

WORKING TOWARD JOBS

An Overview



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This study was conducted to describe the operation of a sample of mature, well-regarded and comprehensive work programs for AFDC recipients and the insights of the administrators of those programs.

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WORKING TOWARD JOBS

An Overview

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

This report, and related technical reports, describes the operation of a sample of mature, well-regarded and comprehensive pre-JOBS work programs for AFDC recipients and the insights of the administrators of those programs. Our purpose was to provide information useful to State and county welfare agencies implementing JOBS.

BACKGROUND

The Family Support Act of 1988, requires the States to implement a new, more comprehensive work program for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) recipients. This program, called Job Opportunities and Basic Skills or JOBS, will replace the current AFDC Work Incentive (WIN) programs. A few of the highly regarded WIN and WIN demonstration programs were used as models for JOBS.

The Federal Government will fund JOBS as a capped entitlement at an enhanced AFDC matching rate. Federal expenditures for JOBS in Fiscal Year 1989 were capped at \$600,000,000. The cap rises each year until Fiscal Year 1995 when it will be \$1,300,000,000. After that funding is expected to be somewhat lower.

All States must implement the JOBS program by October 1990. Upon approval of its plan, a State may implement its program as early as July 1, 1989. Mandatory participation rates for AFDC recipients will be expected of the States. Rates will increase from 7 percent in 1990 to 20 percent in 1995.

JOBS includes four mandatory components which all States must offer. These are: (1) education, (2) job skills training, (3) job readiness activities, and (4) job development and job placement.

The States must also offer two of the following: (1) group and individual job search, (2) on-the-job training, (3) work supplementation, or (4) the Community Work Experience Program (CWEP) or some other work experience.

States must provide supportive services to their JOBS participants. These services must include child care, transportation, and compensation for some work-related expenses. States may use JOBS funds to provide case management services.

In addition to these components, States are required to (1) inform all AFDC recipients of the services available under JOBS, (2) perform an initial assessment of each JOBS participant, and (3) work with each JOBS participant to prepare a plan of action leading to employment.

METHODOLOGY

We selected eight States which had a mature, comprehensive and well-regarded AFDC work program prior to JOBS. These programs were also selected because they vary by certain characteristics (i.e., program structure, geography, employment and training services provided). The participating programs are: California, Delaware, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Washington. Because the program in California is county run, the County of San Diego was also invited to participate.

Data collection for this study was done from April to September of 1989. The information in this overview report, and related technical reports, is based on pre-JOBS work programs for AFDC recipients.

Site visits were conducted at the Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Washington, and County of San Diego programs. All of the participating programs completed extensive mail survey guides.

The directors of the participating programs took part in an OIG sponsored conference, August 1-3, 1989. At this conference, which utilized a variant of the focus group discussion method, the program directors discussed problems encountered, lessons learned and model practices.

We consulted regularly with an advisory group formed of representatives from the Family Support Administration, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Management and Budget.

FINDINGS

In choosing the information to highlight in this overview report, we concentrated on findings which represent trends visible in a significant number of the programs studied. We also chose to direct most of our attention to issues which the Family Support Act leaves to the discretion of the States.

Job readiness is integrated into other activities.

The program administrators defined job readiness activities as those which teach life skills and specific job search or job retention skills. They feel that it is not a

discrete activity, but is integrated through every component. Group job search usually contains a wide spectrum of job readiness activities. The program administrators report including job readiness activities in orientation, education, job skills training and work supplementation.

Group job search is the best regarded of the JOBS components.

All of the programs studied offer group job search. The majority of programs naming their most effective and most cost effective components, named group job search.

The specific form of group job search varies. Usually it is divided into two sections: (1) the discussion of job search and work related issues, and (2) a supervised job search including calls to employers from a telephone bank. Many of the group job search components emphasize building self-esteem, personal drive and developing supportive relationships between the participants.

Case management is also highly regarded.

All of the programs studied employ a case management approach. When we discussed case management with the program administrators, they emphasized four basic concepts: accountability, continuity, encouragement, and empowerment.

Each of the case management models includes a specific case manager assigned to a participant on an ongoing basis. The case manager is responsible for tracking and encouraging the participant's progress and assuring that the participant receives needed services. Beyond this, however, there is wide variation in the definition and implementation of case management.

The majority of the programs emphasize local level flexibility.

Only one of the State programs studied, California's Greater Avenues to Independence (GAIN), is actually run by local level government. However, the majority of the other programs studied, including all in the heavily populous States, encourage local level variation by allowing local State welfare offices discretion in how they implement the work program.

These programs acknowledge the importance of the line worker and strive to enhance their effectiveness.

The program administrators stressed that the line worker can "make or break" the program. The program administrators considered attitude central to the success of a line worker. They try to create a proper attitude through a variety of methods, including recognizing achievement and giving awards.

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

This report, and related technical reports, describes the operation of a sample of mature, well-regarded and comprehensive pre-JOBS work programs for AFDC recipients and the insights of the administrators of those programs. Our purpose was to provide information useful to the State and county welfare agencies implementing JOBS.

BACKGROUND

History of Work Programs for Recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children

The idea that Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) should be temporary assistance for families on their way to self sufficiency is not new. In 1962, the Community Work and Training Program first brought the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), precursor to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), together with State and local welfare agencies in an attempt to provide work for welfare recipients. In 1967, this program was replaced by the Work Incentive (WIN) program. All States were required to implement WIN programs to be jointly overseen by HEW and the Department of Labor (DOL). Although some successes were achieved under WIN, many felt that the program was too limited and did not allow enough flexibility.

In 1982, States received the option to create WIN Demonstration programs (WIN Demos) as an alternative WIN. Under the WIN Demo, the State welfare department is given sole authority for running the work program. States can devise specific processes and services adapted to their own circumstances and priorities. Before the July 1989 initial implementation of JOBS, WIN Demo projects were run by 26 States.

Before the initial implementation of JOBS, slightly more than half of the States were also operating Community Work Experience, Employment Search Program, and/or Work Supplementation with AFDC funding. These welfare work programs did not fall under the same authority as WIN. These programs were under the authority of and funded by the AFDC program.

The Family Support Act of 1988

Over time, the funding and support available to these work programs lessened. Although many States were recognized as running model programs, other State programs were thought meager and ineffective. Some interested Federal and

State officials raised concerns that AFDC, and most WIN and WIN Demo programs, were sustaining rather than alleviating poverty.

In 1985 and 1986 the movement toward welfare reform accelerated. In July 1985, the American Public Welfare Association published "One Child in Four" which called for a re-evaluation of the nation's welfare program and commitment to helping the poor. Former President Reagan voiced similar concern in his 1986 State of the Union Address and asked Congress to work with him on an overhaul of AFDC priorities. The Governors, working through the National Governors Association, expressed their interest in reforming the welfare system to help AFDC recipients move toward self-sufficiency.

Congress, the Administration, and the States worked together to reform the welfare system. The resultant legislation, the Family Support Act of 1988, aims to reform AFDC income maintenance into a program that can enable welfare recipients to become independent. The Act made many important amendments to the AFDC program, including strengthening child support enforcement, requiring transitional day care and extended Medicaid benefits for clients moving from AFDC to self-sufficiency and establishing the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program.

Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS)

The Family Support Act of 1988 mandates that the earlier work programs be replaced by the new, more comprehensive, JOBS program.

The Federal Role

The Federal Government will fund JOBS as a capped entitlement at an enhanced AFDC matching rate. The Act caps Federal expenditures for JOBS in Fiscal Year 1989 at \$600,000,000 and raises it each year until Fiscal Year 1995 when it hits a high of \$1,300,000,000. After that funding is expected to be somewhat lower due to the number of AFDC recipients who will already have moved into employment.

The Federal oversight role in JOBS will be performed through the HHS Family Support Administration (FSA). The FSA is responsible for (1) issuing regulations implementing the JOBS program, (2) approving State plans, (3) assisting and overseeing State implementation, and (4) coordinating with the DOL and other Federal agencies involved in other work and education programs.

Requirements for States

Orientation/Assessment/Employability Planning: Under JOBS, States are required to (1) inform all AFDC recipients of the services available under JOBS; (2) initially assess the educational, child care, medical, and other support service needs of each JOBS program participant, as well as the participant's job skills, work history and

employability; and (3) work with each JOBS participant to prepare an employability plan. The employability plan will establish an employment goal and specify the JOBS program activities and supportive services which will be offered to help the participant achieve the goal. To the greatest extent possible, the employability plan should reflect the desires and goals of the participant. It should also take into account available JOBS resources and local employment opportunities.

Required Components: To address these assessed needs the States must offer (by providing directly or contracting for) all of the following JOBS activities and services: (1) education, including high school or equivalency, basic, remedial and English as second language; (2) job skills training specific to jobs available in the local marketplace; (3) job readiness activities which help participants gain social skills and attitudes necessary for work; and (4) job development (identifying and encouraging the creation of job openings) and job placement (referrals to specific available jobs).

Optional Components: The States must also offer at least two of the following: (1) group and individual job search to assist participants in seeking employment; (2) on-the-job training in which the JOBS program partially subsidizes a participant's wage during a limited training period; (3) work supplementation programs under which the State pays employers all or part of the participant's AFDC benefits to subsidize their salary for some limited amount of time; or (4) the Community Work Experience Program (CWEP) or some other work experience in which AFDC recipients work, without pay, for non-profit organizations or government agencies. In addition to the above requirements, States may choose to offer additional education (post-secondary) or any other activities that are allowed by regulations.

Case Management: States are not required to implement case management, but may use JOBS funds to provide case management services. Although specific definitions of case management vary, it is generally understood to include an ongoing relationship between a worker and a participant which lasts the entire time a participant is in the program. The worker is generally responsible for tracking the client and helping them access needed services.

Supportive Services: States must provide supportive services to their JOBS participants. These services must include child care, transportation, and compensation for some work-related expenses.

Minimum Income: States may not require that a welfare recipient accept a job which would result in a net loss of cash income unless the State offers a supplement which brings the total income to at least the former benefit level.

Target Populations: The JOBS program targets for participation: AFDC applicants or recipients with a long-term history of welfare receipt, parents under 24 without a high school diploma or work experience in the previous year, and members of a family in which the youngest child is within 2 years of being ineligible for AFDC.

Participation Rates: Mandatory minimum participation rates for AFDC recipients will be expected of the States, with some exceptions. Rates will increase from 7 percent in 1990 to 20 percent in 1995.

Implementation: All States must implement the JOBS program by October 1990. Upon approval of its plan, a State may implement its program as early as July 1, 1989. Each State JOBS program must be operating statewide as of October 1992.

Interaction with other Federal, State and Local Resources: States may not use JOBS monies to fund activities which are already available from other Federal, State or local government sources. For example, JOBS money can not be used to pay for high school classes, equivalency classes where those are already available through local public education.

For many States, implementing JOBS will involve entirely new programs or major enhancements of existing ones.

METHODOLOGY

We selected eight States and one county which had comprehensive, mature and well-regarded work programs for AFDC recipients prior to JOBS. These programs were also selected because they varied by certain characteristics such as services offered and client characteristics. We conducted site visits at four of the programs and conducted a mail survey of all of the programs. All of the program directors attended a 3-day series of focus group discussions on work program issues. While conducting this study we regularly consulted with experts within the Federal Government and outside organizations.

Data collection for this study was done from April to September of 1989. The information in this overview report, and related technical reports, is based on pre-JOBS work programs for AFDC recipients. As these programs have converted to JOBS, they may have made some changes to meet JOBS legal and regulatory requirements. Where possible, we have noted the changes the program administrators anticipated at the time of our data collection.

Site Selection

Eight States were selected through a two-tier process. The first tier was designed to insure that the programs studied would all be mature programs from which model practices could be derived. Our research showed that there were 20 States

that met the criteria established for the first tier. The second tier refined that list into a final sample of eight programs which are diverse in structure and circumstance. This was done so that study findings would have meaning for States with disparate goals, circumstances and resources. For an in-depth discussion of the selection process, please see appendix A.

The States participating are: California, Delaware, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Washington. Because the program in California is county run, the County of San Diego was also included to provide the local level implementation perspective.

Site Visits and Mail Guides

Site visits were conducted at the Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Washington and San Diego County programs. While on site we interviewed State program administrators, local welfare office staff, training contractors, participating employers, and participating AFDC clients. All of the participating programs completed extensive mail guides designed to determine program structure and characteristics.

Focus Group Discussion

The administrators of the programs studied participated in an OIG sponsored, 3-day conference called "Working Toward JOBS". The conference used a variant of the focus group discussion method to elicit the program directors' views on the effective administration of work programs. Discussions centered on problems encountered, lessons learned and model practices. The specific topics discussed were drawn from the site visits, and meetings with outside interest groups and relevant officials within the Department. The topics discussed included: strategies for encouraging participant success, coordinating with other programs, identifying and assisting potential employers, staffing issues, and establishing a work program.

Contacts with Experts in the Field

Outside consultation and advice is an integral part of this project. Input has been solicited from the American Public Welfare Association (APWA), the National Governors Association (NGA), and other interested groups.

Relevant actors within the Department were asked to participate in a JOBS Advisory Group (JAG) established to give expert counsel at important points within the inspection. Members of the JAG are drawn from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Management and Budget, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, and the Office of Program Evaluation and the Office of Family Assistance within the Family Support Administration. The JAG met to provide input during initial research, to assist in site selection, and to offer suggestions for topics to be covered in the mail guides. The JAG also

suggested topics for focus group discussions at the conference and commented on draft reports.

PRODUCTS

In addition to this overview report, we have prepared technical reports profiling each of the participating programs. While this report contains information on the practices common to several of the programs, the profiles provide detailed information about each of the programs and their unique practices and experiences. The profiles include an activity listing which describes all of the program services and how they are provided. The profiles also include an overview statement submitted by the program administrator and sample documents. The profiles are entitled:

The California Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) Program (OEI-12-89-01321);

The Delaware First Step Program (OEI-12-89-01322);

The Florida Project Independence Program (OEI-12-89-01323);

The Massachusetts Employment and Training (ET) Program (OEI-12-89-01324);

The Michigan Opportunity and Skills Training (MOST) Program (OEI-12-89-01325);

The Nebraska Job Support Program (OEI-12-89-01326);

The Oklahoma Employment and Training Program (OEI-12-89-01327);

The Washington Opportunities and Family Independence (FIP) Programs (OEI-12-89-01328); and

The County of San Diego Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) Program (OEI-12-89-01329).

We have also published a technical report summarizing the conference, “Working Toward JOBS: Conference Summary” (OEI-12-89-00920). The conference summary reports the opinions of the participating program managers on such subjects as: encouraging voluntary participation, staffing, and encouraging client success.

FINDINGS

Our review of these work programs has generated a great deal of information. In choosing the information to highlight in this overview report we concentrated on findings which represent trends visible in a significant number of the programs studied. Information on the unique features of each of the programs is available in the technical reports.

Given that the purpose of this effort is to provide useful information to States and counties developing JOBS programs, we also chose to direct most of our attention to issues which the Family Support Act leaves to the discretion of the States, rather than areas where State action is directly prescribed by the Act.

The programs studied offer a wide range of activities. Most offer a wide array of supportive services.

As required under JOBS, almost all of the programs studied begin with orientation, assessment and employability planning. They also offer a variety of education, job services and skills training activities.

Almost all of the programs include adult basic education and high school classes. Most also offer post-secondary education and about half offer English as a second language. Among the job services, group job search is offered by all of the programs and almost all of the programs include individual job search, job placement referrals, and job development. Nearly all of the programs offer the following skills training services: community work experience, specific skills training, and on the job training. Slightly more than half of the programs offer work supplementation. Three of the programs offer post-placement services in which they “check in” on employed former participants.

Child care and transportation are offered universally. Many of the programs paid for work and training related expenses, such as safety equipment or uniforms. A few also offer medical expenses, necessary for training or work, which are not covered by Medicaid. These include pre-employment physicals, and sometimes needed optical or dental services. A small number also pay for personal counseling if it is necessary to help a participant or their family adjust to employment.

Job readiness is integrated into other services. It is not a discrete, easily defined activity.

The Family Support Act requires that State JOBS programs include job readiness activities. The implementing regulations define job readiness activities as “activities that help prepare participants for work by assuring that participants are famil-

iar with general workplace expectations and exhibit work behavior and attitudes necessary to compete successfully in the labor market.”

At the *Working Toward JOBS* conference we asked the program administrators to define job readiness activities in detail. While some expressed uncertainty, many expressed agreement with the definition given by the Michigan program administrator:

It's a combination of ability-to-cope kinds of skills: counseling, family management, self-esteem, self confidence, communications skills, money management, parenting. The whole milieu of social skills. Getting along in the work place for people that haven't and combining that with essential remediation to bring people whose education levels were not at a point where they would be competitive for whatever scarce jobs were in the community and tying that whole package together and that becomes the job readiness activities.

Other program directors felt that job readiness was better described as teaching specific job and job search related skills and attitudes: such as interviewing techniques, proper work attitudes, filling out an application, etc. Elaborating on this point, the Oklahoma program administrator said, “You teach them what the system is, how work is, what the expectations of work are, you help them to understand the impact of not working on their lives...”

The program administrators agreed that job readiness is not a discrete activity, but is ideally integrated through every component. According to the Washington program administrator: “Job readiness activities are an ongoing piece of the program for the duration of the time that your client is with you ... It isn't a discreet activity, its something that goes on throughout the process in order to help a client be ready to go to work when the training or whatever is completed.”

Group job search usually contains a wide spectrum of job readiness activities. It is the component in which job readiness issues are most commonly addressed. Any group job search will deal with the basic skills needed to perform a job search. Many also emphasize life skills, often using a group dynamic approach to increase self confidence.

Job readiness activities are also incorporated into a number of other program components. In Oklahoma job readiness is combined with orientation in five, four-hour sessions which cover: program information, exercises to build self-confidence, employer expectations, interviewing, completing job applications, setting goals and managing home and work. Life skills are also incorporated into Delaware's adult basic education program.

Some programs combine job readiness with job skills training. One training contractor in Massachusetts runs a mock company for 2 weeks of each training session. This enables participants to get a sense of how a company operates and to understand work world pressures.

One of the work supplementation programs in Massachusetts begins with 2 weeks of job readiness training which includes setting long term goals, balancing work and family, self confidence, and working against the expectation of failure.

Group job search is the best regarded of the JOBS components.

Group job search is the only optional JOBS activity offered by all of the programs studied. We asked each of the programs studied to name the components they considered to be the most effective in placing participants into unsupported work and the components they considered most cost effective. Of the five programs naming their most effective component, four named group job search. Of the five programs which named their most cost effective components, four named group job search. We also asked each of the program administrators to describe a model practice or procedure, three described their group job search.

The program administrators offered a variety of reasons for placing emphasis on group job search. Some of the program administrators cited placement rates. For instance, the Kent County, Michigan group job search regularly maintains a 35 to 50 percent obtained employment rate. A few of the program administrators emphasized that these significant placement rates come after low program dollar investment. Group job search simply costs less than a training or education activity, and yet it results in significant numbers of placements. A few of the program administrators valued group job search as an early activity because it allows the local labor market to determine a participant's job readiness and need for further training.

The specific form which a group job search takes varies; even the name varies with some programs calling it group job search, others job workshops, and still others job club. The programs which offered detailed description of their group job search usually divided the component into two parts. In the first part work related issues are discussed in a classroom or roundtable setting. These issues include: identification of skills and interests, self confidence, job application techniques, labor market characteristics, personal grooming, work place behavior, interviewing, identifying job leads, and job retention. The second part consists of supervised job search, with participants making calls to employers, applying for jobs and doing interviews.

Many of the group job search components emphasize the interrelation of participants. The sessions include a great deal of group discussion. Participants are encouraged to give feedback to one another on their efforts, to discuss problems and

challenges, and offer each other encouragement. The Nebraska program administrator stated, "The group dynamics methodology is very important in the workshop (group job search). It helps the clients build the self-esteem that many lack. This approach also enables the clients to build their interpersonal skills, which will be needed in the workplace. Most important to this methodology, the participants in the workshop have the opportunity to develop friendships which can be a source of support in difficult times."

The importance of building self-esteem and personal drive was emphasized by many of the program administrators. The County of San Diego program administrator reinforced this point by saying "The biggest part of what goes on there (in group job search) for 99.9 percent of those folks is the issue of motivation and self esteem."

Case management is also highly regarded.

All of the programs studied employ a case management approach. When we discussed case management with the program administrators, they emphasized the importance of case management as a way to achieve four basic goals: accountability, continuity, encouragement, and empowerment. In the words of the County of San Diego program administrator:

I think the concept of a single case manager has to do with you need to have somebody accountable from the staff side of the house making sure that these people get assessed, that they are doing what they are supposed to be doing. They can provide services, counseling, advice, encouragement and enthusiasm. They are a cheerleader. It's a relationship. You can't be passing this thing ... It gets lost in the translation ... So having somebody who can do the whole gamut is a key ingredient.

Accountability assures that there is one person who knows that it is their job to help meet the needs of a specific participant. Continuity enables the case manager to have a long term understanding of the needs of the participant and to develop a relationship with the participant. It allows them to be, in the words of the Washington program administrator, "a constant force in a person's life."

Many of the program administrators spoke of the importance of encouragement, stressing how that increases self-esteem and empowers the participant. Elaborating on this point, the Delaware program administrator said that the case manager's role is "empowering that client, acknowledging when that client has been successful in overcoming an obstacle ... encouraging them to develop the strengths that they already have". Another aspect of empowerment was discussed by the California program administrator, "We teach them how to do it and then they go out and do it. ... That's what life is about ... You make people self-suffi-

cient in whatever regard it is, whether its child care or any of the mechanisms that go wrong in a person's life so they can't go to a job."

Each of the case management models includes a specific case manager assigned to a participant on an ongoing basis. The case manager is responsible for tracking and encouraging the participant's progress and helping the participant access needed services.

Beyond this, however, there is wide variation in the definition of case management and its effective implementation. In many of the programs the case manager is responsible for conducting the assessment and working with the participant to develop an employability plan. In some programs the case manager acts as a broker, helping the participant identify and access various services. In some models a case manager interacts with other staff (such as an employment and training or child care specialist) who also provide assistance and encouragement to the participant on an ongoing basis. Some programs see the case manager as an advocate, representing the participant within the AFDC system.

The majority of the programs emphasize local level flexibility and input.

Only one of the State programs studied, California's GAIN, is actually run by local level government. However, the majority of the other programs studied, including all in the heavily populous States, encourage local level variation by allowing local State welfare offices discretion in how to implement the work program. This allows local level offices to fit the program to local labor market and client needs. These can vary greatly as most States include both densely populated, developed areas and remote rural areas.

One program, ET Choices in Massachusetts, changed from a centrally run program to an emphasis on local level input. When we asked why, the program administrator responded: "It was starting not to work. We needed the help. Local offices were the ones that were making the program work and they were feeding back to central saying you've got to get out of the ivory tower and into the field, and we did." The program administrator from Michigan reinforced the importance of local level input by saying, "I don't think there is any question but you have to have local investment. The practitioner level people have to be invested in development, planning and awareness of what the overall objectives are. ... Local people have the best feel for what their communities are able to do. It's easy to try to mandate things but then you find out it just doesn't work. There has to be real local investment and incentive to be involved."

California's GAIN program is administered at the local level by the county welfare departments, although the basic structure of the program is set at the State level. Before counties implement their GAIN programs, they are required to develop a plan that specifies the arrangement and method by which services will be

provided. The county GAIN plan is approved by the County Board of Supervisors and then submitted to the State Department of Social Services for their approval. County plans are updated annually. The State also meets on a monthly basis with the County Welfare Directors Association and its various subcommittees to get their input into program policy development and decision making.

Variations of this pattern are used by those programs which allow flexibility to the local level State welfare offices. For instance, in Florida the State determines program policy, guidelines and goals. Within those centrally determined parameters the State's 11 geographic districts develop implementation plans. The central State welfare office monitors the implementation of these plans to ensure that they meet Federal and State requirements.

A few of the programs also report meeting with local level State offices and community representatives while developing or during the course of their program. For example, the State Welfare Commissioner of Massachusetts convenes monthly meetings of the directors of the State's 57 local welfare offices. The all-day meeting includes discussion of ET Choices performance and planning issues.

The greatest area of variation between local level offices is in the provision of services. States generally determine centrally the basic menu of services to be offered, but allow the local offices or regions to determine how best to provide the service. The local offices often decide how to structure the services and whether they should be provided in house or by contract.

The program administrators stressed the importance of constructing work programs in relation to specific State and local characteristics.

We asked the program administrators what types of information are needed to construct a JOBS program. Drawing on their experience with their pre-JOBS programs, they first came up with a list of information points they would insist upon knowing before undertaking a JOBS program. The point which came up most often was the extent of administrative and legislative support for the program. Another point that was stressed was knowing the purpose of the program and the goals it would be expected to achieve. Other issues mentioned include: available financial resources; how the State has dealt with social issues; the extent of the provider community; the level of commitment from other Government agencies and community resources; what related services are currently being provided, who is doing it, and what can/will they do for JOBS participants.

Before designing the program, the program administrators felt they would need to know a number of different client characteristics. These would help them determine the needs of the client population and thus the proper emphasis for the program. They were particularly interested in the client population's numbers to be served by: education level, geographic distribution, job skills, employment expe-

rience, number and age of children, proportion of AFDC-Unemployed Parent to single parent families, languages, refugee status, and length of spell on AFDC. When developing their pre-JOBS work programs, many of the program administrators sought this information through a review of a sample of AFDC income maintenance case files. One State, California, reported that they also conducted a telephone survey of a sample of AFDC clients.

Most States determined education level by last grade completed. Delaware, however, discovered that could be misleading. When they gave an assessment test to a sample of their clients, they discovered that education levels were much lower than judged under the last grade completed standard. The realization that education levels were lower than previously believed, led the Delaware program to place more emphasis on adult basic education.

Other State characteristics that the program administrators felt greatly effect program design are the State and local economy, labor market and child care resources. The program administrators felt that to be effective, a program must know what kinds of skills are needed in the marketplace in order to plan appropriate training.

These programs acknowledge the importance of the line worker and strive to enhance their effectiveness.

Throughout our discussions the program administrators stressed that the line worker, as the Nebraska program administrator said, "can make or break a program." The program director from Michigan crystallized this point, when he said "Employment and training is an art. There is no question about its being the people that are doing the program are the program. And I think more and more there has to be the understanding that those folks that are doing it are the ones that make it a viable program."

The program administrators also agreed on what makes a good line worker. As the Florida program administrator explained, "By good people I am not saying that you hire people with a certain degree or a certain educational background or even a certain experience background. It's a question of commitment. It's a question of having a feeling for what it is we are trying to do. Having some kind of almost spiritual or religious commitment to the idea of really helping people get the Government off their back." As the Massachusetts program administrator said, "Attitude is key."

This confirmed our observations at orientation and group job search sessions where participant response seemed closely linked to the line worker's ability to project enthusiasm. We were, at one site, given the opportunity to talk with members of a job club about what they liked best about the club and what they thought

made the biggest difference. They had nothing but praise for their job club leader and all agreed that it was their leader that made the club a success.

We asked the program administrators how they create and foster line worker attitudes that lead to the success of the program. Each of the programs attempts to do this in a variety of ways. The San Diego County program administrator mentioned many of these methods when he said, “We provide a lot of high visibility. We provide a lot of pep talks. We provide certificates. We try to take people out even for local conferences within the county or to offer them some special training.”

What we heard most often was the importance of recognizing achievement and giving awards. The California program administrator explains, “The fight is how do you keep that enthusiasm up among your workers and how do you build their self esteem as a worker just like you have to keep up the enthusiasm of the clients. So you have got to be doing the same things for the worker, almost, that you do for the clients — which is catching people doing something good instead of doing something bad. Recognizing the positive so you can keep them excited.”

Building a sense of ownership and team spirit was another important issue. The program administrators said they tried to do this in a variety of ways. Many of the program managers said that local level flexibility and including the line workers in decision making are the most important ways to create a sense of ownership. Newsletters featuring stories from successful clients and visits from successful clients, were frequently mentioned. Two of the programs require that workers wear program pins. Two States have sponsored birthday parties for their work program.

Echoing the views of many, the Massachusetts program administrator said, “Attitude is key and attitude starts at the top.” Most of the program administrators said that their Governor and department heads had made visits to local offices and stressed the importance of the work program. The Washington program administrator said, the Governor and department heads “would fly to each new site and the office would have a little party for them. ... To have them go out and literally do ribbon cutting and say this is a really important office has done wonders.” The program administrators saw a great benefit to this, as the Nebraska program administrator said “You really can tell the difference when the top gets involved.”

While we principally discussed the importance of the work program staff, many of the program administrators emphasized that all welfare office staff need to be aware of the program and work for its success. This includes everyone from the income maintenance staff to the receptionist at the door. The program administrators said that it was particularly important to include non-work program staff in awards ceremonies and share client success stories with them.

APPENDIX A: SITE SELECTION

Eight States were selected through a two-tier process. The first tier was designed to insure that the programs studied would all be mature programs from which model practices could be derived. The second tier analysis was performed so that the final sample would include programs which are diverse in structure and circumstance. This was done so that study findings would have meaning for States with disparate goals, circumstances and resources.

Tier I

In the first tier we created a sample of those States which have fairly mature, comprehensive and well-regarded work programs for AFDC recipients. This sample was drawn from suggestions made in interviews with the American Public Welfare Association, the National Governors Association, and members of the JOBS Advisory Group (JAG). The States in this initial sample were: CA, CT, DE, FL, GA, IL, IA, KS, MD, MA, MI, MN, NE, NJ, OH, OK, OR, PA, WA, and WI.

Tier II

The initial sample was refined to a final sample of eight States which vary by certain characteristics. So that site visits could be conducted in a timely manner, two States were selected immediately. Those States, Massachusetts and Oklahoma, were selected because of their prominence in the field and the contrasts between their programs.

To aid in selecting the remainder of the final sample, the JAG developed the following list of characteristics by which programs in the final sample should vary.

State descriptors: Geography and State economic conditions.

State AFDC program descriptors: Caseload, benefit levels, and whether State AFDC program has an Unemployed Parent component.

State AFDC work program descriptors: Administrative structure, State dollars spent, voluntary or mandatory nature of program, program components, support services, service providers, number of participants, percentage of urban vs. rural participants, and target groups.

To determine the characteristics of the States in the initial sample, we conducted telephone interviews. A summary report and charts showing the variations on certain key characteristics were distributed to members of the JAG. The JAG met to consider the findings and offer advice on the selection of a final sample.

The States participating are: CA, DE, FL, MA, MI, NE, OK and WA.