

Texas Workforce Investment Council
December 2005



Welfare to Work Initiatives in Texas Report 2005

Workforce Development Programs
and Initiatives in Texas
that Focus on Welfare to Work

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Mission

*Assisting the Governor and the Legislature with strategic planning for
and evaluation of the Texas workforce development system to promote
the development of a well-educated, highly-skilled workforce for Texas.*



Texas Workforce Investment Council

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John W. Wroten

Cheryl Fuller
Director

Dear Texas Workforce System Stakeholder:

The Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council) is pleased to present this sixth annual welfare reform report, *Welfare to Work Initiatives in Texas: Report 2005*, as mandated by Texas Government Code 2308.101(14). This report was approved at the Council's December 9, 2005 meeting.

You will find the structure of this report somewhat different than those published in the past. This year, in an effort to present this information in a more timely manner and address the needs of different audiences, the report has been reorganized into two separate reports. *Welfare to Work Initiatives in Texas: Report 2005* addresses the Council's requirement to provide an annual report on welfare to work initiatives. A second and companion report, *Demographics and Trends in the Welfare Population: Report 2005*, is being published as a State of the Workforce report and is available on the Council's website at <http://www.governor.state.tx.us/divisions/twic>.

This report is organized into three sections. *Programs that Directly Serve TANF and State Program Recipients* highlights programs specifically designed to serve families on TANF and the State Program. The second section, *Other Programs Available to TANF and State Program Recipients*, features programs which impact TANF and State Program families, but also serve a larger population. *Best Practices in Welfare to Work in Texas*, the third section, highlights four programs that demonstrate successful collaborations between local workforce development boards and local employers. These programs were all featured in last year's *Welfare to Work Initiatives in Texas: Report 2004*, and are being revisited to illustrate their sustainability and continued success.

I commend this report to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann Hodge".

Ann F. Hodge, Chair

Welfare to Work Initiatives in Texas: Report 2005

*Workforce Development Programs and Initiatives in Texas
that Focus on Welfare to Work*



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Mandate to the Texas Workforce Investment Council

Texas Government Code 2308.101(14) requires the Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council) to provide annual reports to the Governor and Legislature, “including an annual report analyzing work development programs that focus on welfare to work initiatives.”

This report aligns with *Destination 2010: FY2004–FY2009 Strategic Plan for the Texas Workforce Development System (Destination 2010)*, endorsed by the Council in September 2003 and approved by the Governor in October 2003.

Destination 2010 identifies the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and services to TANF participants specifically in one of the strategic plan’s Critical Success Factors and a Long Term Objective.

Critical Success Factor:

Current and future workers (including TANF participants) will access and be successful at the programs necessary to gain knowledge and skills for tomorrow’s economy. The system will achieve this by maximizing participant outcomes at critical points in the continuum of education to employment, including:

- *Adult Education*
- *Secondary Education*
- *Postsecondary Education*
- *Employment for mature workers through the Senior Employment Program*
- *High-growth population segments*
- *TANF participants*

Long Term Objective:

Decrease number of TANF recipients cycling on and off TANF by increasing employment retention through reduction of barriers and appropriate post-placement services.

Introduction

For the past five years the *Welfare to Work Initiatives in Texas* report has been published in a single volume and has included sections on the demographics of the welfare population, programs, initiatives, pilots, and best practices in the state. In legislative years, the report also included a section containing issue briefs and recommendations for possible legislative actions.

In an effort to present this information in a more timely manner and address the needs of different audiences, the report has been reorganized into two separate reports. *Welfare to Work Initiatives in Texas: Report 2005* addresses the Council's requirement to provide an annual report on welfare to work initiatives. A second report, *Demographics and Trends in the Welfare Population: Report 2005*, is being published as a State of the Workforce report.

This year, both reports will be published in December 2005. In subsequent years, the *Demographics and Trends in the Welfare Population* report will be published every September. This report will serve as the introductory and companion piece to the report on welfare to work initiatives, and will present and analyze the current status of the welfare population in Texas. The rationale for presenting this information in September is to ensure that, in even-numbered calendar years prior to the start of a Legislative Session, legislators and legislative committees will have adequate time and opportunity to study the report and note any critical issues identified before the Session begins. The *Welfare to Work Initiatives in Texas* report will continue to be published in December of each year.

Scope of Welfare to Work Initiatives in Texas: Report 2005

Welfare to Work Initiatives in Texas: Report 2005 is arranged in three sections. The first section, *Programs Designed for TANF and State Program Recipients*, features programs specifically designed to serve families on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The second section, *Other Programs Available to TANF and State Program Recipients*, features programs that TANF and State Program (SP) recipients are eligible for, but serve others as well. The third section, *Best Practices in Welfare to Work in Texas*, features four programs that demonstrate successful collaborations between local workforce development boards and local employers. These programs were all featured in last year's *Welfare to Work Initiatives in Texas* report, and are being revisited to illustrate their sustainability and continued success.

Executive Summary

To meet the mandate of reporting on the status of current welfare to work initiatives, this report details program purposes, target populations, and types of services provided. Program results are also analyzed and tracked over a six year period. In addition, the report includes a section entitled *Best Practices in Welfare to Work in Texas*, featuring successful collaborations between local workforce development boards (local board) and local employers.

Programs that directly serve the TANF and State Program (SP) population featured in this report are:

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is the federal cash grant welfare program for eligible low-income adults with children. The TANF program is administered in Texas by the Health and Human Services Commission. It provides eligibility services, tracks families' time on TANF, and administers the cash grants.

Choices, the training and employment program for TANF and SP adults, prepares TANF and SP adults for employment, assists them in finding employment, and arranges for support to the family following employment to further facilitate their transition to self-sufficiency. In FY2005, 73,015 clients were served, placing 48,240 TANF and SP adults in employment. The "Pay for Performance" model is a provision of HB 2292, 78th Legislature, which requires TANF and SP adults to abide by the requirements of the Personal Responsibility Agreement. The "Pay for Performance" provisions of HB 2292, 78th Legislature, have increased the numbers of adults participating in work activities with a 61% increase in the percentage of Choices adults participating since the implementation of the legislation.

This report also discusses other programs which are available to TANF and State Program recipients, but also serve a wider population:

The **Services To At Risk Youth (STAR)** program provides services to youth who are runaways, truant, or at risk of abuse. The program served 25,244 TANF-eligible youth in FY2005, and has been serving slightly fewer youth every year for the past five years, with the exception of FY2002.

Adult Education provides services to adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency. The program served 11,483 TANF and SP adults in FY2005, up from 11,089 last year. In addition, 918 TANF and SP adults earned a GED in FY2005.

Communities in Schools (CIS) serves at-risk youth in schools. In FY2005, the program operated on 932 campuses in 104 school districts. The number of TANF and SP youth served was 875 in FY2005, down from a high of 1,194 in FY2001. However, the program has increased the number of at-risk youth served each of the last six years, serving 43,721 in FY2005.

Postsecondary Career and Technical Education is provided by Texas' 50 public community college districts, four technical colleges, three lower-division state colleges, and 35 four-year universities. TANF adults with at least a high school diploma or GED may access these education services. In FY2005, these individuals constituted 54% of the TANF

population. However, current TANF law limits the amount of postsecondary education that can be counted toward the work activity requirements. TANF reauthorization may increase the requirement for work activities and change eligible work activities, thereby allowing TANF adults to potentially count their college hours as part of the increasing work activities requirement.

Pell Grants are federal grants available to many low-income students enrolling in postsecondary education training. All TANF and SP adults are eligible for Pell Grants while on TANF or SP. The number of Texas students receiving Pell Grants has increased every year since FY2001.

The **Self-Sufficiency Fund** is funded with TANF dollars for TANF and SP adults, or others at risk of being on welfare. This fund is used for job training and is accessed by individual employers or employer consortia through a community or technical college, the Texas Engineering Extension Service, or a local community-based organization. In FY2005, 7,995 individuals were trained for jobs in 76 participating companies.

The Health and Human Services Commission administers the **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** and **Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (RSDI)** Programs. These programs assist TANF and SP recipients apply as appropriate for SSI and RSDI with the goal of obtaining eligibility for the cash benefits. Both programs have grown in scope and effectiveness over the past six years, growing from 365 accepted cases in FY2000 to 1,148 in FY2005.

The three sections of this report include valuable information on the programs, initiatives, pilots, and best practices that serve Texas' TANF and State Program families. It is useful for policymakers and stakeholders to understand the purposes, target populations, types of services, participant eligibility, and outcomes of these programs to determine if they are currently and successfully providing effective services to the target populations.

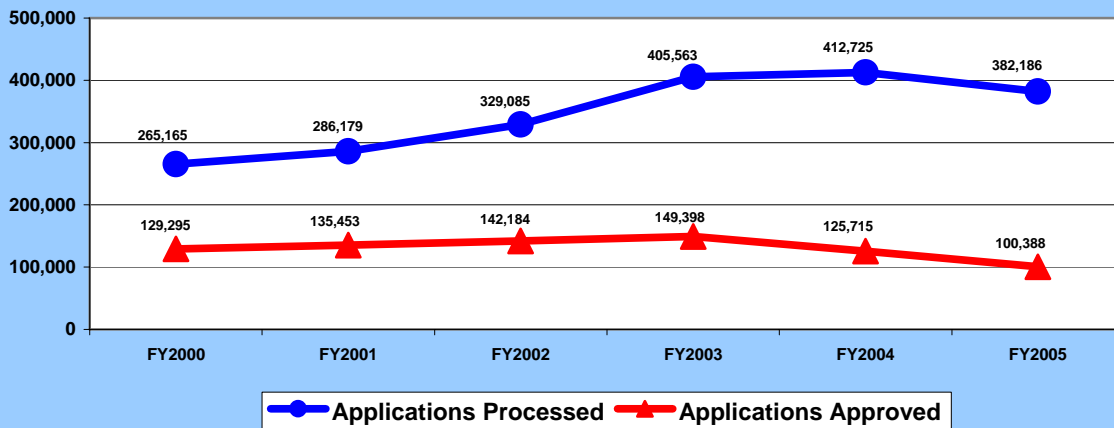
Programs That Directly Serve TANF and State Program Recipients

This section examines programs that directly serve recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the State Program (SP). The State Program is the cash grant program for two-parent families in Texas. TANF and the State Program are administered in Texas by the Health and Human Services Commission. Choices, administered by the Texas Workforce Commission, is the employment and training program for TANF and SP adults. For each program, the purpose, target population, participant eligibility, types of services offered, and six years of program results are detailed.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is the federal cash grant welfare program for eligible low-income adults with children. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is the state agency in Texas designated for TANF administration. HHSC collaborates with community partners to identify, develop, and expand resources to encourage independence. HHSC is responsible for eligibility determination, eligibility-related issues such as sanctions, and tracks the number of months a recipient is on TANF for purposes of state and federal time-limits. HHSC is also the administrative agency for Medicaid and Food Stamps, support programs that TANF and SP recipients utilize. The chart below references the number of applications for TANF and SP that are processed. Also represented on the chart is the number of applications approved, which is the number of families coming onto TANF or SP. This number has declined for the past two years.

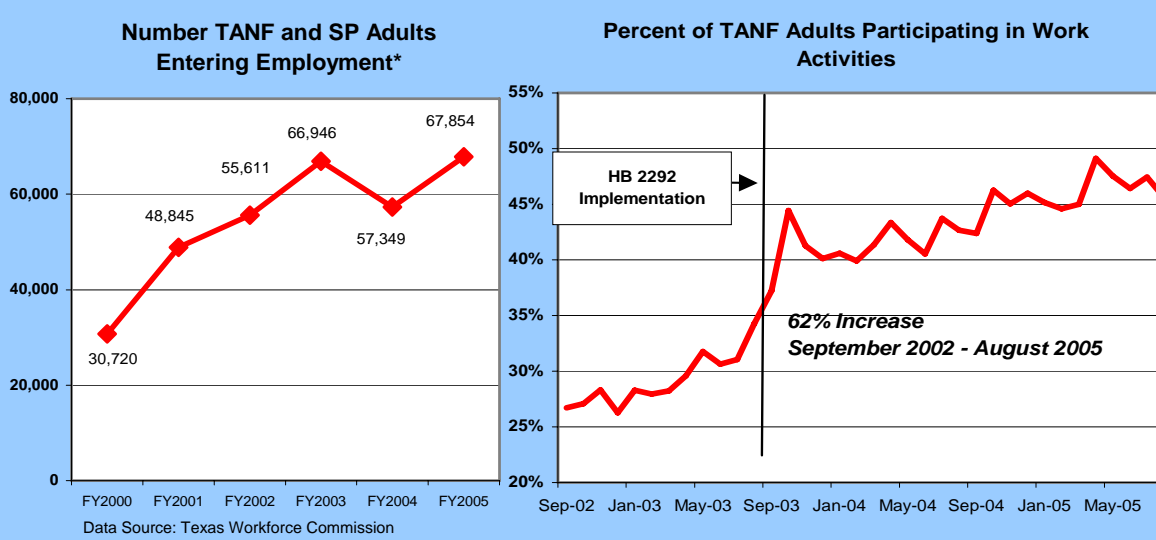
**Total TANF and SP Applications Processed and Approved
FY2000-FY2005**



Federal Administrative Agency:	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families
State Administrative Agency:	Health and Human Services Commission
Purpose of Program:	Cash grant program for eligible families
Target Population:	Families with children with little or no income
Participant Eligibility:	Based on income and size of family
Types of Services:	Eligibility determination, eligibility-related policies, administration and distribution of cash grants
FY2005 Program Results:	
Number Applications Processed:	382,186
Number Applications Approved:	100,388

Choices

Choices, Texas' employment and training program for welfare recipients, has continued successfully assisting TANF and State Program (SP) adults to enter employment. With its "Work First" and "Pay for Performance" models, the program serves adults by preparing, training, and placing them in work. Illustrated in the chart below left, 67,854 TANF and SP adults entered employment in FY2005, earning approximately \$88.3 million and saving taxpayers approximately \$21.5 million in cash assistance payments. The Choices program, a sub-set of the TANF and State Program, served 73,015 adults from August 2004 through July 2005, with 48,240 entering employment, a 66% entered employment rate. Because of the "Pay for Performance" provisions of HB 2292, 78th Legislature, there has been a significant rise in the percent of TANF and SP adults participating in work activities, as illustrated in the chart below right. Since the implementation of the legislation, there has been a 62% increase in the percent of adults participating in work activities. In July 2005, the sanction rate had dropped to 9%.



Federal Administrative Agency:	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families
State Administrative Agency:	Texas Workforce Commission
Purpose of Program:	Employment and training activities for TANF and State Program adults
Target Population:	TANF and State Program adults
Participant Eligibility:	Same as TANF for mandatory adults required to participate in work activities
Types of Services:	Job readiness activities, vocational and other training, educational activities, job search, support services, case management
FY2005 Program Results:	
TANF and SP adults Entered Employment:	67,854

*2000 and 2001 entered employments figures were revised by the Texas Workforce Commission.

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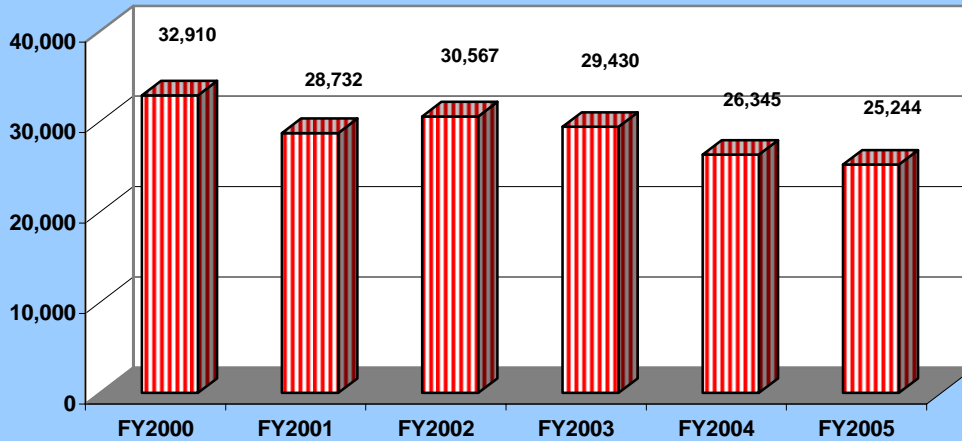
Other Programs Available to TANF and State Program Recipients

This section of the report examines other state and federal programs that are available to recipients of TANF and the State Program (SP). These programs are not specifically designed for TANF and SP recipients but have eligibility requirements which would include them. A program such as Adult Basic Education, administered by the Texas Education Agency, is open to all adults and is included in this section because of its importance for TANF and SP adults. Other programs such as the Self-Sufficiency Fund, Postsecondary Education, and Communities in Schools are all important components to the training and/or education of TANF and State Program recipients and are, therefore included in this section. In some cases, such as the Adult Basic Education program, TANF and SP recipients are tracked within the program, allowing specific results for these participants to be reported. In other cases, such as Postsecondary Education and Pell Grants, TANF and SP recipients are not identified and therefore, data is either limited or unavailable. Thus, only general program results can be reported.

Services to At Risk Youth (STAR)

The Services to At Risk Youth (STAR) program was established in 1983 to fill gaps in services to youth who are runaways, truant, at risk of running away, or at risk of abuse, and who did not meet the criteria for Child Protective Services or services of county juvenile probation programs. Services must include family crisis intervention counseling, short-term emergency residential care, individual family counseling, and primary child abuse prevention services. STAR provides services in all 254 counties in Texas. It is funded with a combination of \$2.5 million in General Revenue (GR), \$7.6 million in GR for TANF maintenance of effort funds, \$3.3 million in GR dedicated funds, and \$4.6 million in Title IV-B, Social Security Act funds. The program is provided by community agencies contracted by the state. The chart below references the numbers of TANF-eligible youth served over the past six years.

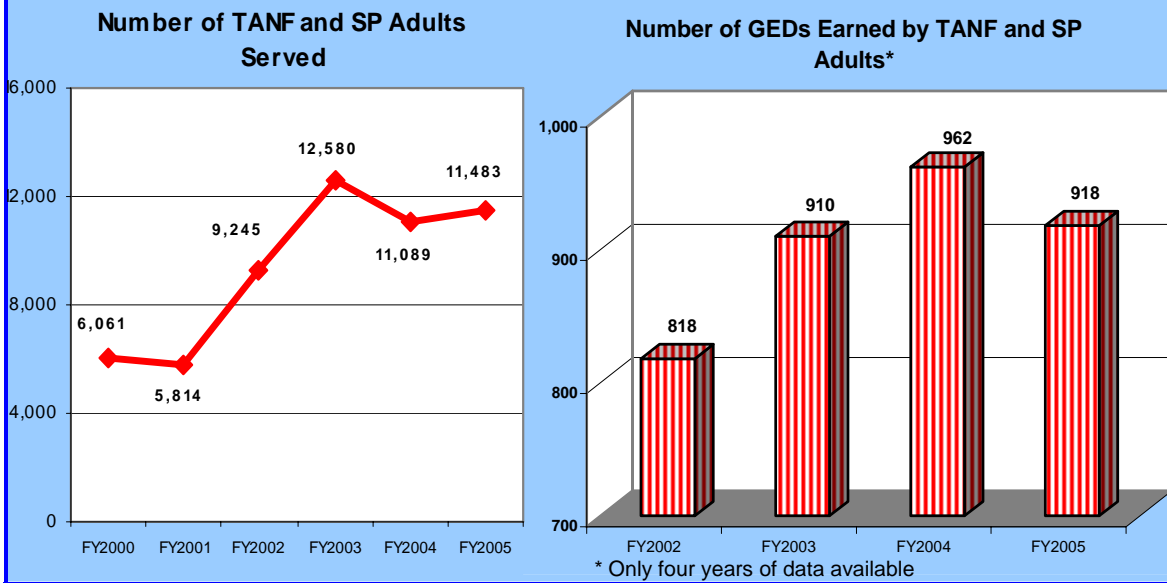
Number of TANF-eligible Youth Served



Federal Administrative Agency:	None
State Administrative Agency:	Health and Human Services Commission
Purpose of Program:	Provide services to at risk youth
Target Population:	Youth who are runaways, truant, at risk of running away, or at risk of abuse
Participant Eligibility:	Youth who do not meet the criteria for Child Protective Services or county juvenile probation services but otherwise meet the target population criteria
Types of Services:	Family crisis intervention counseling, short-term emergency residential care, individual and family counseling, and primary child abuse prevention
FY2005 Program Results:	
Number of TANF-eligible Youth Served:	25,244

Adult Education for TANF Recipients

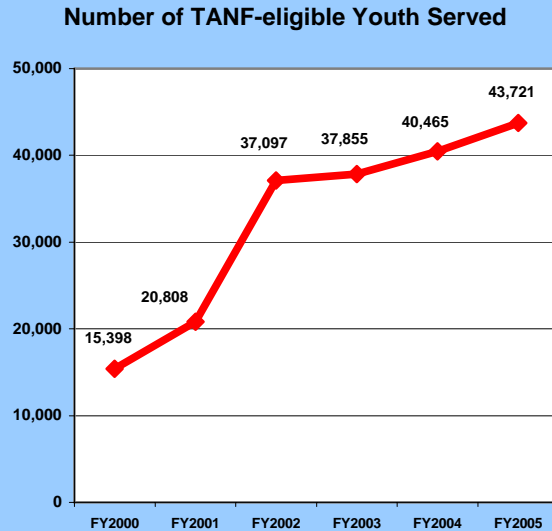
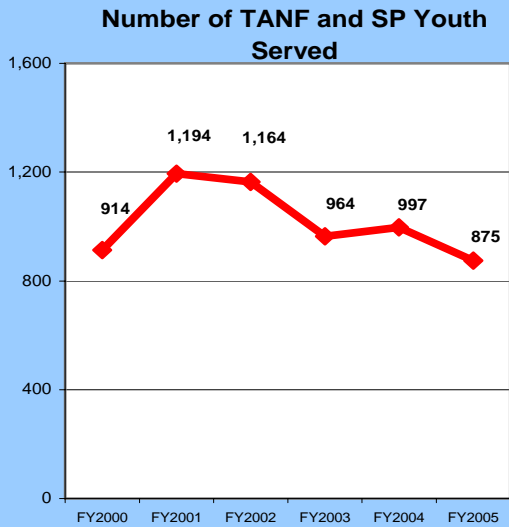
The Adult Education program is authorized both in the Workforce Investment Act, Title II, and the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. It provides services to adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency. These skills might include academic skills training, workforce readiness and work-related training, parenting skills, English as a second language, and GED preparation. Adult education providers are strongly encouraged to form collaborative partnerships with local workforce development boards, local Health and Human Services Commission offices, local support service providers, and employers. The chart below left references the number of TANF and SP adults served over the past six years and the chart below right references the number of GEDs earned by TANF and SP adults.



Federal Administrative Agency:	U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Education
State Administrative Agency:	Texas Education Agency
Purpose of Program:	To provide basic education to adults in TANF and SP
Target Population:	TANF and State Program adults
Participant Eligibility:	None
Types of Services:	Adult basic education, English as a second language, GED preparation, workforce readiness, work-related training, and similar services
FY2005 Program Results:	
Number TANF and SP Served:	11,483
Number Contact Hours:	1,229,583
Percent Completing Educational Level:	65.4%
Percent Continuing to Next Level:	35.9% (4,122)
Percent of GEDs Completed:	8.0% (918)

Communities in Schools

The Communities in Schools program is a state funded program operating on 632 campuses, in 64 counties, and 104 school districts. The program provides case-managed services to at-risk students which are designed to help them be successful in the school environment. Services, while available to all at-risk students, also serve TANF and State Program students in school. The primary focus of the program is to keep students in school and to help them reach the goal of graduation. Assistance in academic programs, counseling, mentoring, as well as career guidance and exploration are all available services to students. Funding comes from Compensatory Education funds and TANF. The chart below left shows that fewer TANF and SP youth are being served, while the chart below right demonstrates that the program is serving more low-income students.

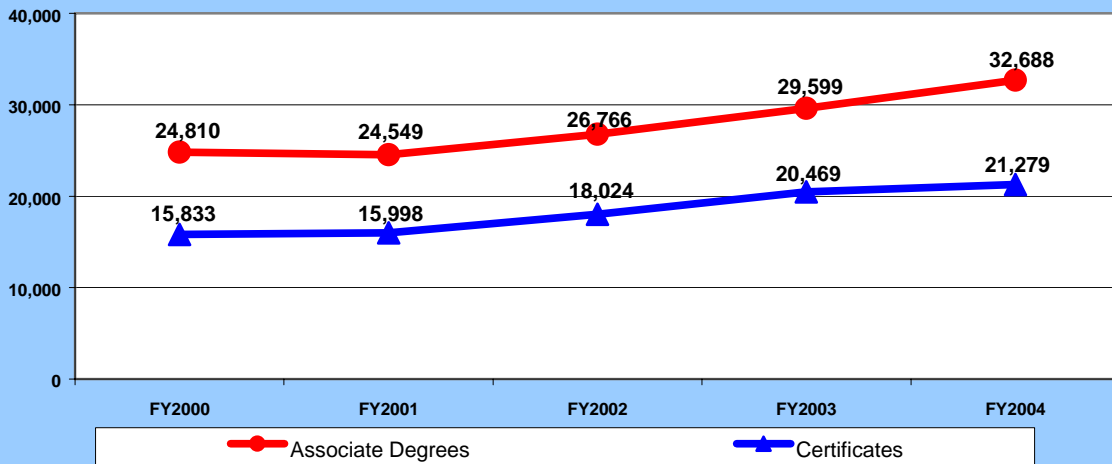


Federal Administrative Agency:	None
State Administrative Agency:	Texas Education Agency
Purpose of Program:	To provide case-managed services to at-risk students enrolled in school
Target Population:	At-risk youth
Participant Eligibility:	Student determined to be at risk of dropping out
Types of Services:	Academic and TAKS tutoring, supportive guidance and counseling, mentoring, drug, gang, and violence prevention, career assistance, work experience, parental and family involvement
FY2005 Program Results:	
TANF Students Served:	875
TANF-eligible Students Served:	43,721
Percent Staying in School:	99%

Postsecondary Career and Technical Education

Texas' 50 public community college districts, four technical colleges, three lower-division state colleges, 35 four-year universities, and degree-granting proprietary institutions offer a variety of academic, vocational and technical programs for certification, associate degree, baccalaureate, and higher degrees. Texas' public community and technical colleges offer a wide range of vocational-technical programs that can be completed in flexible entry and exit formats, providing accessibility to TANF recipients who may not be able to attend traditional educational programs. Available data showed that in the 2002-2003 exit cohort of Choices participants, 1,549, about 2%, were pursuing higher education in a state institution. TANF recipients not work-ready, or post-employment, can apply for and receive funding for postsecondary vocational and technical education through a variety of programs including WIA, Apprenticeship, Self-Sufficiency Fund, state grants, and federal Pell Grants. The number of Associate Degrees and Certificates has been increasing steadily over the past five years as illustrated in the graph below.

Number of Associate Degrees and Certificates Granted FY2000 - FY2004*



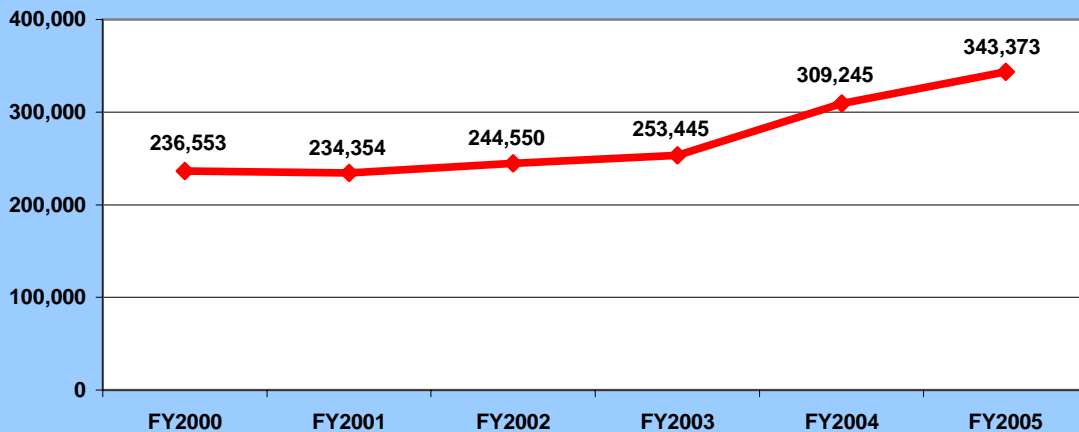
*Only five years of data available.

Federal Administrative Agency:	U.S. Department of Education
State Administrative Agency:	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Purpose of Program:	To provide vocational, technical, and career education to postsecondary students of Texas
Target Population:	Postsecondary students
Participant Eligibility:	High school diploma or GED in most cases
Types of Services:	Academic, vocational and technical skills training; professional development for teachers, counselors and administrators; customized training available to employers
FY2004 Program Results:	
Number of Certificates Granted:	21,279
Number of Associate Degrees Granted:	32,688

Pell Grants

Pell Grants are federal grants for low-income students to attend postsecondary institutions. Most TANF and SP adults are eligible for Pell Grants. In FY2005, almost 54% of TANF and SP adults had earned a high school diploma or GED and would be considered eligible for entry into postsecondary education. Choices case managers can assist a TANF or SP adult who is interested in postsecondary education and training to apply for a Pell Grant. Pell Grants can be used for tuition, fees, books, school-related tools and materials, and living expenses. For the 2004-2005 school year, there were 343,373 Texas students attending postsecondary institutions with Pell Grant assistance, totaling \$835,795,711. Data for TANF and SP recipients receiving Pell Grants is not collected in a manner that allows those participants to be identified.

Number of Texans Enrolled in Postsecondary Education Receiving Pell Grant Assistance

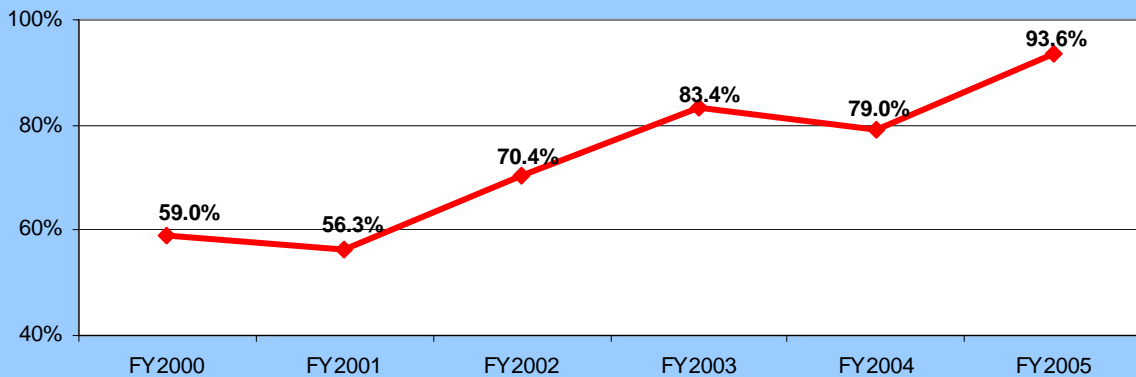


Federal Administrative Agency:	U.S. Department of Education
State Administrative Agency:	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Purpose of Program:	Federal education grants for low income students
Target Population:	Low income students
Participant Eligibility:	Eligible for postsecondary admission (high school diploma, GED) and low income
Types of Services:	Cash grant
FY2005 Program Results:	
Number of Students Attending Postsecondary Institutions with Pell Grants:	343,373

Self-Sufficiency Fund

The Self-Sufficiency Fund was established by the Texas Legislature and began operation in 1998. This program is funded with TANF funds. Employers, or consortiums of employers, initiate a partnership with a community or technical college, the Texas Engineering Extension Service, or a local community-based organization to provide training and act as the fiscal agent for the training project. This program is employer and demand driven as training is customized to the needs of participating employers. Employers agree to hire individuals who successfully complete the training. Eligible adults can be TANF or State Program adults, adults with children who are receiving Food Stamps, or families who are at-risk of going on welfare. As the graph below illustrates, the percentage of trainees from the eligible populations who were hired by the participating businesses has been steadily increasing over the past six years, culminating with 93.6% of trainees hired in FY2005. TANF and SP adults are a sub-set of these trainees and data is not collected separately which would allow identification of the percentage entering employment.

Percent of Self-Sufficiency Fund Trainees Securing Employment with Participating Businesses

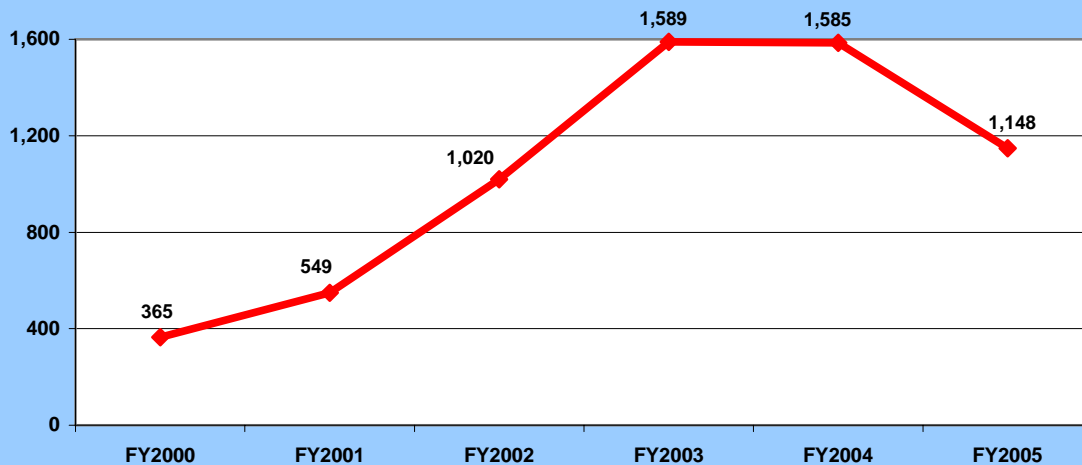


Federal Administrative Agency:	None
State Administrative Agency:	Texas Workforce Commission
Purpose of Program:	Provides funding for customized training of individuals in order to contribute to the success of local employers
Target Population:	TANF and State Program adults, adults with children receiving Food Stamps, families at-risk of being on welfare
Participant Eligibility:	Eligibility for the above named programs
Types of Services:	Customized training with grants awarded through community and technical colleges, statewide extension services, and community-based organizations
FY2005 Program Results:	
Percent of Trainees Securing Employment	93.6%
Number Trainees Served:	7,995

SSI and RSDI Programs

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (RSDI) are two federal programs providing cash assistance and other benefits for the disabled or those otherwise unable to work. A portion of the TANF and SP population is often eligible for these programs and services. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission currently contracts with a private company to assist TANF and State Program individuals through the application and appeals process for both SSI and RSDI. The company helps identify individuals who are probable candidates, assists them with applying for benefits, gathers supporting information from doctors and other professionals, and assists with the appeals process if the initial claim is denied. The chart below references the number of TANF or SP recipients accepted for SSI or RSDI over the past six years.

Number of TANF and SP Recipients Approved for SSI/RSDI



Federal Administrative Agency:	None
State Administrative Agency:	Health and Human Services Commission
Purpose of Program:	To assist TANF and State Program individuals in the application and appeals process for SSI and RSDI
Target Population:	TANF and State Program adults
Participant Eligibility:	Same as TANF
Types of Services:	Application assistance, assistance with appeals
FY2005 Program Results:	
Number of individuals receiving benefits:	1,148
Number of individuals with pending initial claims:	1,609

Best Practices in Welfare to Work in Texas

This section of the report examines best practices in the collaborative efforts between local workforce development boards, workforce centers, and local employers. In a departure from past reports, this year the report is revisiting several best practices from last year's report. These programs have all demonstrated sustainability and positive results. These initiatives may be considered for replication in other areas of the state. Contact names and phone numbers are published with each initiative so that interested parties may get more detailed information.

Best Practice: Heart of Texas Workforce Development Board
Fleetwood Homes of Texas

Fleetwood Homes of Texas is headquartered in Waco, with three manufacturing plants in the Waco area, and approximately 525 employees. Fleetwood manufactures both site-built and manufactured homes. Fleetwood's primary employment needs are for mobile home assemblers. They also need employees with skills in construction work, carpentry, drywall work, cabinetmaking, electrical work, and carpet laying. The company actively pursues hiring workers with basic skills and then trains for the specific skills of the job.

Fleetwood Homes has taken an active role in recruiting workforce center clients and working with the Project RIO (Re-Integration of Offenders) program. The company uses the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, which provides Federal tax credits for hiring certain populations. They maintain an open communication with the workforce center concerning their needs and actively recruit from clients of various programs operated by the center, including Choices. As of last year, over 30 Choices and Food Stamp clients had been hired at an average salary of \$8.55 an hour. Since our last examination of this program in 2004, Fleetwood has expanded their operations and hired another 50 employees directly from the workforce center at an average salary of \$11.00 per hour. Of the total employees for Fleetwood Homes, there are now 28 former Choices clients working who are no longer on TANF. Fleetwood reported that the Choices employees they have hired have been very productive employees.

Contacts: Ms. Rene Clayton, Manager of Business and Industry Initiatives, Heart of Texas Workforce Board, (254) 756-7844
Mr. Ed Shelton, Human Resource Manager, Fleetwood Homes of Texas, (254) 799-6206

Best Practice: Central Texas Workforce Development Board
Professional Contract Services, Inc.

Professional Contract Services, Inc. (PCSI) is a non-profit corporation in Killeen that operates as a self-sufficient commercial enterprise. PCSI employs people with disabilities or with significant social barriers. The company supports several special population programs such as Project RIO, rehabilitation programs, Choices, and Food Stamp Employment and Training. They provide opportunities to work at well paying jobs with benefit packages which include full medical coverage for the employee and family at no cost to the employee.

PCSI provides on-the-job training in food services, grounds maintenance, and warehousing, among others. They hire and then provide training. PCSI helps to address significant barriers to employment including poor work history, disabilities, offender status, and transportation. The company also provides, on a limited basis, transportation to and from the work site.

Since our last examination of this program in 2004, the company has maintained its relationship with the workforce center and has hired 280 Choices and Food Stamp recipients in the last two years. The company reports that this group maintains a better retention rate at 60% than the overall company retention rate of 40-45%. The starting wage is \$7.56 an hour with a raise to \$7.66 an hour after 60 days.

Contacts: Mr. Ben Lopez, Jr., Program Specialist, Central Texas Workforce Center, (254) 939-3771
Ms. Vanessa Ferguson, Rehabilitation Specialist, PCSI, (254) 501-3219

**Best Practice: Tarrant County Workforce Development Board
Advantage Logistics**

Advantage Logistics is the nation's largest grocery distributor and expanded to Fort Worth two years ago. The company partnered with Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County to meet their staffing needs. Together, they filled 98 positions in two weeks, of which 25% were Choices and Food Stamp recipients.

New hires received extensive on-the-job training on warehousing equipment and employees earned proficiency licenses. This training gives them valuable skills that are transferable to other employment. The licenses certify that the employees have acquired specified skills. In addition, the Workforce Solutions staff provided valuable assistance in other ways to Advantage Logistics. They were able to provide assistance in making contact with elected officials to discuss economic, workforce development, and community issues. The director of human resources reported being very pleased with the initial hiring of the Choices recipients. There has been some turnover, but no more than from the non-Choices employees. They have since hired about 50 additional Choices clients and have had many successes from this pool of employees.

Contacts: Mr. Kris Kizer, Adult Program Manager, Workforce Solutions, (817) 413-4448
Mr. Mike Neubauer, Director of Human Resources and Risk Control, Advantage Logistics, (817) 922-8754

**Best Practice: Middle Rio Grande Workforce Development Board
Applebee's Restaurant**

Applebee's Restaurant opened a new location in Eagle Pass two years ago and needed assistance in hiring their staff. They formed a partnership with the Maverick Workforce Center in Eagle Pass. Workforce center staff provided valuable information about being located in the FUTURA Empowerment Zone and Applebee's being eligible for federal tax credits for new hires that lived or worked in the zone.

The workforce center staff and Applebee's managers worked together screening 881 applications for 142 positions that were hired. The center provided all the facilities, screening, computers, and other equipment needed for processing all the new hires, as well as helping with the interview process. New hires received orientation at the workforce center and extensive on-the-job training.

This year, the company expressed satisfaction with most of the Choices new hires, and many are still employed there. Applebee's still works closely with the Maverick Workforce Center for its employee needs and receives applications of Choices clients, many of which have been tested and hired.

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Mr. Tony Hidalgo, Assistant Manager, Applebee's Restaurant, (830) 773-0388

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