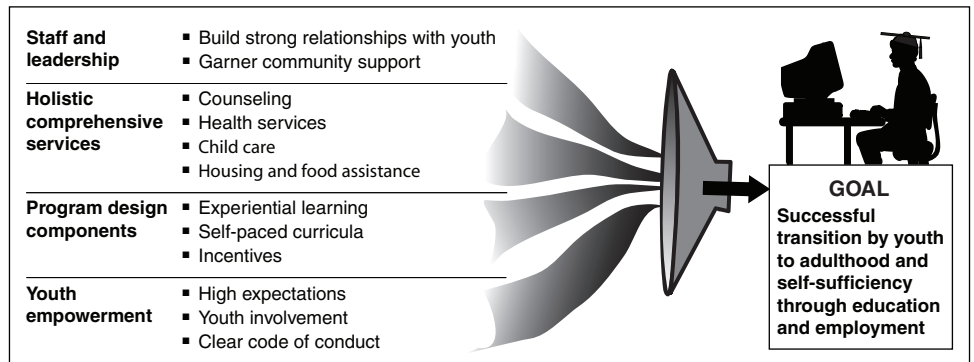
What GAO Found

The 39 local programs GAO reviewed differed in their funding sources and program structure, yet shared some characteristics, such as years of experience serving youth. These programs received funding from multiple sources: federal, state, local, and private, although most relied on some federal funds. They were structured differently—for example, some were community-based organizations that provided services on a daily basis, some were charter schools, and some offered residential living. Most of the programs were created to address local concerns such as youth homelessness or dropout rates, and many had at least 10 years of experience serving youth.

Program directors GAO interviewed attributed their success in reconnecting youth to education and employment to several key elements of their programs. These included effective staff and leadership; a holistic approach to serving youth that addresses the youth’s multiple needs; specific program design components, such as experiential learning opportunities and self-paced curricula; and a focus on empowering youth.

Many of the 39 local program directors reported common challenges in operating their programs—the complex circumstances of their participants, service gaps, funding constraints, and management of federal grants—that increased federal coordination efforts under way may help address. Most of the 15 directors that relied on Labor’s Workforce Investment Act Youth funds reported that meeting performance goals within 1-year time frames that workforce investment boards often write into contracts hinders their ability to serve youth with great challenges, who may need more time to obtain skills. Labor officials reported that they intend for workforce investment boards to develop longer-term contracts to help programs serve hard-to-employ youth. Labor has provided limited technical assistance and is considering issuing guidance on this issue, but has not established a time frame to do so. Federal agencies have recently intensified their coordination efforts, which may help local programs faced with challenges managing across multiple federal grants.

Key Elements of Local Programs Cited by 39 Program Directors in Reconnecting Youth to Education and Employment



Source: GAO analysis of information provided by 39 local program directors; Images (Art Explosion).

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Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|--|
| CCJJD | Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention |
| GED | General Educational Development |
| HHS | Department of Health and Human Services |
| WIA | Workforce Investment Act |
| YO | Youth Opportunity |

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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

February 28, 2008

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

A significant number of American youth are not in school and not working. Some of these young people may have become disconnected from education and employment through incarceration, aging out of foster care, dropping out of high school, or homelessness. As a result, these “disconnected” youth may face difficulties in successfully transitioning to adulthood and self-sufficiency.¹ Not only does this lead to negative outcomes for the youth themselves, but for communities and the nation as a whole. Disconnected youth are more likely than other youth to engage in criminal activities, become incarcerated, and rely on public systems of support.

Federal, state, and local governments as well as private entities are involved in helping to put these youth on a path to self-sufficiency through education and/or employment. Several federal departments oversee a number of federal grant programs in the areas of education, employment, foster care, juvenile justice, and homelessness that can serve this population at the local level. State and local governments assist in the delivery of services to youth at this local entry point. In addition, federal, state, and local collaborations exist that bring together various agencies and programs with the aim of better coordinating services to help these youth.

To respond to your interest in the federal role in improving outcomes for disconnected youth, we looked at the following questions: (1) What are some characteristics of locally operated programs that serve disconnected youth? (2) What are the key elements of locally operated programs to

¹ There is not a commonly accepted definition of disconnected youth. For the purposes of this study, we define disconnected youth as youth aged 14 to 24 who are not in school and not working, or who lack family or other support networks.

which program directors attribute their success in reconnecting youth to education and employment? (3) What challenges are involved in implementing and operating these programs and how are federal agencies helping to address these challenges?

To conduct this work, we asked federal agency officials and 11 experts on youth issues to identify local entities that are operating programs or initiatives with federal or other funding that have been successful in helping disconnected youth reach educational or employment goals. We asked the experts and agency officials, on the basis of their experience and expertise, to identify local programs that could serve as examples or models for expansion or replication; rigorous program evaluations were generally not available. The experts were selected for their understanding of and range of perspectives on youth issues as well as their knowledge of efforts under way at the local level. We identified and interviewed officials from four primary federal agencies that support programs working with this population: the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), Justice, and Education. We selected these agencies based on their legislative mandate to administer relevant federal programs, our previous work, reports from the Congressional Research Service and the White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth,² and discussions with federal officials. We reviewed relevant appropriation and other laws, regulations, and documents pertaining to the key federal programs and coordinating bodies involved with assisting disconnected youth, and synthesized information from interviews with appropriate federal officials.

Out of 100 programs that were identified, we interviewed 39 directors of locally operated programs using a standard set of questions. We selected programs that were geographically diverse, and that represented both urban and rural locations. We also selected programs with a range of approaches to working with disconnected youth, such as employment skills training programs, alternative education programs, transitional living programs, and programs that targeted different subpopulations of disconnected youth in 16 states and the District of Columbia. See appendix I for a complete list of the 39 programs. We conducted in-person interviews with directors and youth participants in 19 of these programs, and completed the remaining interviews with directors by phone. See

² In December 2002, the President of the United States established the White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth to develop for his consideration a comprehensive federal response to the problems of youth failure, under existing authorities and programs, with a focus on enhanced agency accountability and effectiveness.

appendix II for more information on our scope and methodology. We conducted this performance audit from May 2007 to February 2008 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Results in Brief

The 39 local programs we reviewed received funding from a range of government and private sources, and differed in their program structure, yet shared some characteristics. These youth-serving programs received funding from federal, state, local, and private sources. Nearly half of the 39 local youth-serving programs we reviewed received a combination of funding from these sources, and all but 6 of the programs received some federal funding. Some federal funding sources required programs to follow a specific model or offer a standard set of services, while others allowed programs to use funding more flexibly. The programs also varied in their program structure. For example, several programs were community organizations that provided specific training for the youth at their organization during the day. Some were established as charter schools, and others were residential programs, most often providing transitional housing to runaway and homeless youth. Some of the programs were a combination of these different approaches. Within these different program structures, select programs also targeted their efforts to specific youth subpopulations, such as court-involved youth. Yet despite differences, these programs shared some specific characteristics. For example, all of the programs we reviewed were created to meet the needs of local youth such as addressing youth homelessness and high school dropout rates. Most of the programs had also operated for several years and provided ancillary services, such as counseling, in addition to employment and education assistance, to address the multiple needs of their youth participants.

While varying types of local programs serve disconnected youth, program directors we interviewed reported similar elements of their programs that are key in reconnecting youth to education and employment, including effective staff and leadership, a holistic approach to serving youth that addresses their multiple needs, specific program design components, and a focus on empowering youth. Nearly all 39 program directors cited effective staff as a key element in building supportive relationships with the youth in their programs. Many of the youth we spoke with told us that

they continued to participate in their programs because the staff helped establish goals and provided a positive and supportive environment. In addition, program leadership also played a key role in maintaining successful programs and garnering community support. To address the multiple needs of the youth participants, to the extent possible, many programs approached the youth's needs holistically, incorporating support services, such as counseling, either on-site or in collaboration with other service providers in the community. Many program directors also attributed their success in working with youth to specific program design components, such as experiential learning, which helps to engage and retain youth by emphasizing concepts taught in the classroom with hands-on learning opportunities through community service projects and on-site training. Finally, program directors told us that their staff empowers youth participants by setting high expectations, establishing a clear code of conduct, and strengthening their leadership skills through various program operation activities, such as outreach and recruitment efforts.

Many program directors also reported common challenges in implementing and operating their programs, specifically addressing the complex circumstances of their programs' participants, gaps in services at the community level, constraints on funding, and managing federal grants. The complex issues experienced by the youth—such as mental health issues and low academic skills—were frequently cited by program directors as challenges they face in reconnecting youth to educational and employment goals. For example, one program director told us the youth in her program on average test at or below a sixth grade level in reading and math, a fact that affects the program's ability to help these youth achieve educational and employment outcomes. Program directors we interviewed, regardless of their geographic location, cited service gaps for disconnected youth in their communities, particularly in the areas of mental health treatment, housing, and transportation. Local programs we reviewed also reported that funding constraints from all sources as well as unpredictable funding levels have created significant challenges for them to keep pace with demand for services and to plan for the future. Funding for many of the key federal programs we reviewed that serve disconnected youth has remained the same or declined since 2000. In addition, many of the directors of programs receiving Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth funding—one of the larger federal funding sources that can be used to assist disconnected youth—noted that meeting certain youth performance goals within contract time frames discouraged them from serving youth who may need additional time and assistance to achieve specified outcomes. Labor officials acknowledged that the workforce investment boards—entities that contract with and oversee local programs—often issue 1-year contracts that may unintentionally

discourage programs from working with lower-skilled youth to meet performance goals. Labor officials noted that in most cases there is no requirement to achieve performance goals within 1 year, and Labor's intent is for workforce investment boards to develop longer-term contracts to help programs serve hard-to-employ youth. Labor has provided limited technical assistance and is considering issuing guidance on this issue, but has not established a time frame to do so. Labor officials also said that anticipated changes in federal performance goals may help to address this issue by better capturing improvements made by youth at all skill levels. Last, many local programs faced challenges managing multiple federal funding sources, such as working across varying eligibility and reporting requirements. In recent years, at the federal level, existing and new federal initiatives have intensified efforts to coordinate federal youth programs and provide assistance to state and local youth-serving programs, which may help to address some of the challenges faced by local programs.

This report contains a recommendation to Labor to improve implementation of the WIA Youth program by working with workforce investment boards to better ensure they have the information and guidance needed to develop and implement contracts that allow local programs to serve youth who are in need of more assistance than others while still achieving performance goals. We provided a draft of this report to Labor, HHS, Justice, and Education for review and comment. Labor agreed with our recommendation, indicating it will work with workforce investment boards to identify constraints, issue guidance in the spring of 2008 for the workforce investment system on developing contracts with local service providers, and provide technical assistance to support the implementation of the guidance. HHS provided information about a Web site available to communities that we added to the report. Labor, HHS, and Education provided technical comments that we incorporated where appropriate. Justice had no comments on the draft report.

Background

While most youth successfully transition to adulthood, many youth become disconnected from school and work, or social supports,³ and experience challenges in making this transition. Some of these youth are

³ Social networks of family, friends, and communities can provide assistance in the form of employment connections, health insurance coverage, tuition, and other supports such as housing and financial assistance. See Adrienne Fernandes, *Vulnerable Youth: Background and Policies*, Congressional Research Service, Washington, D.C.: April 24, 2007.

more likely than others to remain low-income, to lose jobs during economic downturns, and to engage in criminal activities, antisocial behavior, and teenage parenting. No single estimate exists on the total number of disconnected youth because of varying definitions, distinct time periods from which data are drawn, and the use of different data sources. However, researchers' estimates of the number of disconnected youth range from 2.3 million to 5.2 million.⁴

Disconnected youth encompass a broad population that may include high school dropouts, homeless and runaway youth, incarcerated youth, or youth who have aged out of the foster care system. Youth of different races and ethnicities are represented among this youth population. However, research studies show that African-American males constitute a disproportionate share of the population. For example, many young African-American males experience high incarceration rates, and African-Americans are generally overrepresented in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.⁵ Many young women also become disconnected to assume parenting responsibilities. In addition, the risk of disconnection is particularly high among youth with emotional disturbances and learning disabilities, many of whom have not mastered basic literacy skills. These youth have higher dropout rates and poorer employment outcomes than other youth.

To assist youth transitioning to adulthood, direct services are provided at the local level with the support of federal, state, local, and private funding sources. A range of local entities, such as community-based organizations and charter schools, in urban and rural communities nationwide, provide services to reconnect these youth to education and employment.

⁴ The 2.3 million figure is based on data from March 2006 cited in *Vulnerable Youth: Background and Policies*. The 5.2 million figure is based on 2001 data, cited in Andrew Sum, Ishwar Khatiwada, Nathan Pond, and Mykhaylo Trub'skyy, *Left Behind in the Labor Market: Labor Market Problems of the Nation's Out-of-School, Young Adult Populations*, Center for Labor Market Studies (Northeastern University: November 2002). These estimates refer to youth aged 16 to 24, which differs from the definition for youth (aged 14 to 24) used in this report, and are derived from a dataset that includes the civilian, non-institutionalized population.

⁵ See GAO, *African American Children in Foster Care: Additional HHS Assistance Needed to Help States Reduce the Proportion in Care*, [GAO-07-816](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 11, 2007), for more information on overrepresentation of African-American children in foster care.

Role of Federal Agencies in Assisting Local Efforts

Multiple federal agencies play a role in providing funding and assistance to local programs that serve disconnected youth. The White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth identified 12 federal agencies that fund over 300 programs that assist local communities in serving disadvantaged youth in some capacity. However, four agencies—the Departments of Labor, HHS, Education, and Justice—play a primary role and contain some of the largest youth-serving grant programs in terms of funding.⁶

Despite having distinct missions, these four agencies share the common goal of reconnecting youth to education and the workforce, and each works to accomplish this goal by administering multiple programs. (See table 1 for a listing of key federal grant programs that serve disconnected youth.)

- Labor’s workforce programs provide funding for both workforce training and education services for youth up to age 24, including youth involved in the juvenile justice and criminal justice systems, school dropouts, and homeless youth.
- HHS’s grant programs serve runaway and homeless youth up to age 21 or youth who have aged out of foster care or are likely to age out. These grants fund local programs that have education and workforce components, and also assist youth in connecting to housing and long-term support networks.
- Education’s various related grant programs focus on youth who are homeless; neglected, delinquent, or at risk; out of school; or incarcerated in a state prison within 5 years of release or parole eligibility. The programs facilitate youths’ enrollment and success in school and vocational programs.
- Justice’s grant programs serve those youth 17 and under who are involved in or at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. Grant programs administered by Justice aim to help youth make the successful transition out of the juvenile justice system and on to education and workforce pathways.

In total, these programs received over \$3.7 billion in appropriated funds in 2006. Labor’s Job Corps program accounted for almost half—\$1.6 billion—

⁶ Other federal agencies also play an important role in funding programs that serve disconnected youth, including the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Corporation for National and Community Service, among others.

of these appropriations, and its WIA Youth Activities accounted for nearly \$1 billion. Some of the programs serve a broad subsection of youth, including some who may not be disconnected per our definition, such as young adults over 24 and in-school youth. See appendix III for more information on key federal grant programs' eligibility criteria and purposes.

Table 1: Key Federal Grant Programs That Serve Disconnected Youth

| Agency or office | Federal grant | Appropriated funds, in millions of dollars (2006) |
|---|--|---|
| Department of Labor | | |
| Office of the Secretary | Job Corps | \$1,573.3 |
| Employment and Training Administration | WIA Youth Activities | \$940.5 |
| Employment and Training Administration | YouthBuild | \$49.5 |
| Employment and Training Administration | Youth Offender Grants | \$49.1 |
| Employment and Training Administration | Youth Opportunity (Funding ended in 2003) | Not applicable |
| Department of HHS | | |
| Children's Bureau | Chafee Foster Care Independence Program | \$140 |
| Family and Youth Services Bureau | Runaway and Homeless Youth Program | \$102.9 |
| Department of Education | | |
| Office of Vocational and Adult Education | Adult Education Basic Grants to States ^a | \$564 |
| Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools | Grants to States for Workplace and Community Transition Training for Incarcerated Youth | \$22.8 |
| Office of Elementary and Secondary Education | Education for Homeless Children and Youth—Grants for States and Local Activities | \$61.9 |
| Office of Elementary and Secondary Education | Title I-D Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or at Risk—Grants for States and Localities | \$49.8 |
| Department of Justice | | |
| Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention | Part E Developing, Testing, and Demonstrating Promising New Initiatives and Programs | \$106 |
| Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention | Title II B—State Formula Grants | \$74.3 |
| Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention | Juvenile Accountability Block Grant | \$46.4 |
| Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention | Title V Community Prevention Block Grants | \$4.6 |

Source: GAO analysis of agency data.

^aThe Adult Education Basic Grants to States serves adults and out-of-school youth ages 16 and older.

Federal youth-serving agencies distribute funds to locally operated programs through varying mechanisms. Some programs first provide funds

to states, which are then passed to local units of government or programs. For example, Justice awards formula grants to states that can be used to fund projects for the development of more effective juvenile delinquency programs and improved juvenile justice systems. Juvenile justice specialists in each state administer the funding through subgrants to units of local government or local private agencies in accordance with legislative requirements. Similarly, Education, through the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of WIA, awards funds to local eligible providers through state education or labor agencies. Much in the same way, Labor allocates WIA Title I funds to states, which in turn distribute much of this money to their local workforce investment boards.⁷ These boards then award competitive contracts to youth providers. Other federal grants, such as Labor's YouthBuild program and HHS's Transitional Living Program⁸ are awarded through a competitive process in which local organizations submit grant proposals directly to the federal agencies.

Federal agencies also provide technical assistance and guidance to local programs. For example, to support programs that receive WIA funds, Labor provides online training courses through a contractor, including Web-based, interactive seminars and tutorials. Labor also provides targeted technical assistance to help local areas most in need by assisting them in identifying and correcting issues that are negatively affecting performance outcomes. Similarly, a training provider and a technical assistance provider assist HHS's Transitional Living Program grantees nationally by helping them to develop new approaches to serving youth, access new sources of funding, and establish linkages with other grantees that have similar issues and concerns. These providers also track trends, identify and share best practices, and sponsor conferences and workshops. To assist local programs in identifying successful program models, Justice maintains a database with information on evidence-based prevention programs that serve at-risk and court-involved youth across the country.

⁷ Local workforce investment boards are composed of representatives of businesses, local educational entities, labor organizations, community-based organizations, economic development agencies, and one-stop partners. WIA required states and localities to bring together federally funded employment and training programs into a single comprehensive workforce system, called the one-stop system.

⁸ The Transitional Living Program is one of three programs that constitute HHS's Runaway and Homeless Youth program.

All four federal agencies require local programs to report on their progress with youth by collecting data on youth outcomes, such as attainment of their General Educational Development (GED) credential or job placement, and some of these outcomes are tied to financial sanctions and incentives. For example, HHS requires Transitional Living Program grantees to record each youth's living situation, physical and mental health, and grade completed when the youth exits from the program, among other data elements. Sometimes data must pass through an intermediary agency such as a state education agency or local workforce investment board, and these entities may require additional data from programs for their own monitoring purposes. The federal programs collect this information to monitor the progress toward goals, and to ensure that local programs are serving the targeted population and spending money appropriately. Federal agencies may also affect local programs by setting specific penalties for programs or states that do not meet certain goals or benchmarks. These mechanisms are intended to encourage a high level of performance and accountability. For example, Labor negotiates performance goals with states for WIA Youth Activities, and if states do not meet 80 percent of those goals for more than 2 years in a row, monetary sanctions may be imposed. However, Labor offers states technical assistance after the first year when requested by states, and relatively few states have actually been financially penalized. States are also eligible to receive performance incentives if they exceed certain performance levels.

Local Programs We Reviewed Differed in Their Funding Sources and Program Structure, yet Shared Some Characteristics

The 39 local programs we reviewed received funding from a range of government and private sources, and differed in their program structure, yet shared some specific characteristics.⁹ The programs we reviewed received funding from federal, state, local, and private sources, and all but 6 programs received some federal funding. Some federal funding sources required programs to follow a specific model or offer a standard set of services, while others allowed programs to use funding more flexibly. The programs also varied in their program structure. For example, some were community-based organizations that provided services on a daily basis, some were charter schools, and some offered residential living. Within these different program structures, some programs also targeted their

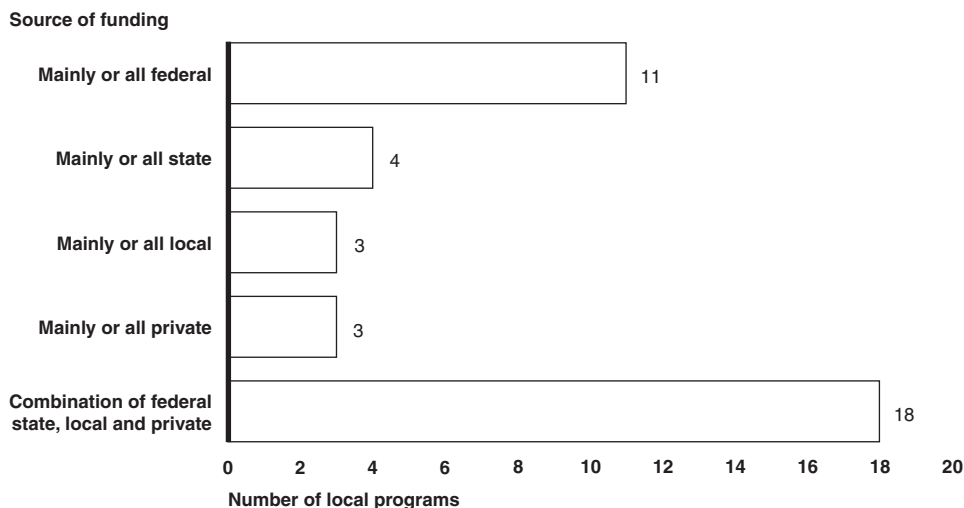
⁹ The programs we reviewed are not a representative sample of the range of programs that serve disconnected youth. See appendix II for more information on the selection criteria we used.

efforts to specific youth subpopulations, such as court-involved youth. Yet despite these differences, programs shared some characteristics. For example, all of the programs we reviewed were created to meet the needs of local youth such as addressing youth homelessness and high school dropout rates. Most of the programs had also operated for several years, and provided ancillary services in addition to employment and educational assistance to address the multiple needs of their youth participants.

Programs Received Funding from Federal, State, Local, and Private Sources

The 39 programs we reviewed received funding from a variety of sources, including federal, state, local, and private sources. Eleven of these programs reported that their funding primarily comes from federal sources, and nearly half received a combination of federal, state, local, and private funding. All but 6 of the programs in our review received some federal funding. Figure 1 summarizes the sources of funding for the local programs we reviewed.

Figure 1: Primary Sources of Funding for the 39 Programs We Reviewed



Source: GAO analysis of self-reported information provided by 39 local program directors.

In some cases, federal funding sources may require programs to follow a specific model or offer a standard set of services, and in other cases federal funding can be used more flexibly. For example, all of Labor’s Job Corps centers feature campus-like settings with youth housed in dormitories and a similar model for guidance and support at all sites to help youth achieve long-term employment. Similarly, HHS’s Transitional Living Program grantees are required to offer a specific set of services, either directly or by referral, to youth in their programs, including

instruction in budgeting, housekeeping, menu planning, food preparation, and parenting. By contrast, Education's Adult Education Grants, which serve both adults and out-of-school youth ages 16 and older, support workplace literacy services, GED instruction, family literacy services, or English-language learning programs and can be delivered by public schools, community colleges, libraries, or other providers.

The 39 Programs We Reviewed Were Structured Differently to Provide Employment and Educational Services to Youth

The 39 programs we reviewed structured their services to youth in different ways. For example, some programs were community organizations that provided specific training for youth at their organization during the day. Some were established as charter schools, and some were residential programs, most often providing transitional housing to homeless and/or runaway youth. Many of the programs were a combination of these different approaches. For example, one charter school also provided residential facilities for youth. Another program with a primary focus on providing employment opportunities to youth also had a charter school on the premises. Depending in part on the structure of the program, the programs varied in size, length of involvement for youth, and the extent of follow-up they conducted with exiting participants.

Several of the programs we reviewed were community organizations that worked to improve the employment outcomes of youth by helping them to gain the skills needed to be successful in the workplace. They generally provided a range of employment training opportunities to youth during the day, such as teaching youth interviewing techniques, and how to develop a résumé and work in a team environment. Some programs provided vocational training to youth participants in certain industries, such as construction or health care, to teach work skills. To the extent possible, some programs also provided youth with on-the-job training by placing them in internships and employment opportunities. In addition to employment training and placement, several of the programs also assisted youth in meeting their educational goals by providing them with opportunities to earn a GED credential or high school diploma either on-site or in collaboration with other organizations in the community. Figure 2 describes a community organization we visited in Boston that works to improve employment outcomes for youth.

Figure 2: Illustration of a Community Organization in Boston, Massachusetts

Youth Opportunity Boston (Boston, Massachusetts)

Established in 1997, Youth Opportunity (YO) Boston is a community-based organization that helps court-involved youth between the ages of 14 and 24. With multiple challenges and many barriers to helping youth achieve immediate success, YO Boston's service population is among the most difficult to serve. Many of the youth are high school dropouts, have spent time in detention facilities, and lack the basic skills needed for entry-level employment, and more than 80 percent are involved with gangs. The program was initially funded by Labor's Youth Opportunity demonstration grant. However, this grant ended in 2005. Currently, the program is funded by state and local funding sources. At the time of our review, the program served about 600 court-involved youth on an annual basis and employed 15 permanent staff and 17 temporary staff.

Staff meet with youth while they are still in detention facilities to develop a relationship and make a plan for their re-entry back into the community. Youth admitted in the program are provided with a range of services, including employment training, case management, and educational preparation. Youth also participate in YO Boston's Transitional Employment Services program—a multitiered, subsidized employment program—that places youth in group “team-based work” with various community partners. Youth are then placed in internships with nonprofits and small companies that may hire the youth and pay their wages. Some of the group projects that youth have participated in include working at a nonprofit that provides clothing and goods to children in foster care, painting a stadium, landscaping public land, and producing a newspaper for the program. During our visit to the program, we observed a cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) course taught to youth by the city's emergency medical services and police departments. These youth were being trained in this because they are often the first individuals at a violent crime scene. This also gives youth the opportunity to positively contribute in the community. Most youth stay in the program for a minimum of 18 to 24 months. Though challenging because of the transient population served, the program does follow up quarterly with youth for up to 2 years after they exit the program through phone calls and home visits.

Source: GAO based on information from Youth Opportunity Boston.

Several of the programs were established as charter schools or nontraditional schools, often referred to as “alternative education schools,” to assist youth who have dropped out of traditional public schools. These programs typically allowed youth to learn in a small classroom-based setting. Some of these programs were selective and required youth to test at certain grade levels or have a certain amount of credits earned before they can be admitted into the program, and generally had a focus on academic and vocational education. Youth typically spent part of their time attending academic classes, such as math or reading classes, to achieve basic academic skills so they can pass the GED exam or earn a high school diploma. In addition to these academic classes, youth typically attended vocational classes to learn work skills and specific trades. To facilitate learning outside of the classroom, some of these schools provided youth with internships or employment opportunities in the community, or allowed youth to participate in service projects. Figure 3 describes a charter school we visited in Washington, D.C.

Figure 3: Illustration of a Charter School in Washington, D.C.

See Forever Foundation’s Maya Angelou Public Charter School (Washington, D.C.)

The See Forever Foundation was founded in 1997, and a year later it established the Maya Angelou Public Charter School for youth between the ages of 14 and 17 who have not succeeded in traditional schools. In particular, Maya Angelou Public Charter School helps to develop the academic, social, and employment skills youth need to build rewarding lives and promote positive change in their communities. The school, funded by local government and private funding sources, has four campuses—two for high school students, one for middle school students, and one at the Oak Hill Academy, a long-term secure facility for adjudicated youth. For the 2007-2008 school year, Maya Angelou Public Charter School serves approximately 475 students at its four campuses and employs 125 staff to work with these youth. At least half of these youth may be low-income, involved in the juvenile justice or foster care systems, in need of special education services, or may have failed school at one point in time.

The formal school day begins at 9:00 a.m. and runs until 4:30 p.m. The program offers after-school academic enrichment activities, vocational programs, and recreational programs until 7:15 p.m. 4 days a week. Over 200 tutors in the community come to the school campuses 3 days a week to provide one-on-one tutoring to students. Maya Angelou Public Charter School high school campuses release students early on Wednesdays to allow them to participate in paid internships. The school provides students with a minimum of 1 hour of group counseling each week to help them address barriers to their academic success. Gender-segregated, group-based residences are available during the school week to approximately 23 students who have experienced obstacles in their school attendance, including chronic truancy and difficult situations at home. The length of enrollment varies, but as of this year, youth can be admitted to the school as young as 6th grade, and attend classes on the various campuses for up to 7 years. Last year, 80 percent of 9th to 12th graders at the high school operated at the 6th grade level or below. While students work at their own pace, the school aims to accelerate performance with the hope of moving students through as many as two grade levels each year. Advancement is based on academic proficiency and the speed at which the students are able to achieve their objectives.

Source: GAO based on information from Maya Angelou Public Charter School.

Many of the programs we reviewed provided residential living accommodations and services to youth to help them develop the skills necessary to transition to independence. Many of these programs were transitional living programs that served runaway and/or homeless youth. Living accommodations for youth in transitional living programs typically vary and can include group homes, maternity group homes, or apartments that are supervised by staff. Several of these programs were small, with fewer than 20 youth residents. Some programs were structured and established ground rules that participants must follow. To address the multiple needs of these youth, these programs generally offered a range of services, including educational opportunities, such as GED preparation, postsecondary training, or vocational education; and basic life skills building, such as budgeting and housekeeping. The length of time youth participants stayed in a program varied; some youth stayed on average 4 months, while others stayed a year and a half or longer, depending on their

needs and certain eligibility criteria.¹⁰ Figure 4 describes a transitional living program we visited in Portland, Oregon. In addition, one residential program we reviewed was targeted to court-involved youth. Labor's Job Corps program also provided residential facilities to youth in that program.

Figure 4: Illustration of a Transitional Living Program in Portland, Oregon

Janus Youth Programs Willamette Bridge House (Portland, Oregon)

Janus Youth Programs created the Willamette Bridge House, a transitional living program, in 1987 to provide stable housing for homeless youth between the ages 16 and 20 who were not in foster care or some other system. The program is funded through grants provided by HHS and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, in addition to other federal, state, local, and private funding sources. The program works with 7 youth at any given time, and employs 6 full-time staff working with these youth. In addition to the 7 youth residing in the Willamette Bridge House, the program also works with 15 to 20 youth at any given time who are transitioning into their own apartments and need the program's help with basic fees, such as security and utility deposits. The youth served by the program include court and/or gang-involved youth, high school dropouts, pregnant or parenting youth, and other youth subpopulations.

To determine which youth will be accepted into the program, staff assess each young person's motivation to get off the streets. Once in the program, youth are required to fulfill 42 hours of work each week, which can include basic education, GED preparation, employment, or any other activities agreed to with their case manager. The program provides a range of services: individualized case management, parenting classes, budgeting assistance, job and life skills training, basic food shopping and preparation, and a savings plan. Youth can stay in the program up to 18 months. While in the program, youth and staff work together to secure stable, permanent housing options upon exit from the program. The program conducts formal follow-up with participants 6 and 12 months after they exit.

Source: GAO based on information from Janus Youth Programs.

Within these different program structures, some of the programs we reviewed targeted their efforts to specific youth subpopulations. For example, a few programs provided support to youth aging out of the foster care system, who typically lack social supports, to help them make a successful transition to adulthood and self-sufficiency. These programs may offer a range of support services, such as food and housing assistance, educational opportunities, and advocacy. Other programs worked to improve the outcomes of court-involved youth. Some of these programs varied in structure and approach to working with youth. For example, one program operating a juvenile residential facility offered youth vocational education and life skills training, as well as a full range of

¹⁰ Average length of stay is longer for transitional living programs than for emergency shelters for youth.

academic courses and diploma options. Other programs provided court-involved youth with on-the-job training through their vocational curricula and service projects.

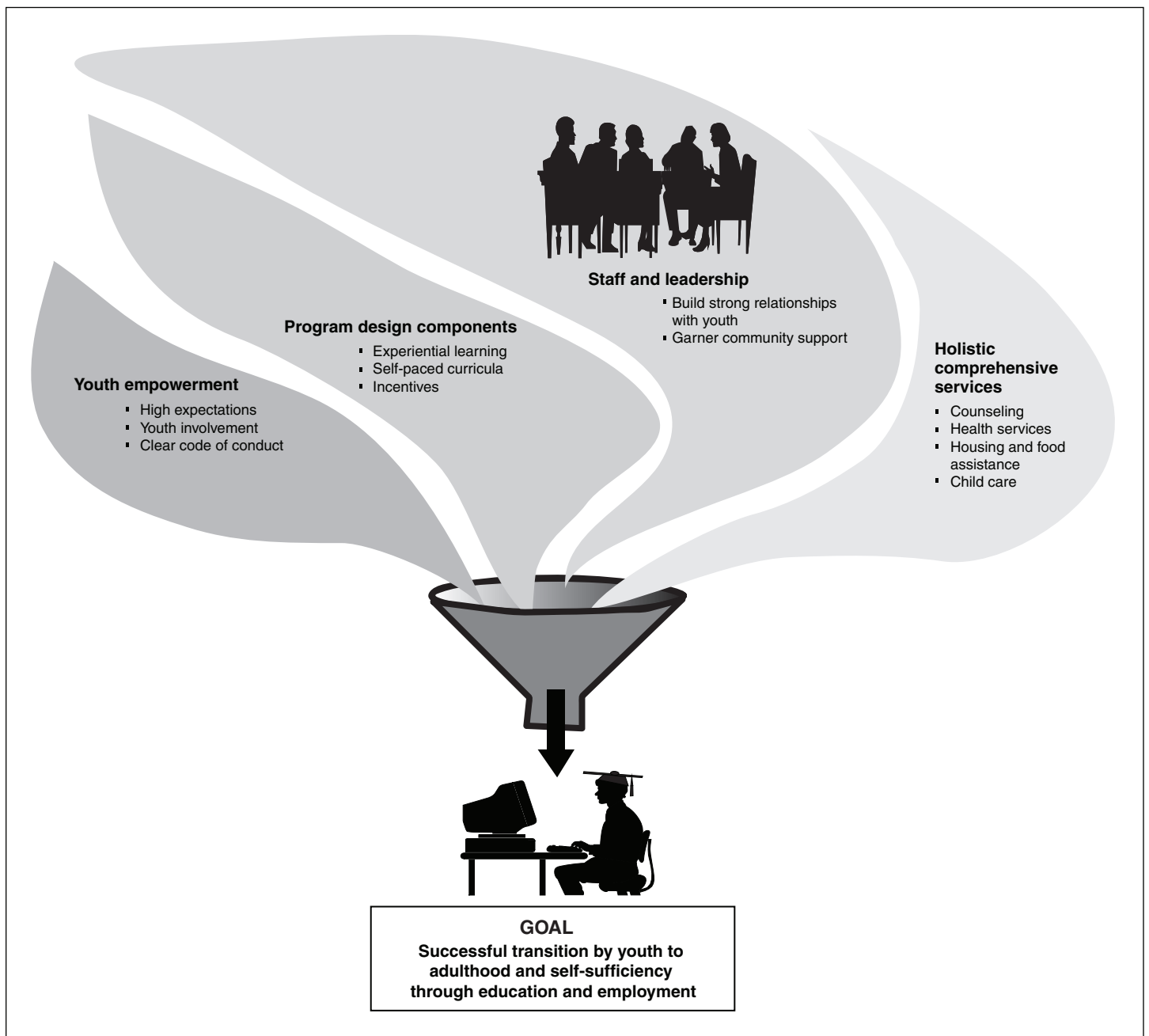
Despite Different Approaches to Serving Youth, Local Programs Shared Some Specific Characteristics

Despite these differences, the 39 local programs we reviewed shared some characteristics. All of the programs we reviewed were created to meet the needs of local youth, such as addressing youth homelessness and high school dropout rates. For example, one program was started by an individual seeking to assist high school dropouts in her community by allowing youth to complete their GED while acquiring construction skills. Another program providing employment training and placement to youth was started by a local police officer who wanted to help young men returning to the community from jail obtain support services and the skills needed to achieve self-sufficiency. Most of these programs were well established, with many providing services to youth for at least 10 years. Slightly less than half of the programs had 20 years or more of experience in assisting youth, and relatively few were newly established with less than 5 years of experience. In addition, most programs provided services, such as counseling or housing assistance, to their youth participants directly or through referrals to community service providers.

Directors of the 39 Local Programs Cited Similar Key Elements in Reconnecting Youth to Educational and Employment Goals

While varying types of programs serve disconnected youth, directors of the 39 local programs we reviewed identified similar key elements of their programs that assist them in reconnecting youth to educational and employment goals. These include employing effective staff and leadership to build strong relationships with youth and the community, addressing youth needs in a holistic manner, incorporating a variety of specific program design components, and empowering youth to achieve their goals. Our findings on key elements in reconnecting youth are generally in line with those cited in literature on youth and by other experts on youth issues whom we interviewed. These elements and key components are shown in figure 5 and are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Figure 5: Key Elements of Local Programs Cited by Program Directors in Reconnecting Youth to Education and Employment



Source: GAO analysis of key elements of the 39 local programs; Images (Art Explosion).

Staff and Leadership Are Key in Building Relationships with Youth and Community Partners

Nearly all of the 39 directors cited the importance of staff in building strong relationships with youth to help them achieve their goals. For some youth, their interactions with staff may be among the first positive experiences they had with adults. Many youth we spoke with across programs agreed that staff were a primary reason they continued in the program. For example, one youth we spoke with told us she continued to participate in her program because the staff helped her establish goals and provided a supportive environment. In many cases, the relationships between staff and youth participants continue well after these youth complete the program, providing an ongoing source of support to the participants. Figure 6 depicts photos of staff working with youth participants at two programs we visited. Directors reported that they have developed a range of strategies to retain staff, which included providing competitive pay and benefits. One director provides training to reduce burnout and help her staff feel more confident and competent. Others said that they maintain a low caseload for case managers, allow staff to have input in program development, and conduct recognition ceremonies to award staff for their accomplishments.

Figure 6: Staff Working with Youth Participants at Various Work Sites



Project CRAFT/Nashville (Nashville, Tennessee)

Source: GAO.



Civicorps Schools (Oakland, California)

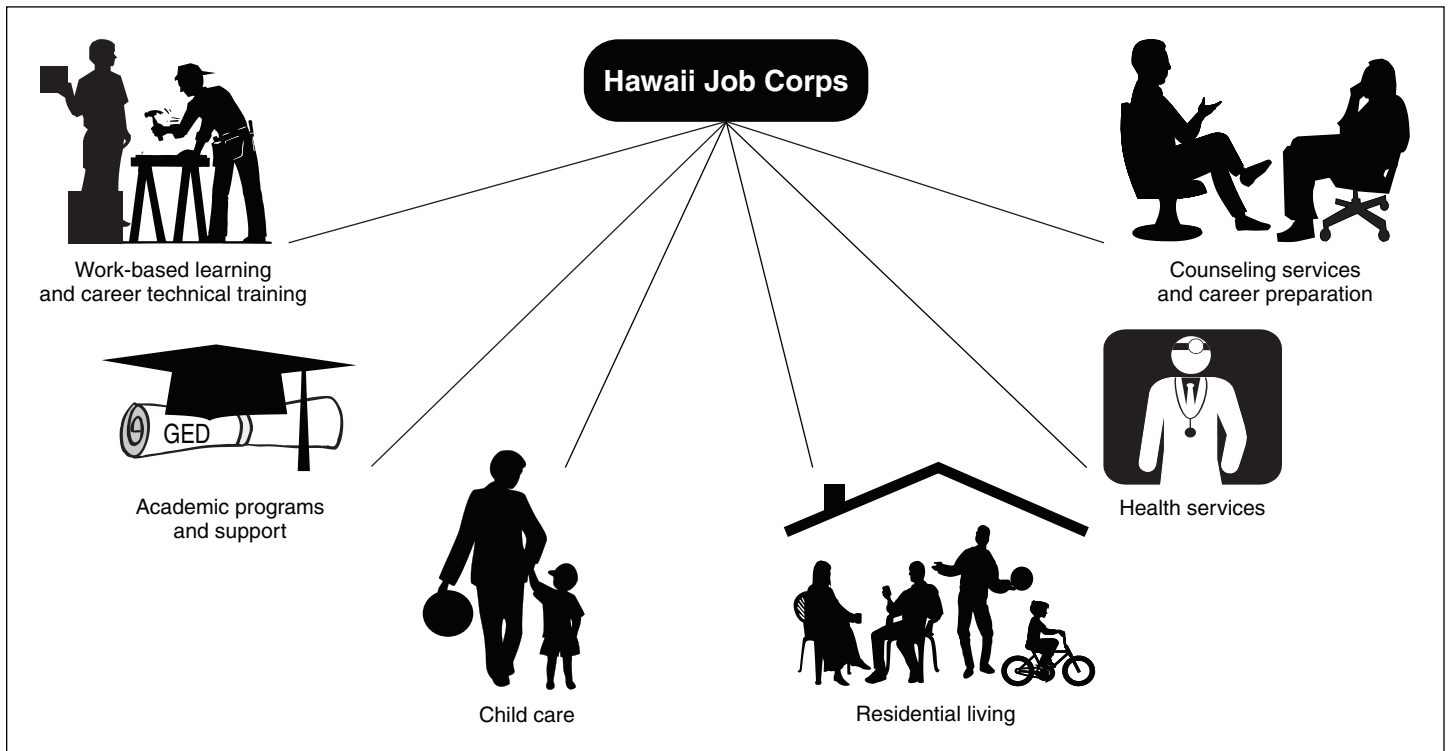
Program leadership also played a key role in maintaining successful programs and garnering community support that leads to funding and other resources. The vision of certain program directors helped programs to continually innovate to meet the needs of youth in their communities. For some programs, the same leadership had been in place since their inception, a fact that has contributed toward their continued stability.

Directors had built strong relationships with a range of community stakeholders, including mayors, city departments, local businesses, employers, and clergy. For example, two youth-serving programs reported that they received funding from their mayor and city after the federal Youth Opportunity grants were eliminated, a fact that enabled them to continue to provide services to youth. Additionally, programs established relationships with service providers in the community to gain access to a range of educational or employment opportunities for youth. For example, one program partnered with a local community college program to provide skills training and certification for entry-level jobs. Other programs partnered with employers to provide their youth participants with employment placements, internships, and job shadowing opportunities. One director working with court-involved youth noted that these relationships were critical to finding employment for their youth participants with criminal records. Program reputation, longevity of the program and its staff, and ability of the management to plan for the future and attract relevant stakeholders were cited as factors helping programs to coordinate efforts within their communities.

Directors Emphasized the Importance of Addressing Youth Needs in a Holistic Manner

To address the multiple needs of participants, many program directors told us that, to the extent possible, their programs took a holistic approach to providing comprehensive support services to youth either on-site or in collaboration with other service providers in the community. (Fig. 7 illustrates the range of services one local Job Corps center offers youth participants in addition to educational and employment assistance.) In one program, on-site case managers provided individual counseling to youth and referred these youth to providers in the community for additional services, such as substance abuse and mental health services, if needed. Another director of a program working with runaway and homeless youth said the program provides a continuum of services, including on-site health services, such as psychological assessments and human immunodeficiency virus testing. Other medical services were provided through a partnership with the local public health department.

Figure 7: Example of a Local Job Corps Center’s Holistic Approach to Providing Comprehensive Support Services



Source: GAO analysis of the Hawaii Job Corps Center's support services; Images (Art Explosion).

Specific Program Design Components Help Programs to Engage and Retain Young People

Program directors incorporated a variety of specific design components to help engage and retain youth, such as experiential learning opportunities, engagement in civic activities, self-paced curricula and flexible schedules, and financial and nonfinancial incentives. Many program directors told us that they incorporated experiential learning opportunities, which provide youth with hands-on learning opportunities and on-site training, to emphasize concepts used in the classroom or to teach work skills. For example, one director of a program that teaches various trades to court-involved youth allows young people to apply their academic skills to real world situations. Youth receiving training in construction, for example, can apply math concepts they learn in the classroom to construction projects in the community. One young person participating in this program said that he appreciated this applied setting and is more motivated to learn math skills. Through such on-the-job training, youth also learn how to take directions from supervisors and work as part of a team, skills that are

necessary in the work environment. Figure 8 depicts a photo of a local program's workshop that trains out-of-school youth in construction.

Figure 8: Workshop at a Local Program That Trains Out-of-School Youth in Construction



Youth Employment Partnership, Inc. (Oakland, California)

Source: GAO.

Directors reported that civic engagement provides youth with an opportunity to give back to the community and learn how to get involved with government and community activities. One director of a program serving court-involved youth said that his curriculum incorporated a restorative justice framework whereby youth participate in community activities to make up for their negative behavior. Some of these community service activities included building a deck for a local youth-serving organization or constructing homes for low-income families. Other programs arranged local field trips to expose youth to government and community activities. For example, one educational and occupational training program organized field trips to city hall, cultural events, and museums to teach youth about various community activities. A young person who attended such an event at the local city hall said the experience taught him about public hearings and how to be an advocate for issues that affect him.

To accommodate the various needs of their youth participants, many programs employed an individualized or self-paced curriculum and a flexible class schedule. For example, one educational and occupational

training program reported that it tailored students' academic course of study to their skill level through more individualized attention. One young person, who dropped out of school because the slow pace had left him unchallenged, told us that he became re-engaged in school work through the program's self-paced curriculum. To further accommodate the needs of their youth participants, such as parenting or employment, programs provided flexibility to their youth in developing class schedules.

Over half of the 39 programs used incentives to retain youth or encourage positive behavior. These incentives may include industry-related certifications upon graduation, transportation vouchers, rent subsidies, and educational scholarships to attend college. In particular, a few housing or foster care programs provide youth with housing subsidies and help them to set up personal savings accounts to save for future expenses, such as buying a car or placing a deposit on an apartment. A few programs had coordinated with the federal AmeriCorps program to provide educational scholarships to reward youth for their service in the program.¹¹ Other programs have established a behavioral management system that incorporates incentives to reward youth for positive behavior. For example, one program allowed youth to earn points for maintaining a clean room, arriving on time to school, and not being involved in negative incidents. These points can then be traded in for items valuable to the youth participants, such as compact discs.

¹¹ The AmeriCorps program, administered within the Corporation for National and Community Service, provides financial awards for education to individuals upon completion of intensive public service that meets educational, public safety, health, and environmental needs.

Programs Empower Youth by Setting Expectations and Strengthening Their Leadership Skills

Youth Development Approach

According to HHS's National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth, the youth development approach, developed over 30 years ago by researchers and practitioners, emphasizes providing services and opportunities to support young people to succeed and contribute as adults by incorporating four components:

- a sense of competence
- a sense of usefulness
- a sense of belonging, and
- a sense of power.

A number of federal agencies, foundations, and national organizations utilize this framework in their initiatives. For example, HHS's Family and Youth Services Bureau, one of the federal agencies in our review, has funded demonstration projects at the state level to encourage collaborative approaches to youth development. For more information, see National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth Web site at <http://www.ncfy.com>.

Program directors reported that they empower youth by setting high expectations, establishing a clear code of conduct, and strengthening their leadership skills. Many directors told us that they use an approach that focuses on youths' capacities, strengths, and developmental needs rather than solely on their problems and risks—often referred to as the “youth development approach” by researchers and practitioners. According to one director, youth have been accustomed to interacting with people and systems that focus on their deficits rather than their talents and strengths, leading them to lack confidence in their abilities. By setting high expectations, staff demonstrate confidence in youth, and in turn some youth will rise to those expectations. Many programs told us that they balance these high expectations with a clear code of conduct that provides youth with guidelines about the consequences of their behaviors.

To strengthen youths' leadership skills and improve program services, many program directors reported involving youth in a variety of program operation activities. Many programs involved youth in the process to hire new staff or their outreach and recruitment efforts for new participants. One program encouraged youth to attend advisory board meetings once a quarter to talk about what is working and additional needs. Other programs have established youth councils to help set goals for the program and solicit input from other youth participants. In addition, several directors noted that they hired former youth participants as staff. One director from a program that serves foster care youth said that these youth workers are key because they can relate to other youths' circumstances and can teach them conflict resolution and coping skills.

Directors We Interviewed Cited Service Gaps, Funding Constraints, and Federal Grant Management Challenges That Hindered Their Efforts; Federal Coordination Efforts Under Way May Help Address Some of These Issues

Program directors reported challenges addressing some of the issues faced by youth in their programs as well as gaps in certain services, such as housing and employment opportunities for youth. Most directors reported that funding constraints from federal and other sources challenge program stability and efforts to serve more youth. Funding for many of the key federal programs we reviewed that serve disconnected youth has remained the same or declined since 2000. In addition, many of the 15 directors with federal WIA Youth funding noted that the need to meet certain WIA Youth performance goals within short-term time frames discouraged them from serving youth that may need more time and assistance to achieve specified outcomes. Labor officials acknowledged that states and workforce investment boards sometimes issue 1-year contracts with local programs that unintentionally discourage the programs from working with lower-skilled youth and that the boards may need more assistance from Labor to address this issue. Regarding local programs receiving funding from more than one federal source, several directors cited varying grant requirements that pose a challenge for local programs to reconcile. In recent years at the federal level, existing and new federal initiatives have intensified efforts to coordinate federal youth programs and provide assistance to state and local youth-serving efforts, which may help to address some challenges faced by local programs.

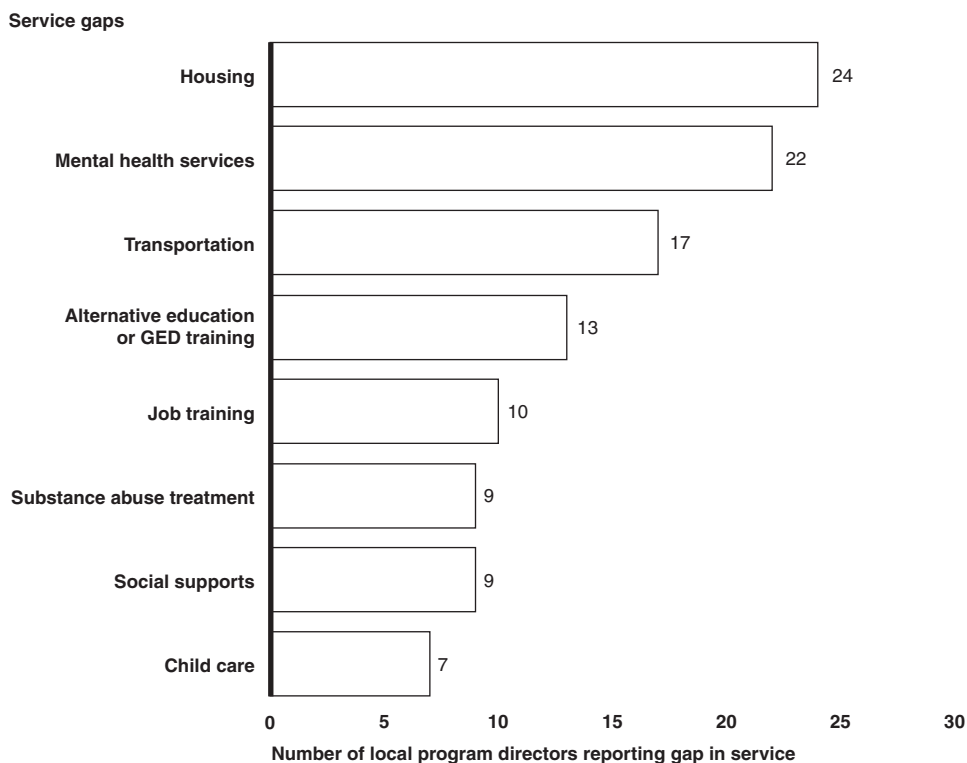
Programs Constrained by Circumstances and Needs of Some Youth and Gaps in Services at the Community Level

Most directors cited the complex nature of the youth populations they serve and issues facing youth at the community level as key challenges to successfully reconnecting youth to education and employment.¹² These challenges are further complicated by a gap in needed services at the local

¹² In 2005, GAO surveyed 36 grantees that received Labor's Youth Opportunity funding. The grantees also identified obstacles faced by their clients—homelessness, lack of family support, mental health problems, and low levels of academic achievement—as a major implementation challenge. See GAO, *Youth Opportunity Grants: Lessons Can be Learned from Program, but Labor Needs to Make Data Available*, [GAO-06-53](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 9, 2005).

level.¹³ Figure 9 identifies the top gaps in services most frequently cited by local program directors.

Figure 9: Gaps in Services for Disconnected Youth Reported by 39 Program Directors



Source: GAO analysis based on interviews with 39 local program directors.

Note: Directors identified the top three services they believed were insufficient or lacking in their communities. These data only include services that were mentioned by more than three directors.

A large number of the program directors reported that their youth have mental health issues, and several said these issues may be undiagnosed or

¹³ In a 2006 report on challenges faced by child welfare agencies, GAO reported that in 2006 more than half of state child welfare agencies said that they were dissatisfied with mental health services, substance abuse services, transportation services, and housing for parents of at-risk families. States interviewed for the report cited that funding constraints were among the reasons maintaining an adequate level of services was difficult. See GAO, *Child Welfare: Improving Social Service Program, Training, and Technical Assistance Information Would Help Address Longstanding Service-Level and Workforce Challenges*, GAO-07-75 (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 6, 2006).

untreated before entering the program, and that their communities lack adequate mental health services. Directors cited trauma, depression, and attachment disorders as examples of the mental health issues faced by some of the youth. Several directors said that these mental health issues were undiagnosed prior to the youths' involvement with their programs. As one director stated, the complex family and living situations many of these youth come from and the long-term effects of abuse and neglect experienced by some of these youth need to be addressed in order for youth to have success in reaching employment or educational goals. However, more than half of the program directors cited a lack of mental health treatment as a major gap in their communities. Most often, directors attributed this gap in mental health services to inadequate funds. Some directors also attributed the gap to a misperception of the need for mental health treatment. For example, one director believed that the mental health services these youth need to transition to self-sufficiency have not been adequately understood or addressed by policymakers. At the same time, a few of the program directors also noted that youth themselves are unaware that they need intensive counseling and resist pursuing mental health treatment due to the associated stigma.

Some programs also reported that a number of their youth have learning disabilities, and that these may have been undiagnosed by the school system. For example, one alternative education program stated that in 2002, nearly 45 percent of its students were diagnosed with learning or emotional disabilities. Of these students, only half had been diagnosed before coming to their program. Many programs reported that the low educational attainment of the youth slow their efforts to achieve educational and employment outcomes. According to one director, high school-aged youth are frustrated when they test at a seventh grade level. Another director reported that, on average, her youth test at a fifth to sixth grade level in reading and a fourth to fifth grade level in math. She noted that her program's staff must work with youth who are at a tremendous skills deficit to achieve outcomes.

Violence and drugs at the community level create additional challenges to youth efforts to successfully complete their programs. A large number of programs we reviewed reported that their communities struggled with gangs, violence, or drugs, which may affect youths' success. Due to gangs and violence, one director reported that young people in the program face peer pressure that may detract from their efforts to remain in the program. Additionally, youth may not feel safe traveling to the program, or may have trouble focusing when violence affects their family or friends. One program that works predominantly with youth involved in gangs reported

that in a 2 ½-year time frame, 26 of their youth participants were murdered. This program and other programs have developed close relationships with law enforcement officials to keep abreast of gang activity to ensure the youths' safety and generally to serve youth in such communities better. A number of directors also reported high levels of drug activity in their communities, and many reported substance abuse issues among the youth they serve. However, program directors also cited gaps in substance abuse services. One program director said that 80 percent of youth in his program are in need of substance abuse services, and that these services were less available for his participants than in previous years.

A majority of the 39 directors cited a lack of affordable housing as a top challenge for youth who are trying to become self-sufficient. Many directors discussed a lack of affordable long-term housing, and several referred to a lack of temporary housing or shelters for youth. Some directors attributed the high cost of housing to revitalization efforts in certain areas, and some believed that policymakers lack the political will to focus on affordable housing needs. Directors reported that wages for this population are low, which creates challenges for their youth participants to afford housing. In one community, the program director reported a 3-year waiting list for low-income housing. Certain restrictions that affect specific subpopulations of disconnected youth further limit housing options. For example, landlords are reluctant to lease apartments to youth who are unemployed, have been involved in the criminal justice system, or do not have a parent to cosign a lease. In addition, some programs also expressed concern that there are not enough shelters available for homeless youth.

The affordable housing challenge is further complicated by employment challenges. Several directors cited a lack of jobs that pay a sufficient wage and a reluctance by employers to hire certain subpopulations of youth as major challenges facing youth in their community. According to one transitional living program, the lack of low-skilled jobs that pay enough to meet living expenses, coupled with rising housing costs, makes it nearly impossible for a young person to transition to a stable living situation upon leaving the program. In addition, a number of programs working with court-involved youth discussed the challenge these youth face obtaining employment because they have a criminal record. One program director working with ex-offender youth said these youth are aware of the limited employment opportunities they face and some of them lose hope in their ability to secure a job. He further noted that it is hard to keep them

motivated and feeling positive given these constraints, even with stipends for academic and employment training.¹⁴

Job opportunities for youth may also be limited by transportation challenges. Many program directors in both rural communities and urban centers cited challenges with the accessibility or affordability of transportation that affect youth access to opportunities, especially employment. Directors cited the high cost of public transportation as a barrier for the youth in their programs. One director of a program in an urban community that places youth in employment said some jobs require youth to go on multiple interviews and the youth do not have the money to pay for transportation to and from these interviews. The program tries to help youth with the transportation barrier, but the amount of funding it can allocate toward transportation is determined by its funders. Another program that trains youth for jobs in the construction field noted that a lot of the construction jobs are in suburban areas, which are not well serviced by public transportation. We were told of young people taking multiple buses and many hours to travel to a workplace, impeding their ability to sustain employment.

Funding Constraints from Government and Other Sources Challenge Program Stability and Efforts to Serve More Youth

Local programs told us that funding constraints from all sources have created significant challenges in working with their disconnected youth populations. Difficulty with funding was rated as the number one overall challenge faced by local programs, and some program directors noted that their funding was either declining or not keeping pace with inflation or with demand for their services. Funding for 10 of the 15 key federal programs we reviewed has remained the same or declined since 2000. WIA Youth funds have been reduced from a high of \$1.13 billion in fiscal year 2001 to \$940 million in fiscal year 2007. This represents a decline of about 27 percent in inflation-adjusted dollars. While overall Transitional Living Program funding increased in fiscal year 2002 to support a greater number of programs, the amount available each year to individual local programs—capped at \$200,000—has not changed since 1992. One program director explained that considering increases in the costs of operation, this amount funds only part of one staff rather than three as in previous years. Despite these reductions, many of the programs we spoke with emphasized that the demand for their services has continued. For example, more than half

¹⁴ Similarly, 28 out of 36 of the Youth Opportunity grantees interviewed for GAO's 2005 report also cited a lack of jobs in the community as an implementation challenge.

of the programs reported having a waiting list of youth in need of their services ranging from 10 to 1,000 youth, and high school dropout rates in many communities remain high. The Annie E. Casey Foundation found that between 2000 and 2005, an additional 626,000 youth between the ages of 18 and 24 became disconnected from school and work, based on U.S. Census Bureau statistics.

Program directors also stressed that the unpredictability of federal grant money has made it difficult to run their programs. In particular, most of the program directors who received Transitional Living Program funds told us that one of their greatest concerns for this grant source was its unpredictability and a perception that HHS does not take into consideration enough the experience of current grantees. HHS officials said that the agency used to award extra points to current grantees of the program, a practice it stopped a few years ago to allow new organizations to have greater opportunity. They also acknowledged that this is a highly competitive grant and that there are likely many deserving programs they are unable to support, given the budget. Other programs noted that the short-term nature of some grants made it difficult to predict how long they could sustain some of their programming and plan for the long term. Program directors we interviewed stressed the importance of predictable and long-term funding commitments for working with disconnected youth who in particular require sustained services and support during precarious transitional years. While most of the programs we reviewed received some federal dollars, those that relied more heavily on private, state, or local funding expressed similar concerns with the limited amount, as well as the consistency, of funds available for the populations of youth with which they work.

In response to these funding constraints, program directors reported that they had modified or limited their services. One program eliminated its GED instruction in response to decreases in WIA Youth funds, and another reduced youth served from 1,500 participants in 2000 to a current capacity of 300 because of similar reductions. Some program directors told us that the amount of funding they received limited their ability to follow up with youth after they complete the program or to conduct program evaluations to improve services. Program directors told us that funding levels also affected their ability to attract and retain staff. In fact, one Transitional Living Program director told us that upon leaving the program, some of the youth the program serves found jobs that paid higher wages than those of the program staff, a fact that affected the program's ability to retain staff.

Performance Contracts Associated with Some Federal Funding May Have Unintended Consequences

Many of the 15 local program directors who received WIA Youth funding reported that meeting the performance goals for which they were held accountable within short-term contracts discouraged them from working with low-skilled youth who may need increased time and assistance to reach specified outcomes, such as employment or educational gains.¹⁵ Several local program directors said their WIA contracts are for 1 year, and that the need to achieve outcome measures often based on only 12 months of service provided a disincentive to serve those youth with the greatest challenges.¹⁶ Program directors explained that youth entering their programs may have multiple barriers, such as criminal backgrounds, limited reading abilities, and lack of social support, and require a longer investment in order to achieve positive outcomes than other youth. In order to meet current federal performance goals, such as employment outcome goals, within a 1-year period, some directors of the WIA-funded programs reported that they only accept youth who test at least at a certain grade level. One director explained that many employers will not consider hiring young people who cannot read at least at a specific grade level. In some areas, this can mean leaving behind a significant number of youth who are out of school. One program director in Baltimore told us that because of its policy to accept youth that test at least at a seventh grade level, the program has to turn away 80 percent of youth who seek its services even though it has the capacity to serve some of these youth.

Labor officials said they were aware that workforce investment boards, which award contracts to local programs, have implemented local program contracts in a way that may unintentionally discourage programs from working with lower-skilled youth and have taken some initial steps to address this issue. The officials acknowledged that 12 months is often an inadequate time frame within which to ensure that youth will fulfill education- and employment-related outcomes. Labor officials explained that for all but one of the measures there is no requirement to achieve performance goals within 1 year and workforce investment boards often

¹⁵ We have documented a similar effect of performance benchmarks on local programs' selection criteria in the WIA Adult and Dislocated Workers programs. See GAO, *Workforce Investment Act: Improvements Needed in Performance Measures to Provide a More Accurate Picture of WIA's Effectiveness*, [GAO-02-275](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 1, 2002).

¹⁶ We have similarly found in a prior report that programs receiving WIA funds preferred to focus on in-school youth because serving out-of-school youth was much more difficult and expensive, and less effective. See GAO, *Workforce Investment Act: Labor Actions Can Help States Improve Quality of Performance Outcome Data and Delivery of Youth Services*, [GAO-04-308](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 23, 2004).

develop 1-year contracts despite Labor's intent for them to develop longer-term contracts. Labor has taken some steps to address this problem. For example, it is currently conducting some training for workforce investment boards to explain the importance of a longer-term investment in youth in order to reach outcomes. It has also, through a national contractor, provided technical assistance on this issue to some state and local workforce investment boards and youth programs. However, it has not provided technical assistance more broadly on this issue. Labor officials also told us they were considering issuing guidance at some point in the future to help boards understand ways to establish contracts to better ensure programs have incentives to work with hard-to-employ youth, a population group Labor acknowledges is important to serve. Labor officials said they have not yet established a time frame for developing and issuing guidance on this.

Labor officials noted another development that may provide local youth-serving programs more flexibility to serve youth at all skill levels. As part of an Office of Management and Budget requirement for programs across multiple agencies to report on uniform evaluation metrics, Labor has adopted and implemented the three common performance measures for youth employment and training programs developed by the Office of Management and Budget. It asserts that these measures may better capture improvements made by youth at all skill levels, instead of the seven measures currently in statute, reducing the incentive for some programs to select only higher-skilled youth. The three new performance measures, referred to as the common measures, apply to youth of all ages, and focus on literacy or numeracy gains as well as placement in employment and education as outcomes, which may give more flexibility to programs to work with youth at different levels. By contrast, the current measures for older youth (aged 19 to 21) emphasize employment outcomes, such as employment retention after 6 months. (See table 2.) Labor uses data on performance measures that states collect from service providers to track states' progress in meeting performance goals. Labor officials told us that states must collect data for both sets of measures until the new measures are established through law, although some states have already started to work with the new measures.¹⁷ For program year 2007, Labor reported that 22 states had waivers in place that allowed them to collect data for only the three new common measures; 10 of these states were granted waivers recently in program year 2006 and two of them in

¹⁷ The Workforce Investment Act, initially authorized through fiscal year 2003 may be one legislative vehicle for establishing new measures. Congress has not yet reauthorized WIA, although it has continued to appropriate funds for WIA programs each year.

program year 2005. While the new measures may give states more flexibility in how they measure youths' progress, it may be too early to assess whether these new measures have been incorporated into contracts with local programs in ways that result in reduced incentives for programs to select higher-performing youth.

Table 2: Existing and New Common Measures for WIA Youth Program

| | WIA measures currently in statute | Common measures |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Youth (ages 19 to 21) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entered Employment Rate Average earnings change in 6 months Employment retention rate at 6 months Entered employment/education/training and credential rate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placement in employment and education Attainment of a degree or certificate |
| Youth (ages 14 to 18) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skill attainment rate Diploma or equivalent attainment rate Placement and retention in postsecondary education, advanced training, or employment rate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literacy or numeracy gains |

Source: U.S. Department of Labor.

Federal Grant Requirements That Vary across Programs Can Pose Challenges

Local program directors that received multiple federal grants from different agencies expressed difficulty in working across varying reporting requirements, funding cycles, and eligibility requirements. (See fig. 10.) To a lesser extent, these program directors also experienced challenges working across varying program goals and sharing information about their clients that participate in multiple federal grants.

- Varying reporting requirements.* Directors of 17 of the 19 local programs we reviewed that received more than one federal grant stated that reconciling varying reporting requirements presented at least some challenge.¹⁸ One program director explained that each of the program's federal funding sources has its own management information system, but they all require similar information, causing staff to spend a significant amount of time inputting nearly identical data elements into separate data collection systems.
- Varying funding cycles.* Fifteen program directors reported at least some challenge in managing grants that span different funding cycles.

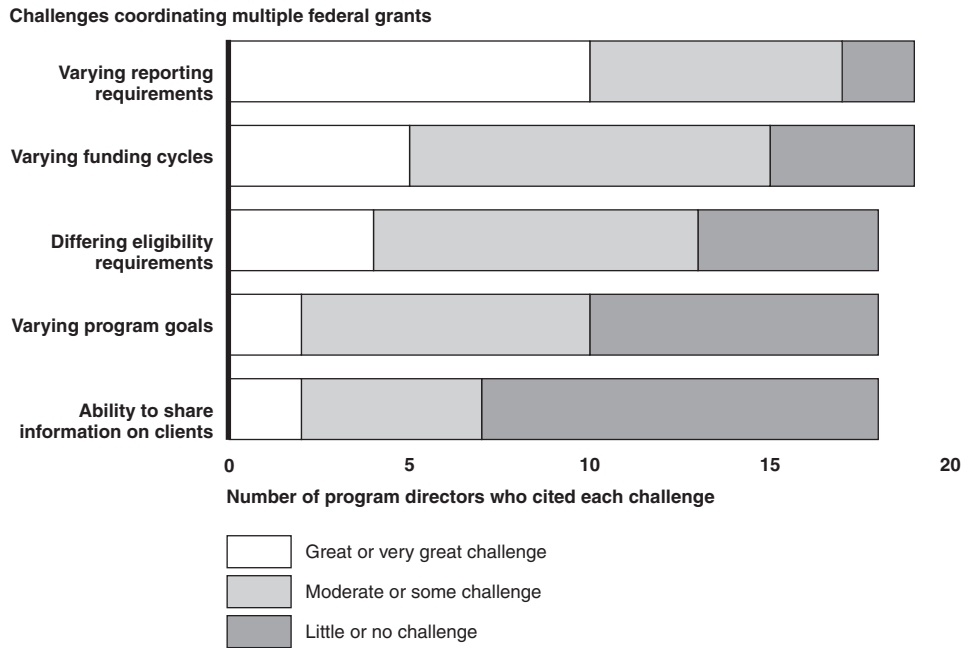
¹⁸ Program directors responded on the severity of these challenges using a five-point scale as follows: very great challenge, great challenge, moderate challenge, some challenge, and little or no challenge.

Even within the same federal agency, grants can have different fiscal year schedules and different grant durations. For example, among the large workforce programs, workforce investment boards often award 1-year WIA contracts to local programs, and YouthBuild is now a 3-year grant.¹⁹ Working across differing funding cycles and grant years can make it difficult for programs to plan for the future.

- *Differing eligibility requirements.* Directors of 13 local programs reported that they face challenges reconciling differing eligibility requirements. For example, grants from HHS and the Department of Housing and Urban Development to support and house homeless youth use different definitions of homelessness and varying age criteria, which can make it difficult for a local program that depends on both sources of funding. Some workforce grants fund youth less than 21 years of age and others fund up to 24 years of age, making it especially challenging for local programs to combine funding sources.

¹⁹ Labor officials explained that 95 percent of the funds for the 3-year YouthBuild grant are spent on program operations in the first 2 years, with the remaining 5 percent allowed for follow-up with participants during the third grant year.

Figure 10: Programs Cite Multiple Challenges in Coordinating across Federal Grant Programs



Source: GAO analysis based on interviews with 39 local program directors.

To Address the Various Needs of Disconnected Youth, Federal Agencies Have Intensified Efforts to Coordinate across Youth-Serving Programs

Recognizing that services addressing the various needs of disconnected youth fall under the jurisdictions of multiple agencies, federal agencies have intensified efforts to coordinate across the array of youth-serving programs. Our past work has highlighted the need for federal collaboration given the multiple demands and limited resources of the federal government.²⁰ As we noted in our previous work on multiple youth programs, enhanced coordination at the federal level can lead to more efficient use of resources and a more integrated service delivery approach at the local program level.²¹ Related to disconnected youth in particular, the federal officials we spoke with highlighted the ongoing coordination efforts of the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency

²⁰ GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, [GAO-06-15](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 21, 2005).

²¹ GAO, *At Risk and Delinquent Youth: Multiple Programs Lack Coordinated Federal Effort*, [GAO/T-HEHS-98-38](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 5, 1997).

Prevention (CCJJDP), led by Justice, and the Shared Youth Vision initiative, led by Labor, among other collaborative efforts.

- The CCJJDP, which was authorized in 1974 by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, coordinates federal juvenile delinquency programs. Among its responsibilities, the council examines how programs can be coordinated among federal, state, and local governments to better serve at-risk youth. The CCJJDP, which meets on a quarterly basis, is composed of nine federal agency members, including those from Education, Labor, and HHS, and nine nonfederal members, who are juvenile justice practitioners. In recent years, the council has broadened its focus to other at-risk youth and is seeking to implement some of the 2003 White House Task Force recommendations, including the following: (1) improving coordination of mentoring programs, (2) developing a unified protocol for federal best practices clearinghouses, (3) building a rigorous and unified disadvantaged youth research agenda, (4) improving data collection on the well-being of families, (5) increasing parents' involvement in federal youth programs, (6) targeting youth in public care, (7) targeting youth with multiple risk factors, and (8) expanding mentoring programs to special target groups. A Justice official said one project under way involves researching best practices for federal collaborative efforts to prepare a tool kit to assist federal agencies in their ongoing youth coordination efforts.
- The Shared Youth Vision initiative emerged in response to the 2003 White House Task Force recommendations, which cited a lack of communication, coordination, and collaboration among federal agencies that provide services to the nation's neediest youth, and out of the CCJJDP. It involves officials from Labor, Education, HHS, Justice; the Departments of Transportation, Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development; the Corporation for National and Community Service; and the Social Security Administration. Its mission is to serve as a catalyst at the national, state, and local levels to strengthen coordination, communication, and collaboration among youth-serving agencies to support the neediest youth in their healthy transition to adult roles. Labor officials we spoke with see this initiative as a way to more holistically support youth who come to the attention of various related social service systems, in order to reinforce the effectiveness of each intervention. They also said that the initiative can help make local youth programs more aware of other services available in their communities, such as mental health or substance abuse treatment services that youth may need. One senior HHS official noted that the initiative can be a powerful way to extend federal partnerships into

communities, and another official observed that the initiative has led to better coordination of resources among agencies for juvenile justice programming, mentoring, and youth aging out of foster care. To date, the initiative has sponsored several regional forums convening state- and local-level officials from various agencies to share information and discuss better ways to work together to serve youth. In response to state interest in continuing these efforts, Labor awarded grants ranging from \$27,500 to \$116,000 to 16 competitively selected states to help the states develop strategic plans to connect their systems that serve youth at the state and local levels. For example, Florida is using this initiative to bring together the state Department of Juvenile Justice, local school districts, and community-based organizations to create a one-stop prevention and intervention system for court-involved youth on probation.

- Several federal agencies have undertaken initiatives to improve coordination among specific programs or programs serving specific subpopulations. For example, Education and HHS are cosponsoring a 4-year program to offer long-term support to youth with serious emotional disorders and emerging serious mental illness. Through the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative, HHS, Education, and Justice are collaborating to reduce violence and drug abuse in schools and communities. Working through the CCJJDP, HHS's Family and Youth Services Bureau and the Corporation for National and Community Service (an independent federal agency) have instituted the Federal Mentoring Council to coordinate mentoring efforts for disadvantaged youth across eight federal agencies. In addition, since 2005, in an effort to provide stronger support to local partnerships working with youth, several federal agencies, including HHS, Labor, Education, and Justice, have created a Web site that provides interactive tools to assist communities to form effective partnerships, assess community assets, map local and federal resources, and search for evidence-based programs to meet the needs of youth, including disconnected youth.²²

In addition to these ongoing efforts, Congress in 2006 enacted legislation creating the Federal Youth Development Council with the task—within 2 years—of issuing final recommendations designed to lead to improved coordination and assessment of federal youth programs. However, the council has not been convened. The council is to include members from

²² For more information, see the Community Guide to Helping America's Youth at www.helpingamericasyouth.gov.

HHS, Education, Labor, Justice, and several other federal entities, as well as other members as appointed by the President, with the Secretary of HHS serving as the chairperson. The authorizing legislation provides for the council to terminate after meeting at least quarterly for 2 years and issuing a final report. Council duties include several related to finding ways to better facilitate the coordination, efficiency, and effectiveness of federal programs and promote high-quality research and evaluation of youth services and supports. The final report is to include, among other items, an assessment of the needs of youth, especially those in disadvantaged situations, and of those who work with youth; a summary of a plan for quantifiable goals and objectives for federal programs that assist disadvantaged youth; and recommendations for ways to coordinate and improve information sharing among the various federal programs and agencies serving youth, as well as for ways to better integrate and coordinate youth policies at all levels of government. The legislation also specified that the council should coordinate its efforts with existing interagency coordination entities in order to complement and not duplicate efforts. Some assert that the council could reduce duplication of effort by agencies and working at cross-purposes and lead to a stronger emphasis at the federal level on youth development. Funding was not appropriated to the council for fiscal years 2007 and 2008. HHS did not seek funding for the council in the fiscal year 2008 President's budget.²³ HHS has said that the CCJJD, of which HHS is a member, has begun to address some of the objectives and goals proposed for the council. In addition, on February 7, 2008, the President issued an executive order to establish an Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs. Under the order, HHS would lead this effort to coordinate among relevant federal, private, and nongovernment entities; facilitate the development of a federal Web site on youth; and encourage high standards for assessing program impact.

Due to the relationships established through some of these ongoing formal efforts, officials told us that they now more routinely talk to their counterparts in other agencies. For example, Labor officials told us that they now contact stakeholders in other agencies as a matter of course and as issues arise, and that this practice marks a change from prior years. Similarly, a Justice official stated that Justice staff now consider

²³ Pub. L. No.109-365, title VIII, which established the council, authorized appropriations of \$1,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2007 and 2008 to carry out the title, although funds were not appropriated.

contacting officials in other agencies to get their expertise and input when awarding grants, recognizing that they are serving some of the same populations. While officials spoke highly of these coordination efforts, some officials pointed to the importance of sustained attention at the appropriate levels to help ensure the longevity of these efforts. More specifically, one official noted that turnover in agency staff, especially among political appointees, can hinder long-term progress and suggested that assigning high-level career officials as point persons at each agency could be a way to facilitate this coordination and strengthening existing coordinating bodies.

Conclusions

Preparing disconnected youth to become self-sufficient adults is an important responsibility for all levels of government. The government bears some of the costs for youth who have difficulty becoming self-sufficient, and who may instead commit crimes, become incarcerated, and utilize public systems for assistance. However, with adequate support, disconnected youth may be able to obtain the skills needed to make the transition to adulthood and ultimately participate fully in society, including in the workforce. Our research found that many successful locally operated programs serving disconnected youth still struggle to access services and opportunities for youth in their communities that can help these young people meet their needs and achieve educational and employment goals. While all levels of government can help to assist this population, the federal government plays an important role by providing funding, oversight, and technical assistance to support locally operated programs serving disconnected youth. In addition, ongoing and relatively new coordination efforts at the federal level hold potential for promoting more holistic service delivery to youth while also ensuring more efficient use of federal resources, although it is too early to know the impact these efforts may have on local programs serving youth. Sustained attention and leadership from agencies at appropriate levels will be needed to support such coordination efforts and help them endure, while at the same time minimizing unwarranted duplication among the coordination efforts themselves.

Federal agencies also play an important role in holding programs accountable for meeting performance goals, although the pursuit of such goals can sometimes lead to unintended consequences. As a result, it is important to understand all the ways in which rewarding and sanctioning performance can change behavior at the local program level. For example, local program directors receiving WIA Youth funds told us that meeting the seven current performance measures within 1-year contracts provides

incentives for the programs to serve youth participants who may quickly achieve desired performance goals within the specified time frames, potentially leaving behind youth with the most challenges to successful outcomes. This potentially means that one of the larger federal funding sources that can be used to assist disconnected youth may discourage local efforts from serving them. While the new common measures, if enacted, may help address this issue, it is important that all workforce investment boards understand how to develop long-term contracts for local programs that avoid discouraging them from serving youth facing increased challenges. Labor has also identified this as a concern and has taken some initial steps to address this issue. However, unless Labor works more with boards to ensure they have the information they need for effective contract development, local programs may continue to lack adequate incentives to work with lower-skilled youth who could greatly benefit from their services.

Recommendation for Executive Action

To improve implementation of the WIA Youth Activities program, we recommend that the Secretary of Labor work with states and workforce investment boards to better ensure they have the information and guidance needed to develop and implement contracts that allow local programs to serve youth who are in need of more assistance than others while still achieving performance goals. This could include (1) working with workforce investment boards to identify and understand the incentives or constraints that discourage boards from structuring contracts with local programs that would assist their efforts to serve lower-skilled youth, (2) issuing guidance—based on this input—that provides specific examples of ways to develop contracts with local service providers that allow them to serve youth at varying skill levels, and (3) providing technical assistance to support the implementation of this guidance.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to Labor, HHS, Justice, and Education for review and comment. Labor agreed with our recommendation, and indicated it will work with workforce investment boards to identify constraints, issue guidance to the workforce investment system in the spring of 2008 on ways to develop contracts that allow programs to successfully serve youth at varying skill levels, and provide technical assistance to support the implementation of the guidance. Labor's written comments are reproduced in appendix IV; we incorporated technical comments it provided where appropriate. HHS provided additional information about a Web site available to communities to provide them

support for their efforts to help youth, including disconnected youth, and we have added this information to the report. HHS's written comments are reproduced in appendix V; it also provided technical comments that we incorporated where appropriate. Education provided technical comments only, which we also incorporated where appropriate. Justice had no comments on the draft report.

As agreed with your office, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days after its issue date. At that time we will send copies of this report to the Secretaries of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and the Attorney General; relevant congressional committees; and other interested parties. We will also make copies available to others upon request. In addition, the report will be made available at no charge on GAO's Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>. Please contact me on (202) 512-7215 if you or your staff have any questions about this report. Other contacts and major contributors are listed in appendix VI.

Sincerely yours,



Cornelia M. Ashby
Director,
Education, Workforce, and Income Security Issues

Appendix I: List of Local Programs Interviewed

An asterisk indicates programs we visited in-person. In-person interviews included a tour of the facilities and meeting with youth participants.

| Organization name | City | State | Brief description | Key federal funding source(s) ^a |
|---|-----------|--------|---|--|
| Access Inc.—Youth Empowerment Services | San Diego | Calif. | Assists out-of-school youth to complete their high school education while exploring and preparing to enter employment in a growth industry career ladder in collaboration with a network of programs and service providers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIA (Labor) |
| American YouthWorks | Austin | Tex. | Helps young people transition into self-sufficient adults through education, job training, and community service. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AmeriCorps (Corporation for National and Community Service) • YouthBuild (Labor) • WIA (Labor) • Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Titles I, II, III, IV, and V (Education) |
| Avon Park Youth Academy | Avon Park | Fl. | Provides a residential program that focuses on vocational education and life skills training, as well as offers a full range of academic courses; diploma options, including GED; and college selection services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I (Education)^b |
| * Career Academy at Harbor City High School | Baltimore | Md. | Provides educational and occupational training to Baltimore City youth. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIA (Labor) |
| *Civicorps Schools (formerly East Bay Conservation Corps) | Oakland | Calif. | Promotes citizenship and builds a civil society by creating educational models that incorporate service as a way of learning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No federal funding |
| *Civic Works | Baltimore | Md. | Engages out-of-school youth and high school students through education, community revitalization, and workforce development programs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AmeriCorps (Corporation for National and Community Service) • YouthBuild (Labor) • WIA (Labor) |
| *First Place For Youth | Oakland | Calif. | Supports youth in their transition from foster care to successful adulthood through a supportive housing program, an academic enrichment program, counseling, youth community center, and collaboration with other organizations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive Housing Program (Department of Housing and Urban Development) • Community Development Block Grant (Department of Housing and Urban Development) |
| *Fostering Success | Nashville | Tenn. | Aims to help youth aging out of foster care to have access to education, employment, health care, housing, and a place to call home. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No federal funding |

**Appendix I: List of Local Programs
Interviewed**

| Organization name | City | State | Brief description | Key federal funding source(s)^a |
|---|-------------|--------------|---|--|
| Guadalupe Youth and Young Adult Programs | Guadalupe | Ariz. | Provides a nurturing environment for Guadalupe youth and young adults that combines education, life and leadership skills, and job readiness and community services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AmeriCorps (Corporation for National and Community Service) • YouthBuild (Labor) |
| Harlem Children’s Zone | New York | N.Y. | Works to enhance the quality of life for children and families in some of New York City’s most devastated neighborhoods. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No federal funding |
| Haven House Services— Preparation for Independent Living Program | Raleigh | N.C. | Establishes transitional living program participants as the leaseholders of their own market-rate apartments in order to address the issue of housing after graduation from its transitional living programs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIA (Labor) • Runaway and Homeless Youth (HHS) • Supportive Housing Program (Department of Housing and Urban Development) |
| Hawaii Job Corps Center | Waimanalo | Hawaii | Provides academic, career, technical, and life skills training resulting in long-term quality employment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Corps (Labor) |
| Hollywood Cinema Production Resources | Los Angeles | Calif. | Trains underserved youth and young adults in the crafts and technicians skills of the entertainment industry. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Offender Initiative (Labor) |
| Improved Solutions for Urban Systems Corporation | Dayton | Oh. | Teaches high school dropouts skills in one of four fields: construction technology, health care, manufacturing technology, and computer technology. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AmeriCorps (Corporation for National and Community Service) • YouthBuild (Labor) • Youth Offender Initiative (Labor) • Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (HHS) |
| *Janus Youth Programs — Willamette Bridge House Transitional Living Program | Portland | Ore. | Empowers youth who were previously homeless, pregnant, or parenting to support themselves and work on fulfilling educational and employment needs, integrating a “self-governance” model that incorporates resident participation in all program decision-making processes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horizon (Department of Housing and Urban Development) • Runaway and Homeless Youth (HHS) |
| Jobs for Youth/Chicago | Chicago | Ill. | Helps young men and women from low-income families become a part of the economic mainstream and, in the process, provide the business community with motivated job-ready workers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Basic Education Grants (Education) • WIA (Labor) |
| *Joseph L. Meek Professional Technical Campus of the Alliance High School | Portland | Ore. | Provides Portland youth with vocational and academic programs and offers opportunities for students seeking an alternative to the traditional high school model. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I (Education) • Carl D. Perkins Vocational-Technical Education Act (Education) |

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Interviewed**

| Organization name | City | State | Brief description | Key federal funding source(s)^a |
|---|---------------|--------------|--|--|
| *Larkin Street Youth Services | San Francisco | Calif. | Provides a range of housing options—from immediate emergency shelter to permanent supportive housing—in addition to essential wraparound services that offer young people the resources and skills they need to exit street life. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McKinney-Vento Act (HHS) • Runaway and Homeless Youth (HHS) • Ryan White Care Act, Title IV (HHS) |
| Las Artes Arts and Educational Center | Tucson | Ariz. | Addresses the needs of out-of-school youth by providing an opportunity to create public art while earning a GED. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIA (Labor) |
| *Latin American Youth Center–Workforce Investment and Social Enterprise | Washington | D.C. | To offer clear guidance and direction toward a career path to youth who do not have marketable skills or who have dropped out of school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIA (Labor) |
| Lighthouse Youth Services | Cincinnati | Oh. | Provides safe, secure living environments for homeless youth and adults, and assists them with developing the skills necessary to live self-sufficiently and responsibly. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Runaway and Homeless Youth (HHS) • Shelter Plus Care Program (Department of Housing and Urban Development) • Scattered Sites Grant (Department of Housing and Urban Development) |
| *Maya Angelou Public Charter School | Washington | D.C. | Creates learning environments in low-income communities in which teens, particularly those who have not succeeded in traditional schools, can develop the academic, social, and employment skills they need to build rewarding lives and promote positive change in their communities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No federal funding^c |
| *MY TURN, Inc. | Brockton | Mass. | Assists youth in the development and identification of their skills, goals, and self-confidence through career exploration, employment training, and postsecondary planning in collaboration with partnering organizations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIA (Labor) |
| Northwest Piedmont Service Corps | Winston Salem | N.C. | Helps young men and women develop workplace and life skills to make them successful contributing members of the community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIA (Labor) |
| *Oasis Center | Nashville | Tenn. | Addresses the needs of youth in crisis through housing and other support services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Runaway and Homeless Youth (HHS) |
| *Open Meadow Alternative Schools | Portland | Ore. | Aims to retain youth who have not fared well in traditional academic settings and those who have already dropped out, as well as supporting their transition to college and employment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIA (Labor) • Community Development Block Grant (Department of Housing and Urban Development) |

**Appendix I: List of Local Programs
Interviewed**

| Organization name | City | State | Brief description | Key federal funding source(s)^a |
|--|-------------|--------------|--|---|
| Operation Fresh Start | Madison | Wis. | Serves at-risk youth, primarily high school dropouts and offenders, through a paid opportunity to learn basic work skills, improve basic academic skills, prepare for the high school equivalency examination or complete diplomas, secure and retain employment and/or postsecondary placement at the end of training, and contribute to the community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AmeriCorps (Corporation for National and Community Service) Community Development Block Grant (Department of Housing and Urban Development) HOME Investment Partnerships Program (Department of Housing and Urban Development) WIA (Labor) |
| *Portland Community College–Gateway to College | Portland | Ore. | Promotes student success and readiness for an adult learning environment by grouping students into learning communities for their first term, offering intensive literacy development, maintaining rigorous academic standards, and providing individualized support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not applicable^d |
| *Project CRAFT/Nashville | Nashville | Tenn. | Strives to improve educational levels, teach vocational skills, and reduce recidivism among adjudicated youth while addressing the home-building industry’s need for entry-level workers by incorporating hands-on training in the construction trade with academic instruction. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Offender Grant (Labor) |
| Promise House–Transitional Living Services Program | Dallas | Tex. | Offers older youth who have nowhere to go, no family, no money, and nowhere to live the opportunity not only to learn how to live independently, but to finish their education, find meaningful work, and become productive citizens. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuum of Care Grant (Department of Housing and Urban Development) Runaway and Homeless Youth (HHS) |
| * Sasha Bruce Youthwork–Independent Living Program | Washington | D.C. | Strives to improve the lives of runaway, homeless, neglected, and at-risk youth and their families in the Washington area by providing shelter, counseling, life skills training, and positive youth development activities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stewart McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (HHS) |
| School to Career | San Antonio | Tex. | Promotes and sustains communication among community partners to leverage resources and supportive services for young adults aging out of the foster care system. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No federal funding |
| Teen Living Programs–Transitional Living Program | Chicago | Ill. | Assists youth who are homeless to permanently leave the streets, secure stable housing, and build self-sufficient, satisfying lives. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Runaway and Homeless Youth (HHS) |

**Appendix I: List of Local Programs
Interviewed**

| Organization name | City | State | Brief description | Key federal funding source(s)^a |
|--|-------------|--------------|--|--|
| Welcome New Jersey– Camden Community Connections | Camden | N.J. | Provides life skills management, job readiness skills training, education tutorial and academic progress assistance, and community service and job opportunities to youth living in Camden County who are at risk of adjudication through the juvenile justice system. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Growth Youth Offender Initiative (Labor) • WIA (Labor) |
| *Youth Opportunity (YO!) Baltimore | Baltimore | M.D. | Helps City youth receive the education and career skills training needed to become successful adults. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIA (Labor) • Youth Opportunity (Labor) |
| *Youth Opportunity (YO) Boston | Boston | Mass. | YO Boston is a citywide program that helps young people on the wrong path make a turn toward a positive, self-sufficient future by connecting them with opportunities and employment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No federal funding^e |
| YouthBuild McLean County | Bloomington | Ill. | Offers young people an opportunity to build their futures and their communities through education, leadership development, job training, and the rehabilitation and production of affordable housing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AmeriCorps (Corporation for National and Community Service) • YouthBuild (Labor) • Urban and Rural Community Economic Development Program (HHS) • Self-Help Housing Loan program (U.S. Department of Agriculture) |
| *Youth Employment Partnership, Inc. | Oakland | Calif. | Provides training, job placement, access to education, and comprehensive support services to enhance the employment opportunities of underserved youth. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AmeriCorps (Corporation for National and Community Service) • WIA (Labor) • YouthBuild (Labor) |
| Youth In Need— Transitional Living Program | St. Charles | Mo. | Offers homeless youth opportunities to learn independent living skills, work toward completing their education, and become self-sufficient members of the community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Runaway and Homeless Youth (HHS) |

Source: GAO analysis of data from 39 local programs.

^aKey federal funding sources as reported by the 39 program directors. GAO did not verify this information.

^bThis funding source provides only 1 percent of the program’s budget.

^cPreviously, the program reported receiving federal funding through the TRIO grant (Education); Safe Schools/Healthy Schools (HHS, Justice, and Education); and Titles I, II, and V of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended (Education).

^dThis program received less than \$10,000 from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I (Education) in fiscal year 2006.

^eInitially, this program was funded by the federal Youth Opportunity Grant. However, program authorization expired in fiscal year 2003 and funding has not been appropriated for the program.

Appendix II: Scope and Methodology

Our review focused on (1) the characteristics of programs that provide services to disconnected youth, (2) the key elements of locally operated programs that program directors attribute to their success in reconnecting youth to education and employment, and (3) the challenges that are involved in implementing and operating these programs and how federal agencies are helping to address these challenges. For the purposes of this engagement, we defined disconnected youth as individuals between the ages of 14 and 24 who have dropped out of school and are not employed, or do not have supportive social networks, which may help youth access employment or educational opportunities. This definition is intended to include youth who are close to aging out of the foster care system, in the juvenile justice system, homeless and runaway youth, and youth who have dropped out of school. We did not focus on prevention efforts, such as school-focused dropout prevention programs, or on youth with disabilities or migrant youth, although prevention efforts may be part of programs we reviewed, and youth with disabilities and migrant youth may be among the disconnected youth these programs serve.

To obtain background information on the role the federal government plays in assisting programs that serve disconnected youth, we identified four primary federal agencies as having programs for this population: the Departments of Labor, HHS, Justice, and Education. We selected these agencies based on their legislative mandate to administer relevant federal programs, our previous work, and reports from the Congressional Research Service and the White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth, and discussions with federal officials. However, other federal agencies, such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Corporation for National and Community Service, may also have programs that serve this population. We talked with agency officials to identify the key programs within these four agencies that serve disconnected youth. We reviewed the relevant laws, regulations, appropriations, and documents of 15 key federal programs as well as coordinating bodies involved with assisting disconnected youth, and synthesized information from interviews with appropriate federal officials.

To obtain information on the types of programs that provide services to disconnected youth and to understand the key elements that contribute to the success of locally operated programs and the challenges they face, we interviewed directors of local programs identified by agency officials and 11 experts on youth issues as successfully helping disconnected youth reach educational or employment goals. We selected experts based on their understanding of and range of perspectives on youth issues as well as their knowledge of efforts under way at the local level. Specifically, we

identified them through reviews of key studies, participation in the White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth, and other conferences focused on youth issues. In speaking with the experts, we asked them to identify other experts in the field who were working on disconnected youth issues, and we reviewed our list with three of the experts to ensure we had a comprehensive list. We asked the experts and agency officials to identify local programs that could serve as examples or models for expansion or replication that represent various approaches or subpopulations and geographic diversity, including programs in both urban and rural locations. We also asked them to indicate the specific reasons why they were recommending the program as successful and whether evaluation results or outcome data were available for the local effort. However, many noted that rigorous program evaluations are not readily available. Likewise, when we asked programs we interviewed whether they had conducted impact evaluations of their programs, few had completed evaluations. We did not review any available evaluations in determining whether to include a program in our review.

Out of 100 programs that were identified, we selected 39 local programs to include in our review. We selected a mix of programs in 16 states and the District of Columbia that provided different types of services, such as transitional living programs, employment skills training programs, and alternative education programs; that targeted different subpopulations; and that represented geographic diversity, including a mix of urban and rural locations. (See app. I for a list of the programs we interviewed.) Most of the programs received federal funding, but some relied primarily on state, local, or private funding sources. For organizations with multiple programs focused on disadvantaged youth, we asked the executive director to identify the single program that had the most long-standing success in reconnecting youth to education and employment.

We interviewed directors of these programs using a standard set of questions. We asked directors to provide information on the key elements they thought made the program successful, implementing and operating challenges, gaps in services provided in their community, funding sources, and federal grants and policies. Prior to the interviews, we reviewed our list of closed-ended and open-ended questions with internal and external experts and conducted two pretests to ensure the questions were appropriate and clear. To use resources most efficiently, we conducted in-person interviews with 19 programs in six locations where there were a number of programs to visit, that enabled us to have broad geographic coverage, and where we could see examples of the different types of programs assisting disconnected youth. Site visit locations included

Baltimore, Maryland; Boston and Brockton, Massachusetts; Nashville, Tennessee; Portland, Oregon; San Francisco and Oakland, California; and Washington, D.C. On our site visits, we toured facilities and met with youth at the programs we visited to learn about their experiences in the program. In addition, we spoke with representatives from various citywide initiatives in Baltimore, Boston, and San Francisco to gain an understanding of their efforts at cross-system collaboration to serve disconnected youth. We completed the remaining interviews by phone. We conducted this performance audit from May 2007 to February 2008 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix III: Key Federal Grant Programs That Serve Disconnected Youth

| Agency or office | Federal grant | Eligible youth | Purpose |
|--|---|--|--|
| Department of Labor | | | |
| Office of the Secretary | Job Corps | Low-income youth ages 16 to 24 | To assist eligible youth who need and can benefit from an intensive program, operated in a group setting in residential and nonresidential centers, to become more responsible, employable, and productive citizens. |
| Employment and Training Administration | Workforce Investment Act Youth Activities | Low-income Individuals ages 14 to 21 who have a barrier to completing an educational program or securing or holding employment | To make available to youth activities in workforce training, education attainment, community involvement, leadership development, and supports while in the program and for follow-up services not less than 12 months after program completion. |
| Employment and Training Administration | YouthBuild | School dropouts ages 16 to 24, who are members of a low-income family, in foster care, or are youth offenders, disabled, migrant, or children of incarcerated parents. | To provide disadvantaged youth with opportunities for employment, education, leadership development, and training through the rehabilitation or construction of housing for homeless individuals and low-income families, and of public facilities |
| Employment and Training Administration | Youth Offender Grants | 14 to 24-year-old youth offenders, gang members, and youth at risk of court or gang involvement | To increase employability and employment of youth offenders, gang members, and youth at risk of court or gang involvement. |
| Employment and Training Administration | Youth Opportunity Grants (Program authorization expired in fiscal year 2003 and funding has not been appropriated for the program) | All 14 to 21-year-olds residing in designated impoverished areas | To provide education, employment, and leadership development activities and supports for youth in high-poverty neighborhoods to increase their long-term employment. |
| Department of Health and Human Services | | | |
| Children's Bureau | Chafee Foster Care Independence Program | Children who are likely to remain in foster care as well as youth 18 to 21 who have aged out of the foster care system | To identify youth likely to remain in foster care until age 18 and assist these youth up to age 21 to make the transition to self-sufficiency by providing housing and educational and vocational services, among other services. |

**Appendix III: Key Federal
Grant Programs That Serve
Disconnected Youth**

| Agency or office | Federal grant | Eligible youth | Purpose |
|---|---|---|---|
| Family and Youth Services Bureau | Runaway and Homeless Youth Program | Emergency services for homeless and runaway youth under 18 years of age. Transitional housing services for homeless youth ages 16 to 21 | To provide comprehensive services for youth in at-risk situations and their families. The program supports emergency shelter and services and street-based education and outreach to young people, and provides older homeless youth with longer-term housing and assistance to develop the skills and resources to live independently. |
| Department of Education | | | |
| Office of Vocational and Adult Education | Adult Education Basic Grants to States | Adults and out-of-school youth ages 16 and older | To provide adult education and literacy services, including workplace literacy services, family literacy services, and English literacy and civic education programs. |
| Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools | Grants to States for Workplace and Community Transition Training for Incarcerated Youth | A person age 25 or younger who is incarcerated in a state prison and is within 5 years of release or parole | To assist and encourage incarcerated youth to acquire functional literacy, and life and job skills through the pursuit of postsecondary education certificates, associate of arts degrees, and bachelor's degrees. |
| Office of Elementary and Secondary Education | Education for Homeless Children and Youth—Grants for States and Local Activities | Homeless children, including preschoolers and youth | To ensure that homeless children, including preschoolers and youth, have equal access to free and appropriate public education. Among other things, this grant also supports an office for the coordination of the education of homeless children and youth in each state. |
| Office of Elementary and Secondary Education | Title I-D Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk— Grants for States and Localities | Children and youths in state-run institutions for juveniles and in adult correctional institutions | To improve educational services for neglected and delinquent children and youth in state-run institutions for juveniles and in adult correctional institutions. |
| Department of Justice | | | |
| Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention | Part E Developing, Testing, and Demonstrating Promising New Initiatives and Programs | Individuals 17 and under involved in the juvenile justice system; some states may provide services until their 24th birthday | To support programs that will develop, test, or demonstrate promising new initiatives that may prevent, control, or reduce juvenile delinquency. |
| Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention | Title II B—State Formula Grants | Individuals 17 and under involved in the juvenile justice system; some states may provide services until their 24th birthday | To support the planning, establishment, operation, coordination, and evaluation of projects for the development of more effective juvenile delinquency programs and improved juvenile justice systems. |

**Appendix III: Key Federal
Grant Programs That Serve
Disconnected Youth**

| Agency or office | Federal grant | Eligible youth | Purpose |
|---|---|--|--|
| Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention | Juvenile Accountability Block Grant | Individuals 17 and under involved in the juvenile justice system; some states may provide services until their 24th birthday | To strengthen their juvenile justice systems and encourage juveniles to be accountable for their actions. |
| Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention | Title V Community Prevention Block Grants | Individuals under age 17 involved in the juvenile justice system; some states may provide services until their 24th birthday | To support local projects and activities for youth who have had contact with the juvenile justice system or who are likely to have contact with the juvenile justice system. |

Source: GAO analysis of agency data.

Appendix IV: Comments from the Department of Labor

U.S. Department of Labor

Employment and Training Administration
200 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20210



FEB 5 2008

Ms. Cornelia M. Ashby
Director
Education, Workforce, and Income Security Issues
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Ms. Ashby:

Thank you for sharing the Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report entitled, *DISCONNECTED YOUTH: Federal Action Could Address Some of the Challenges Faced by Local Programs That Reconnect Youth to Education and Employment* with the Department. The Department found the report to be very informative. In the report, GAO provides guidance on improving the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act, Youth Activities program. GAO recommends the Department "...work with states and Workforce Investment Boards to better ensure they have the information and guidance needed to develop and implement contracts that allow local programs to serve youth who are in need of more assistance than others while still achieving performance goals."

The Department agrees with this recommendation and intends to work with Workforce Investment Boards to identify constraints and plans to issue guidance to the Workforce Investment system in the spring of 2008 that will provide specific examples of ways to develop contracts with local service providers that allow them to successfully serve youth at varying skill levels. In addition, the Department will provide technical assistance to support the implementation of this guidance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Dowd", written over a horizontal line.

Thomas M. Dowd
Administrator
Office of Policy Development and Research

Appendix V: Comments from the Department of Health and Human Services



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Office of the Assistant Secretary
for Legislation

Washington, D.C. 20201

FEB 8 2008

Ms. Cornelia M. Ashby
Director
Education, Workforce, and
Income Security Issues
U.S. Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Ashby:

Enclosed are the Department's comments on the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) draft report entitled: *Disconnected Youth: Federal Action Could Address Some of the Challenges Faced by Local Programs that Reconnect Youth to Education and Employment* (GAO 08-313).

The Department appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on this report before its publication.

Sincerely,
for Rebecca Hornum
Vince Ventimiglia
Assistant Secretary for Legislation

**COMMENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
ON THE GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE'S (GAO) DRAFT
REPORT ENTITLED, "DISCONNECTED YOUTH: FEDERAL ACTION
COULD ADDRESS SOME OF THE CHALLENGES FACED BY LOCAL
PROGRAMS THAT RECONNECT YOUTH TO EDUCATION AND
EMPLOYMENT (GAO-08-313)**

GAO Recommendation

To improve implementation of the WIA Youth Activities program, we recommend that the Secretary of Labor work with states and Workforce Investment Boards to better ensure they have the information and guidance needed to develop and implement contracts that allow local programs to serve youth who are in need of more assistance than others while still achieving performance goals. This could include (1) working with Workforce Investment Boards to identify and understand the incentives or constraints that discourage boards from structuring contracts with local programs that would assist their efforts to serve lower-skilled youth, (2) issuing guidance—based on this input—that provides specific examples of ways to develop contracts with local service providers that allow them to serve youth at varying skill levels, and (3) providing technical assistance to support the implementation of this guidance.

Response to Recommendation

Since 2005, in an effort to provide stronger support to local partnerships as they work to support youth, several Federal agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Labor, the Department of Education, and the Department of Justice, have created a website called the Community Guide to Helping America's Youth (www.helpingamericasyouth.gov). This website provides interactive tools to assist communities as they seek to form effective partnerships, assess community assets, map local and Federal resources, and search for evidence-based programs to meet the needs of youth, including disconnected youth.

Appendix VI: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Cornelia M. Ashby, (202) 512-7215, ashbyc@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

Gale Harris (Assistant Director) and Kate Blumenreich (Analyst-in-Charge) managed all aspects of the assignment. Kim Siegal and Ashanta Williams made significant contributions to this report in all aspects of the work. Tiffany Boiman, George Erhart, Adrienne Fernandes, Jessikah Foulk, Tamara Fucile, Claire Li, and Flavio Menasce also made contributions to the report. Susannah Compton contributed to writing this report. Luann Moy provided key technical support, and Jessica Botsford provided legal support. Avrum Ashery developed the graphics for the report.

Related GAO Products

African American Children in Foster Care: Additional HHS Assistance Needed to Help States Reduce the Proportion in Care. [GAO-07-816](#). Washington, D.C.: July 11, 2007.

YouthBuild Program: Analysis of Outcome Data Needed to Determine Long-Term Benefits. [GAO-07-82](#). Washington, D.C.: February 28, 2007.

Child Welfare: Improving Social Service Program, Training, and Technical Assistance Information Would Help Address Longstanding Service-Level and Workforce Challenges. [GAO-07-75](#). Washington, D.C.: October 6, 2006.

Youth Opportunity Grants: Lessons Can Be Learned from Program, but Labor Needs to Make Data Available. [GAO-06-53](#). Washington, D.C.: December 9, 2005.

Foster Youth: HHS Actions Could Improve Coordination of Services and Monitoring of States' Independent Living Programs. [GAO-05-25](#). Washington, D.C.: November 18, 2004.

Workforce Investment Act: Labor Actions Can Help States Improve Quality of Performance Outcome Data and Delivery of Youth Services. [GAO-04-308](#). Washington, D.C.: February 23, 2004.

Juvenile Justice: OJJDP Reporting Requirements for Discretionary and Formula Grantees and Concerns About Evaluation Studies. [GAO-02-23](#). Washington, D.C.: October 30, 2001.

At-Risk Youth: School-Community Collaborations Focus on Improving Student Outcomes. [GAO-01-66](#). Washington, D.C.: October 10, 2000.

Foster Care: Effectiveness of Independent Living Services Unknown. [GAO/HEHS-00-13](#). Washington, D.C.: November 5, 1999.

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Related GAO Products

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