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ABSTRACT

A study aimed to provide education and welfare officials with information on the experiences of welfare/education programs as they had been implemented in five states. The states (California, Florida, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin) represented a range of noteworthy approaches to providing education to welfare recipients, including some dramatic departures from past practices. Operational issues were identified that had to be resolved for programs to succeed: the quality of education, tailoring education programs to the welfare population, attendance, program capacity and flow, differences among education providers, and policy gaps that affected program operations. Three areas for improvement without federal action were identified: more attention to the education-employment transition, alternative education programs in programs targeting teenagers on welfare, and elimination of redundant achievement testing of participants in the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Program. New institutional roles for welfare and education agencies had caused new issues to emerge: institutional priorities, cooperation and resistance of educational institutions, funding, innovations, and service gaps. Several recurring design issues affected the welfare/education programs in all five states: program goals, exit standards, use of volunteerism in mandatory programs, and returning teen dropouts to school. The importance of negotiations between welfare and education agencies was stressed. (Appendixes include a brief summary of California's program and list of 42 selected publications.) (YLB)

Papers for Practitioners

LINKING WELFARE AND EDUCATION

A STUDY OF NEW PROGRAMS IN FIVE STATES

MANPOWER DEMONSTRATION RESEARCH CORPORATION

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MANPOWER DEMONSTRATION
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The Authors

Preface

With this paper, MDRC launches an occasional series of Papers for Practitioners designed primarily to share with administrators and program operators in the public policy arena practical information and insights acquired in the course of MDRC's fieldwork, quantitative and qualitative research, dissemination efforts, and technical assistance activities.

Aimed particularly at education and welfare officials, the paper discusses the varied experiences of five states–California, Florida, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin–as they initiated or expanded education services for welfare recipients, a direction encouraged by the Family Support Act of 1988. It highlights key design, operational, and institutional issues the programs faced, and the crucial role of negotiations and linkages between welfare and education agencies in making the programs work.

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Judith M. Gueron
President

I. Introduction

Over the last several years, states and localities have been greatly expanding education programs serving welfare recipients. Triggered by welfare reform initiatives, this expansion is being carried out through partnerships between welfare departments and education agencies. It is based on the recognition that many welfare recipients lack basic skills and educational credentials, multiplying the problems they experience when they attempt to leave welfare for employment and self-sufficiency. Programs designed to remedy these educational problems are the direct result of this recognition; pressures for reforms of the linkages between the education and welfare systems are its byproduct.

This study aims to provide education and welfare officials with information on the experiences of welfare/education programs as they have actually been implemented in five states, thus supplementing other studies that have concentrated on the potential of such programs.[1] It identifies key operational issues that policymakers should face as these and other states continue, expand, revise, and in some cases initiate education programs for welfare recipients. The states—California, Florida, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin—were among the early developers of welfare/education initiatives, and they provide evidence on a variety of approaches, target groups, and policy environments. The states discussed here are not intended to be seen as representative of all states; they were chosen because of the interesting and significant character of their programs.

While some states have provided education to welfare recipients for a decade, most of the current welfare/education programs were prompted by Congress's passage in 1988 of the Family Support Act, which revised the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program in major ways and created incentives for states to provide increased amounts of education services to their welfare recipients. Specifically, the Act:

- established the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) Program, which, unlike previous federal legislation, places a substantial emphasis on education as a means to improve the self-sufficiency of people on welfare;
- provided states with new federal matching funds, which may be used at

[1]See, for example, Janet Levy, *Joining Forces: A Report from the First Year* (Alexandria, Va.: National Association of State Boards of Education, 1989); Alan W. Houseman and Mark Greenberg, "Welfare Reform and the Education Provisions: Programmatic Options and Recommendations" (Washington, D.C.: Center for Law and Social Policy, 1989); American Public Welfare Association et al., *New Partnerships: Education's Stake in the Family Support Act of 1988* (n.p., n.d.); Job Training Partnership Act Advisory Committee, *Working Capital: Coordinated Human Investment Directions for the 90's* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, 1989); Katherine Porter, *Making JOBS Work: What the Research Says About Effective Employment Programs for AFDC Recipients* (Washington, D.C.: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 1990); and Jose Figueroa and Robert A. Silvanik, "The Provision of Education and Other Services in State Welfare-to-Work Programs" (Washington, D.C.: National Governors' Association, 1989).

state option to expand education services for welfare recipients in the JOBS program;

- identified welfare recipients under age 24 who lack a high school diploma (or its equivalent) as a priority group for states to serve and, within this group, requires custodial parents under age 20 who lack a diploma to participate in an education activity if one is available (unless they meet specified deferral criteria, or child care and transportation are unavailable);
- encouraged states to offer education as a first service for any adult JOBS participant who lacks a high school diploma or basic educational skills; and
- provided funding for child care while welfare recipients are participating in education or another JOBS activity.

The Family Support Act consequently has stimulated a substantial increase in education programs for welfare recipients—and in the linkages between the education and welfare systems to achieve this. It should be emphasized, however, that the Act does not prescribe how this will be done. Rather, it creates a structure within which states develop their own programs.

The JOBS program is based on the concept of reciprocal obligation: states and the federal government are responsible for providing services and incentives to help welfare recipients find employment, and eligible welfare recipients have a responsibility to participate in welfare-to-work activities (which may include education) and to take jobs. Welfare is thus coupled with encouragement, supports, and requirements to help recipients become self-supporting. Under JOBS, the states have designed welfare/education programs that take different approaches to fulfilling the concept of reciprocal obligation, as subsequent sections of this study will show.

The education and welfare systems have different goals, jurisdictions, clienteles, and operating procedures. Thus, it should not surprise readers that states and localities have faced a number of challenges as they work to reconcile the approaches of the two systems. The evidence reported here suggests that despite the great differences among the five states' welfare/education programs, some consistent lessons on the successful operation of these programs have emerged. This report presents the key policy and operational issues, and the most promising strategies for resolving them, that have emerged from MDRC's field research for this report. These may be a forecast of what other states can expect as they implement their own welfare/education programs.

A central theme of this report is the difference between JOBS education services for adults and young people. Broadly stated, programs for teens are focused on traditional and alternative high schools and on counseling to keep students in school or to help dropouts return. In contrast, programs for adults typically take place in other institutions that provide adult basic education, preparation for the high school equivalency (GED) test, English for speakers of other languages, and post-secondary education.

Interviews and field research for this study were conducted in 1989 and 1990 at state and local welfare and education agencies in 5 states, 24 counties, and 27 school jurisdictions. Continuing contact was maintained with officials in all five states in 1991 and 1992, to verify and update the information reported here. The research used structured interviews designed to identify factors critical to

increasing the involvement of welfare recipients in education and of schools in working with welfare recipients. The five state programs were studied at different points: the Florida and Ohio programs were in their beginning stages when the interviews were conducted, while the California, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin programs had been operating for more than two years. The research results reflect this variation in the time available for implementing and fine-tuning the programs.

This project benefited from MDRC's ongoing evaluations of California's Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) Program, Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program, and Florida's Project Independence, which supplemented the interviews undertaken for this study and provided some of the examples cited here.

In this study, Section II briefly summarizes the welfare/education initiatives in each of the five states. Section III starts at the grass-roots level of welfare/education programs, describing the operational issues that programs face. Section IV focuses on institutional issues that affect states' programs. Section V examines recurring design issues in welfare/education programs, including their fluctuating goals and the balance between mandatory and voluntary participation in program services. Section VI summarizes the study's conclusions, which argue for the importance of negotiations between welfare and education agencies on questions of program quality, exit standards, links between education programs and employment, expansion of alternative education programs, and efforts to solve attendance problems.

II. Welfare/Education Initiatives in Five States

The five states that MDRC selected for this study represent a range of noteworthy approaches to providing education to welfare recipients, including some dramatic departures from past practices. California, for example, has adopted an education program that potentially affects more than half of all adults on welfare. Florida has combined mandatory job search activities for many welfare recipients with the offer of education for those who are not designated as job ready. Ohio has devised new financial incentives for teen parents to attend school, providing them with a bonus in their welfare check (and paying for child care and transportation) if they attend school regularly or reducing their welfare grant if they fail to enroll in school or exceed the allowed number of unexcused absences. Oklahoma has required that much of its welfare caseload—including women whose youngest child is age one or older—be involved in education or other welfare-to-work activities. Wisconsin's Learnfare program contains a new approach to parental responsibility for teenagers' education, financially penalizing persons heading welfare cases containing teens who do not attend school regularly.

It is not yet clear whether these initiatives are pioneers that will lead the way as states continue to implement the Family Support Act or outliers whose approaches will not be picked up elsewhere. It *is* clear that these five states provide a fascinating laboratory for studying the implementation of education initiatives for people on welfare.

This section provides brief summaries of the five welfare/education initiatives that have been studied by MDRC. They provide a basis for the subsequent discussion of the issues faced by program operators, policymakers, and others working to increase welfare recipients' participation in education.

California

In 1985, California created the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) Program. GAIN requires that California's 58 counties (which administer the state's welfare system and operate GAIN) offer comprehensive services, including education, to those welfare recipients who are obligated to participate and to those who volunteer.

GAIN is particularly noteworthy for the large scale of its educational activities. GAIN registrants who do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent (for example, those who have not passed the General Educational Development—GED—test), and those who cannot speak English or who fail a math or reading basic skills test, are typically assigned to one of three education programs: adult basic education (ABE), GED preparation, or English as a second language (ESL). These people may instead elect to receive job search assistance, but if they do not find a job, they must then enroll in the prescribed education program. Child care and transportation assistance are provided to make participation easier.

There is a multi-step enforcement process for those not complying with program rules: first, there is a determination as to whether they had "good cause"

for not participating; second, there are conciliation meetings; and, finally, there may be a financial sanction—that is, a temporary reduction of the welfare grant.

Because of its prescribed position at the beginning of the service sequence for people who are determined by GAIN to be "in need of education" (a category comprising fully 60 percent of GAIN registrants),[1] education plays a greater role in GAIN than in many other states' programs for adult welfare recipients. However, it is important to note that the group determined to be "in need of education" can choose to enroll first in direct job search activities. Considerable variation exists across the counties in California in the degree to which this "in need" group selects job search or basic education as their first activity. Importantly, nearly all of those determined *not* "in need" of basic education (about 40 percent of GAIN registrants) are required to attend initial job search activities, so the total proportion of all GAIN participants who begin in job search is typically greater than the proportion of those who start in basic education.[2] Still, GAIN's emphasis on basic education is notable because of the very large number of participants in its activities and because California has devoted substantial state and Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) resources to education services for GAIN participants. The GAIN program was considered a major innovation when GAIN became law in 1985, and it contributed to the emphasis that the JOBS program places on education.

Florida

Florida has two programs that provide education for AFDC recipients. The first, Project Independence, is a mandatory program for welfare recipients over age 19 who have children age three or older. The first program activity for these AFDC recipients depends on whether they are designated by Project Independence as "job ready," based on formal criteria: job-ready people are those who have completed high school (or have an equivalency certificate) or have been employed for 12 of the previous 24 months prior to their application or eligibility redetermination for AFDC.[3] Those who are designated as job ready participate in two weeks of assisted job search. Those who are not designated

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[1]James Riccio et al., *GAIN: Early Implementation Experiences and Lessons* (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1989).

[2]Individuals who attend GAIN orientation who are already enrolled in an approved education or training activity are typically permitted to continue—regardless of their "in need of education" status.

[3]In 1991, Florida amended the law authorizing Project Independence and revised the program's job-readiness criteria. To be designated as job ready, Project Independence participants must now have completed high school (instead of tenth grade, as in the previous criteria), or have been employed for 12 out of the previous 24 months (instead of the previous 36 months). Program administrators estimated that the proportion of not job-ready clients would increase from 20 to 60 percent.

Two factors mitigate against a large influx of Project Independence participants into education programs:

(1) Child care payments are available only for transitional purposes and not for participants in education and training. In effect the program is often voluntary for those who need child care.

(2) The state is maintaining its job placement performance standards for caseworkers, thus maintaining the incentive for them to refer participants to job search activities rather than education and training whenever possible.

as job ready, plus those who do not find a job during job search, are assessed by a caseworker in a process that provides a significant role for client choice. The assessment is aimed, as in the other states, at producing an individual employability plan for each welfare recipient. Education is often a component of employment plans. Project Independence participants are provided with child care and transportation to enable them to participate. State rules also give caseworkers some discretion to identify recipients as "not job ready," even though they meet the established job-readiness criteria. This typically happens when an individual appears to lack basic skills, despite having completed high school, or when her job history includes numerous spells of unemployment.

In making assessments, caseworkers have a dual challenge: to identify appropriate pre-employment activities for individual recipients and to meet an assigned target number of actual job placements. To meet their placement targets quickly, caseworkers have an incentive to channel recipients to job search activities rather than education. Nevertheless, many Project Independence employability plans include education—ABE, GED, and ESL classes, and vocational education and training. The proportion of the Project Independence caseload receiving education services was reported to be 14 percent in September 1988, according to state data.

Florida's second welfare/education initiative, the Project Independence Teen Parent Initiative, provides child care and case management to enable teen parents to remain in school (or to enable dropouts to reenroll). Caseworkers attempt to remove any barriers to regular school attendance that affect the participating teen parents, and, for some teens, caseworkers arrange for alternative education placements (in vocational programs, GED classes, or JTPA skills training). Caseworkers also work with principals and schools to facilitate teens' school attendance.

Ohio

Ohio's JOBS program also has separate components serving teen parents and adults. For the teen parents, there is the Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program for pregnant teens and custodial parents under age 20 who are receiving AFDC (on their own welfare case or on another case) and who do not have a high school diploma or GED.[4] Eligible teens are required to regularly attend a school or program leading to a high school diploma or its equivalent. They receive financial incentives to stay in or return to school, provided that they maintain satisfactory attendance in school (in regular high school programs, this is defined as being absent no more than four scheduled class days per month and having no more than two unexcused absences per month). The bonus is a supplement of $62 per month to the family's AFDC grant. LEAP participants also receive case management and support for child care and transportation. Once enrolled in school, some LEAP participants receive other services through the Graduation, Reality and Dual-Role Skills (GRADS) Program, an Ohio Department of Education initiative for pregnant and parenting

[4]Teen parents who have a high school diploma or GED certificate do not participate in LEAP. They may be required to participate in other JOBS activities, depending on the age of their youngest child.

teens, which operates in more than 500 public schools in the state. GRADS, which was established before the advent of LEAP, offers special classes on parenting, life skills, family planning, and other subjects.

Teen parents who do not meet the criteria for being exempted from LEAP and who miss two scheduled orientation sessions without a valid excuse, fail to enroll in school, or have more than two unexcused absences in a month are subject to a sanction that reduces the family's welfare grant by $62 per month. Exemptions from LEAP's school attendance requirement are given if the teen has a child under three months old or is in the last seven months of a pregnancy, if child care or transportation services are not available, or if health problems or other specified circumstances exist. LEAP is operated under a waiver of regulations from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which enables the state to impose sanctions tied to the actions of teens under age 16 and to use other rules that differ from those in JOBS.

Oklahoma

In Oklahoma, the Education, Training and Employment (ET&E) Program offers education and a variety of other services to welfare recipients. Mandatory program participation requirements under JOBS apply to all adults age 18 and over who receive AFDC and whose youngest child is at least one year old.[5] Until 1990, Oklahoma required participation by AFDC case heads with children of any age.

Assignment to particular activities is based on the joint decisions of caseworkers and welfare recipients. When a caseworker is assigned to an AFDC applicant, the worker usually meets with her at her home to complete necessary welfare paperwork and to set up an individual employability plan. The worker explains the services that are available and discusses the applicant's interests in work and her needs for education, training, child care, and transportation. Caseworkers usually recommend participation in education to recipients who lack a high school diploma or GED; however, applicants who do not want to attend school are permitted to choose employability plans that include unpaid work experience, supervised group job search, and/or vocational training programs.

According to state data, the ET&E program has resulted in the enrollment of a substantial portion of the welfare caseload in education. In April 1990, approximately 20 percent of adult AFDC applicants and recipients in Oklahoma who met the criteria for inclusion in the ET&E program were reported to be enrolled in education programs. An additional 10 percent were assigned to other employment and training activities, including part-time employment, unpaid work experience, supervised group job search, motivational activities, and training.

[5] Technically, this participation requirement applies to single-parent AFDC case heads, a group comprising most of the adult AFDC recipients. Participation in JOBS is also required for all two-parent AFDC households, regardless of the age of the youngest child.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin's Learnfare program, which ties a family's receipt of welfare to school attendance by its teenagers, was the first state initiative of its kind. It remains different from other programs in that it covers all teenagers on AFDC (because the state has received a waiver of JOBS regulations from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, its program is allowed to impose sanctions on a basis different from that employed in JOBS) and uses financial sanctions as a primary tool to encourage school attendance.

Under the Learnfare program, all teenagers in households receiving AFDC are required regularly to attend school or an alternative program leading to a high school diploma or GED in order for their families to continue to qualify for the full AFDC grant. The program pays for child care and transportation so that the teen can attend school. Teens are exempted from the school attendance requirement if they have a child under three months old or if child care or transportation is not available.

In the Learnfare program, welfare caseworkers review the school attendance record of each teenager who is part of a welfare case. If the teen had 10 or more unexcused absences during the previous semester, he or she is required to meet a monthly attendance requirement, which allows no more than two unexcused absences per month. When teens do not comply with the attendance requirement, their portion of the AFDC grant is removed. Monthly grant reductions range from $58 to $192, depending on the number of persons on the teen's AFDC case.[6]

Wisconsin also operates a statewide JOBS program for adult AFDC recipients. The program provides ABE and GED classes as well as job search, unpaid work experience, and vocational training. The program requires participation by all AFDC single parents whose youngest child is age two or older and by both parents in two-parent AFDC households. Assignments to particular activities are based on an assessment of service needs in which client choice is a key factor.

[6] Thomas Corbett et al., "Learnfare: The Wisconsin Experience," *Focus* 12, no. 2 (1989): 4.

III. Operational Issues in Welfare/Education Programs

The effectiveness of welfare/education programs depends directly on the services they provide. Consequently, information about the grass-roots experiences of program operators is crucial for understanding the issues that must be resolved for programs to succeed. The authors interviewed staff responsible for operating welfare/education programs in local schools, other education providers, and welfare agencies. This section presents the common themes that emerged from these interviews.

Quality of Education

- ***Little attention is being given to determining the quality of education programs provided under JOBS; this is the case both for programs serving adults and for those serving teenagers.***

Welfare officials and staff repeatedly told MDRC that it is the responsibility of education officials to maintain the quality of education programs. Education officials and staff told MDRC that they had rarely been questioned by welfare officials about program quality and had been asked in only a few cases to present information on the performance levels of their programs. The apparent result of this situation is that the quality of welfare/education programs may not be subjected to careful review. The failure to focus on the quality of programs apparently arises from the fact that program operators tend to pay attention to their immediate tasks rather than to overarching issues. Another important reason is that educational quality is very difficult to measure.

When MDRC's interviewers asked case managers and welfare recipients participating in JOBS education whether they knew of any complaints about the quality of education programs in JOBS, there were few reports of complaints. In one interview site, welfare recipients and case managers reported that some participants had requested a transfer to a different education provider because of their assigned provider's very large class size, the limited availability of assistance from the teacher, and their resulting dissatisfaction with the provider. Their requests were granted—and other welfare recipients were then referred to the slots they had vacated. While clearly not representative of all welfare/education programs, this example suggests that some welfare staff members may be failing to attempt to correct problems in education programs serving their clients. By developing collaborative relationships with local education officials, welfare staff may be able to discuss problems in the education programs that provide services to welfare recipients and to discuss ways of resolving those problems. In addition, as welfare agency staff members gain experience in dealing with the various education providers, they may be able to identify providers that graduate and place more of their students. They can then increase their referrals to those providers while decreasing referrals to less successful providers.

While MDRC's field research did not systematically address the question of whether some education programs have higher dropout rates than others, or what the reasons for variation in dropout rates were, information on the dropout

rate may be a useful indicator of program quality. (However, welfare staff should recognize that dropout rates are affected by the characteristics of the people who attend each particular program. Information on the dropout rates of programs that serve different populations will not necessarily yield useful comparisons.)

Dropout rates are a good example of program information that focuses on the central participants in an education program: the teachers and students. Education policy research suggests that efforts to improve the quality of the education should focus on the behavior of teachers and students in the programs.[1] Among the crucial questions that can be used to assess program quality are these:

- Does the program attract and retain good teachers? Are working conditions and salaries competitive? Do hiring procedures seek out and persuade the best applicants to join the program? Is teacher turnover low?
- Are teachers encouraged to tailor the program to the needs and abilities of their students? Do they?
- Are small grants available to support and encourage teachers who have ideas for program improvements?[2] Are they used?
- Do teachers see themselves as making a difference? Are they aware of "success stories" in the welfare/education program?
- Do some education providers have significantly higher attendance than others?
- Are clients committed to their school or program? Do they perceive strong linkages between the education program and employment?
- When welfare recipients complete or end their participation in an education program, what is their view of it? A relatively simple way for welfare or education staff to investigate the quality of education programs is to conduct an exit interview with persons leaving their program, asking about the problems and accomplishments of the education provider.

Obviously, these questions provide *indicators* of program quality rather than definitive evaluation criteria. However, they may be useful operational tools for welfare and education agency staff—and they go far beyond the limited efforts to gauge educational quality that MDRC's interviews found. Information from teachers and clients can be used as an early warning system to identify program quality problems. Of course, some problems are more easily solved than others, but effective joint efforts to improve the quality of education for welfare recipients must begin with the identification and shared discussion of those problems.

To deal with issues related to the quality of education, Florida's state

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[1]See Richard Murnane, "Interpreting the Evidence on School Effectiveness," *Teachers College Record* 83, no. 1 (1981).

[2]See Lorraine McDonnell and Milbrey McLaughlin, *Program Consolidation and the State Role in ESEA Title IV* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, 1980). Small competitive grants to teachers have been found to stimulate substantial grass-roots program improvements.

welfare agency, JTPA, and the state education department have formed Partners in Technical Assistance Committees (PINTACs), which conduct week-long site visits to assess the quality of each welfare district's welfare/education program. The committees prepare a report on each district and suggest actions to improve program quality.

Tailoring Education Programs to the Welfare Population

- ***The target groups for welfare/education programs differ substantially from students who have traditionally been served effectively by education programs. Lower average achievement, lower average motivation, greater need for support services, and a higher incidence of personal problems have been found in this population, compared to other students. Programmatic adaptations will be necessary for education programs to meet the needs of these groups.***

The target groups for welfare/education programs include many people who would not have enrolled in school without the support, suggestion, or mandate of the welfare office. Compared to traditional students, they are likely to be—at least initially—somewhat more difficult for education agencies to serve. Many JOBS education participants have low achievement levels despite having spent many years in school. Consequently, it is not likely that more of the same educational approaches that failed them in the past will suffice to improve their achievement.

Education officials and teachers reported that welfare/education students tended to have more personal, health, child care, and transportation problems, and lower self-esteem, than their other students. According to the teachers, these situational problems sometimes interfered with the students' attendance and ability to concentrate in class.

Education services for adults have traditionally been geared toward students who came to school voluntarily; and while high school attendance is mandatory for most teenagers, most schools essentially rely on voluntary attendance by students. While welfare/education programs serve a wide range of people, including a substantial number who are highly motivated, mandatory programs that impose participation mandates on welfare recipients inevitably create a new set of classroom challenges: motivating welfare recipients some of whom may not wish to be there, at least initially. Education staff told MDRC interviewers that students' resistance to participating in education often stemmed from a history of educational failure and that teachers had to make more of an effort to encourage these students to learn.

Some education providers reported that they were unable to help a small number of welfare recipients who were not progressing at an acceptable rate, some of whom may have had learning disabilities. Some teachers voiced frustration over having to work with people who did not seem capable of progressing and thought that these people had been improperly assigned to their program. While some high schools have programs for students with learning disabilities, such programs are rare in adult education—even in highly developed adult education systems such as California's.

In welfare/education programs that target teen parents on welfare, all of the

difficulties of dropout recovery must be faced, including students' history of school failure and current status as parents. In addition, teen welfare recipients may be absent from school more often than other students because they may need to care for a sick child at home. In school, they may need special classes dealing with parenting issues and employment preparation. Their counseling needs may differ from those of students with whom high school counselors are familiar. Teen parent welfare recipients often live in their own households (rather than with parents or guardians), which places heavy new burdens on them and also creates complications regarding normal high school procedures that require notes and approvals from parents.

Because of welfare recipients' special needs, states have found that adaptations are needed to make existing education programs work for them.

Counseling

Many education providers have found that some welfare recipients require additional counseling, above and beyond what is provided to other students. Welfare departments and schools have found that they often cannot enroll a welfare/education student in class without providing additional guidance, support, and assistance to deal with motivational and situational problems. Counselors can act as a "buffer" in welfare recipients' transition to school. This counseling function has been implemented in a variety of ways.

First, as discussed below, some schools have hired counselors to provide welfare recipients with personal support, educational assistance, and job-directed counseling and preparation, and consider these to be important ways of encouraging attendance. This has been done in programs for adults and in programs for teens, and in both adult schools and high schools. Second, in some programs, case managers from the welfare department spend two or three days per week or more at a school when classes are in session. In all five states, there are welfare caseworkers who visit schools regularly (although the states vary in the resources available for this task). School staff told MDRC that this on-site presence was effective in resolving day-to-day problems which, if not dealt with immediately, can result in more serious barriers to participation. Finally, in some schools, the teachers tended to function more as counselors than they had in the past. While some teachers reported being comfortable with this role, others said it was not an appropriate use of their time. Some adult education teachers, particularly those who worked part-time, reported that they did not have the time to provide this assistance in addition to their teaching responsibilities.[3]

In programs targeting teen dropouts, extra resources have been allocated for counseling—through the Teen Parent Initiative's case managers in Florida and through the Children at Risk program in Wisconsin (a program of the state education department). However, in both Florida and Wisconsin, counseling resources for teen welfare recipients returning to school are limited, although Wisconsin's Department of Health and Social Services is increasing the number of welfare case managers who provide counseling to Learnfare participants. In Ohio, all LEAP teens are assigned to a case manager, who is responsible for helping the teen overcome barriers to school attendance.

[3]Riccio et al., *GAIN*.

Curriculum

Some education providers have adapted their established curricula to better meet the needs of welfare recipients. The most common adjustment is to revise classes to include more life management, parenting, and employment skills. Some providers added supplemental materials with a vocational focus—for example, mathematics problems that involve balancing a checkbook or using job-related skills. Ohio's GRADS programs and the local initiatives of many adult schools in California provide examples of this kind of enriched curriculum.

Other examples of programmatic adaptations include instituting a pre-GED program for those too advanced for ABE but not yet ready for GED, and a pre-literacy ESL program for welfare recipients who do not speak English and are not literate in their native language.

Programs for Slower Learners

Some schools have the capacity to diagnose welfare recipients who appear to have learning disabilities and then to refer them to the welfare department for another placement if the schools lack an appropriate program. Some California counties have begun establishing classes expressly for GAIN registrants with learning disabilities. One county contracted with an education provider that specializes in programs for adults with learning disabilities to provide services for GAIN participants.

Mainstreaming Versus Separate Classrooms

Program operators have responded in varied ways to the question of whether to adapt mainstream classes to serve welfare recipients or to develop separate classes to serve them.

Most teen welfare recipients in Wisconsin who are not parents are enrolled in regular school programs. However, many teen parents are unwilling to return to the schools they have left; in Milwaukee, community-based organizations have developed programs to serve many of these students, with funding from JOBS.

In some local education agencies in California, educators decided on their own initiative to create classes expressly for adult welfare recipients. In these programs, the providers specifically sought ways to serve GAIN registrants effectively. The providers initiated a series of adaptations—including ABE, GED, and ESL curricula with a vocational focus, increased counseling, and a greater emphasis on attendance monitoring. Program operators who have implemented this GAIN-only system also see other benefits: reportedly, welfare recipients develop an identification with their school, and communication between the school and the welfare office is enhanced.

In contrast, many other California localities have "mainstreamed" their welfare recipients into existing adult education programs. In these cases, there have been fewer efforts to make adaptations in the education program. Nonetheless, creating separate classes is not a necessary condition for making adaptations, since some mainstreamed programs did make strides in adjusting to the needs of welfare recipients.

Attendance: The Biggest Issue

- ***Poor attendance has been a major problem for welfare/education programs, requiring substantial program adaptations.***

MDRC interviews found that the biggest operational problem facing welfare/education programs—and requiring the most difficult adaptations—was poor attendance. Despite the great differences between the welfare/education programs in the five states studied by MDRC, *attendance issues were reported to be prominent in all programs.* It seems likely that other states will face this issue, too.

In the United States, education providers have historically served students who enrolled voluntarily, so any barriers to their participation in education were usually resolved by students, at least temporarily, prior to their enrollment. For example, while many adult night school students are poor and have difficult family situations, they typically decide to attend school *on their own*; consequently, by the time they enroll, they have already determined how to fit their class schedule into their lives. (However, many adult education program serving voluntary participants have severe attendance and dropout problems, reflecting the ongoing stress in participants' lives.)[4] This is not the case for many welfare recipients who are required to attend school as a condition of receiving their welfare grant. Unresolved and sometimes longstanding problems with child care, transportation, housing, and health and family crises can easily interrupt or terminate these students' attendance. Moreover, their prior school experiences, many of which were negative, may cause them to be uncertain about their ability to learn, unskilled in dealing with teachers and school staff, and generally reluctant to attend school. Among teenagers, those with the most severe attendance problems typically drop out of school. When welfare/education programs attempt to return these teens to school, poor attendance is likely to follow for many students.

All of the local welfare and education officials interviewed by MDRC agreed that attendance problems have been a greater source of strain on their ability to serve welfare recipients than they had anticipated. However, it should be pointed out that attendance problems have been shown to be significant in programs that serve non-welfare populations, too; it is not clear that the attendance of welfare recipients is worse than that of other disadvantaged groups.[5] However, if welfare/education programs are to succeed, they must develop effective responses to their students' attendance problems.

Officials interviewed by MDRC have developed two types of policies to respond to poor attendance: increased school follow-up of absent students and improved record-keeping.

Increased Follow-Up

MDRC's interviews found widespread agreement that *prompt follow-up of welfare/education students who do not attend can greatly improve their participation*

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[4] See Association for Community Based Education, *ACBE Evaluations of Community Based Literacy Programs (1988-89)* (Washington, D.C.: Association for Community Based Education, 1989).

[5] Association for Community Based Education, *ACBE Evaluations.*

levels. Local education providers have devised innovative and successful methods in response to attendance problems. Many schools have designated a staff member to follow up on welfare recipients who miss school, to determine the reason for their absence, and to get them back to school. They use a variety of methods, including phone calls, home visits, calls to the welfare recipient's caseworker, counseling when the welfare recipient returns to school, and referral to community service agencies. These methods were developed gradually by school staff; initially, when teachers and staff members became aware of attendance problems, it sometimes took a month or more for welfare caseworkers to respond to these problems, and even longer to resolve them. School staff concluded that if the schools wanted to retain their welfare/education students, they had to take immediate and direct action to deal with their attendance problems.

Schools have several incentives to focus on the attendance of welfare recipients. Some schools have performance-based contracts and risk payment reductions if students stop attending. Other schools see welfare recipients as an important target group for their community service mission. Still others (typically high schools and alternative schools) monitor attendance closely for all their students. Sometimes the attendance follow-up activities combine the efforts of school and welfare staff. In Florida, the teen parent caseworkers' weekly visits to participating schools have become the mechanism for following up attendance problems. Similarly, several California adult schools have arranged for regular visits by caseworkers, and LEAP staff in some Ohio counties regularly visit high schools and alternative schools. The effect of these visits is to speed up the process of resolving barriers to regular attendance and to shift the burden of attendance follow-up from school staff to welfare staff. In Ohio and Wisconsin, some high school teachers and attendance officers follow up students' absences by telephoning their homes and in some cases making home visits; this is often done by Ohio's GRADS teachers for their teen parent students.

The cost of these activities is sometimes covered by the schools' administrative overhead, sometimes by a share of the increased revenues they receive for serving welfare recipients, and sometimes by reimbursement from welfare department sources. However, some states' regulations for the JOBS program limit or prohibit the use of JOBS funds for attendance outreach activities. In California, funds are available to education providers who incur increased costs for monitoring the attendance of GAIN participants, and in some cases for education providers' other efforts to improve attendance.

Some schools do little to monitor or follow up attendance problems. In these schools, staff believe that students are responsible for solving their attendance problems by themselves. According to school staff's reports, such schools appear to have substantially lower participation levels for welfare/education students than schools that follow up students' absences.

Finally, there is a special attendance issue for welfare departments: monitoring the initial enrollment of welfare recipients in school. The welfare office must deal with this problem because the schools cannot monitor students who have not yet enrolled. If welfare/education programs are to succeed in their goal of placing welfare recipients in education programs, welfare departments must develop record-keeping and follow-up mechanisms to make sure that recipients actually enroll in an appropriate school program.

Improved Record-keeping and Monitoring

In addition to the schools' efforts to follow up students' absences, there is another set of policies that have been developed to deal with low attendance in welfare/education programs: policies that improve attendance monitoring and record-keeping. MDRC found that *timely and accurate monitoring is needed to ensure that attendance standards are met and to resolve attendance barriers.* The attendance problems in welfare/education programs, and the five states' participation requirements, have led to the creation of a variety of state and local monitoring procedures. MDRC's interviews suggested that when the five states' welfare/education programs began, many educational institutions did not have adequate attendance monitoring and recording procedures in place, and it took time and planning to create and test these procedures. For this to occur, the division of responsibility between the welfare department and the school had to be defined and resources had to be allocated to the task of monitoring attendance.

The Welfare Agency Perspective on Attendance Monitoring

MDRC's research found striking variation in welfare departments' attendance monitoring procedures, even in states and localities where standardized attendance rules have been adopted. Some local welfare agencies have developed timely and accurate monitoring arrangements with education providers, while others have not. The most successful monitoring resulted when welfare agencies gained the cooperation of the education providers, whose staff do much of the work of daily monitoring. In some cases, a clerk at the school notifies the case managers on a daily or weekly basis—through telephone calls or paper records—about welfare recipients who do not attend classes. Through these arrangements, even welfare staff with large caseloads learn about absences very quickly. Even in localities with high client/staff ratios, these case managers almost always have up-to-date information on how regularly their clients are attending their education program. In other cases, the school district's central office coordinates the attendance reports on a monthly basis; this method does not produce timely action on attendance problems.

Another approach to monitoring is to give the greater share of the burden to the welfare case managers. For example, in some localities, welfare staff members collect attendance information directly from teachers during site visits and meet with teachers and students to discuss any problems that arise. In Ohio, some welfare offices assign LEAP case managers to work with particular schools, facilitating attendance monitoring. Some welfare offices in California and Florida have found it effective to assign to a specialized case manager a caseload composed entirely of welfare recipients who are in an education program. This allows an efficient use of time when the case manager is on-site. On-site visits may not be feasible, however, in localities with high client/staff ratios.

Problems caused by the less timely monitoring systems have triggered an evolution in some programs, which have developed speedier and more accurate monitoring procedures. Large programs that relied on paper reporting systems experienced initial difficulties because they received attendance data in different forms and on different schedules from their cooperating schools. Some programs tried, and had trouble with, systems that placed the burden for reporting largely on the welfare recipients themselves. Others contracted with a private-sector

organization to track attendance. These arrangements often worked so poorly, according to the welfare agency staff, that case managers usually did not know how regularly the welfare recipients were attending their classes. These problems have led many welfare offices to revise their procedures.

In many programs, the welfare office staff had to tighten their initial procedures for attendance reporting, usually after months of experience had shown that more timely reporting of absences was essential for achieving desired participation levels. Instituting changes to improve communications took time, often requiring a series of meetings between welfare and education staffs to discuss the weaknesses of the original system, learn about each other's needs and available resources, and consider the trade-offs among alternative approaches.

Some local welfare agencies monitor school attendance by using their monitoring system for reimbursements to welfare recipients for child care and other support services. Payments for child care, transportation, and meal expenses are only provided for those days that the welfare recipient can document that she attended school. This approach uses expense reimbursement as an incentive for welfare recipients to attend school and to report barriers to attendance promptly. It also places the responsibility for providing timely attendance reports (which must be signed by a teacher, in most cases) on welfare recipients.

In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the school district sends a list of students whose grants may be reduced for poor attendance to school principals at the same time that the attendance reports are sent to the welfare office as part of the sanctioning process. This enables principals to target services on those students to help them overcome the problems that are reducing their attendance. Unfortunately, some principals report that they lack the resources to offer such services to all students who need them.

Despite these problems, MDRC's interviews found that attendance monitoring can be a valuable intermediate outcome measure for JOBS—an "interim report card" that shows how well the JOBS program is doing. Attendance data are available more quickly than data on program completions, dropouts, or GED receipt, and can be used to trigger interventions that can benefit clients. Attendance data can also be used to identify schools that are not serving JOBS participants effectively. JOBS staff can then meet with school officials to attempt to resolve the attendance problems.

The Education Provider Perspective on Attendance Monitoring

Before the welfare/education programs began, most adult education providers reported attendance data only for funding purposes, often in aggregate form. Adult education and GED programs had no need to distinguish excused from unexcused absences. Even in high schools, which have traditionally kept records on each student's attendance, the accuracy of those records has often been uncertain. When the new welfare/education programs caused welfare agencies to ask education providers to keep closer track of their students, many problems with attendance data-collection systems were discovered. Even schools with attendance data systems were pressed to increase the accuracy and verifiability of their data to meet the needs of the welfare/education programs and to stand up to court challenges.

Education administrators reported in MDRC's field interviews that the new monitoring systems are burdensome. Because the number of welfare recipients who attend sporadically was higher than expected, providers had to devote substantial amounts of administrative resources to the monitoring procedures. In the small, less centralized GED, alternative, and adult school settings, the burden on teachers is especially severe. As a result, some schools have been reluctant to establish mechanisms for generating daily or weekly attendance reports.

Several schools gave the task of compiling attendance data to clerical staff or instructional aides. This procedure tended to be used in places where welfare departments required daily or weekly attendance reporting from the schools. While the procedures were time-consuming for the schools, the welfare agency staff indicated that they were usually efficient and accurate.

At other schools, the teachers were responsible for monitoring attendance. This procedure gave rise to a number of difficulties. First, adult education teachers are often paid on an hourly basis for instructional time only, and providers did not have the extra funds to reimburse teachers for their additional work on attendance monitoring. Second, some teachers resisted taking on a monitoring role: in their words, they wanted to be teachers, not cops policing students—a function they believed would interfere with instruction. Third, when classes included both welfare recipients and other students, teachers had to enforce different attendance standards and keep different records for each group. As a result of these problems, some welfare programs have switched from teachers to clerks as attendance monitors.

States that impose financial sanctions on welfare recipients based on school attendance data have strong incentives to develop accurate, timely, and reliable record-keeping systems, and to maintain tight coordination between welfare agency staff and the school officials responsible for attendance monitoring. Ohio and Wisconsin have installed reasonably effective procedures to meet these goals, although they encountered some difficulty in doing so. (In Wisconsin's case, there was pressure from litigation in Milwaukee that challenged the accuracy of attendance data in some jurisdictions.) The largest school districts in Wisconsin have devised sophisticated computer-matching systems to identify the welfare recipients in the school district's data system and track their attendance. Some school districts, including Milwaukee, have also conducted detailed training for teachers and administrators on the importance of assuring accurate record-keeping for students who may have their welfare grants reduced for poor attendance.

Attendance monitoring has been a particular problem in community colleges, as well as in some night schools and GED programs, where students work on individualized programs and where detailed attendance record-keeping may not be a normal practice. Some community colleges and schools have responded vigorously to welfare offices' requests for improved attendance monitoring, usually by assigning this responsibility to a staff person who works directly with faculty members and the welfare/education students. It is necessary for colleges to identify their welfare/education students in order to monitor their attendance—and this is challenging, as many community colleges in California and Florida have found. Attendance monitoring seems likely to be a continuing problem in many community colleges.

Some education providers have encountered problems with state

requirements that absences be labeled "excused" or "unexcused." This distinction is not used in many adult education, GED, and community college programs. The result has been confusion as local welfare and education staff attempt to apply state rules.

Attendance Records and Federal Participation Standards

Under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' JOBS program regulations, each state is required to submit reports to the federal government on the number of participants in JOBS, the number of hours per week they were scheduled to participate, and the number of participants who actually attended 75 percent of their scheduled hours of activity. These reports are used to establish the state's eligibility for enhanced rates of federal reimbursement of the costs of operating JOBS, provided that a sufficient number of the state's JOBS participants meet the federally established minimum requirements for intensity of participation.

Education components in JOBS may be among the few activities with the potential to meet the standard (an average of 20 scheduled hours per week) for counting participants for purposes of meeting federal program intensity requirements. (Other activities that may meet the 20-hour standard include job training, on-the-job training [OJT], subsidized work, unpaid work experience programs, and programs that combine these activities.) In 1990, few states made adjustments in their data-collection procedures to collect the data they will need for their federal participation reports. This issue is likely to become increasingly important to the states as the federal participation standards are raised.

In the five states studied by MDRC, the process of planning ways to meet the participation standards was at an early stage. Since many existing ABE and GED classes are scheduled for fewer than 10 hours per week, some state officials said that they were considering adding a "study hall" or a self-guided work period to the existing class hours so that the scheduled hours would be increased to 20. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' regulations for the JOBS program do not permit independent study time to be counted toward scheduled hours of participation, but scheduled, supervised study halls may be counted under certain circumstances.) In Hamilton County, Ohio, JOBS participants are only sent to programs that schedule classes for at least 20 hours per week. Some (but not all) of the five states are already using standardized attendance reporting forms that request schools or welfare recipients to report the hours that the welfare recipients attended class. This information will be useful for the states' JOBS participation reports.

- ***States that impose financial sanctions for welfare recipients who do not comply with attendance requirements in JOBS education programs need to develop clear policies and to support them with substantial administrative resources.***

In Wisconsin and Ohio, substantial numbers of teenage welfare recipients are sanctioned by having their welfare grant reduced when their unexcused absences from an education program exceed state-specified limits. Wisconsin initially reported sanctioning approximately 10 percent of its high school-age welfare recipients per month. Sanction rates are now substantially reduced

because of program maturation, procedural changes triggered by litigation against the Learnfare program in Milwaukee, and perhaps other factors.[6] In Ohio, early data from the research counties suggest that the sanctioning rate may be even higher,[7] with as many as one-fifth of eligible teens being referred for sanctions in a given month.[8] This requires that large amounts of caseworkers' time be devoted to processing sanctions and participating in appeals. In some Ohio counties, reports suggest that the paperwork requirements for reducing a teen's welfare grant are discouraging some income maintenance workers from processing the sanctions, suggesting that more administrative focus on the sanction process is needed.

In the other states studied by MDRC, sanctioning practices vary, but it appears that most sanctions are applied to welfare recipients who fail to participate in an orientation or fail to enroll in school programs that are part of their employment plans, rather than being applied to enrolled welfare recipients whose attendance is poor. There are several reasons for this. First, welfare agencies have considerable experience in dealing with recipients who refuse to cooperate with welfare caseworkers, but less experience with compliance problems that are manifested outside the welfare office (for example, in schools). Second, caseworkers are often evaluated on their success in getting welfare recipients to participate in an initial assignment, rather than on maintaining them in an assignment. Third, welfare recipients who do not want to attend school are difficult to distinguish from those who have experienced barriers to regular attendance, making it difficult for caseworkers to decide whether a sanction is appropriate.

Oklahoma's 1991 sanctioning rate (according to state data) was less than 1 percent. Earlier data from Florida indicated that, at a particular point in time (September 30, 1988, during Project Independence's first year), 14 percent of the active Project Independence caseload was being recommended for sanctioning and 0.5 percent was being sanctioned. In both states, most of the sanctions are concentrated among new JOBS participants, with little sanctioning of those assigned to education. In California, approximately 1 percent of GAIN participants are sanctioned.

If welfare officials decide that continuous participation in education should be enforced by sanctioning welfare recipients whose school attendance is poor, it seems clear that they will have to devote substantial additional time and resources to the monitoring and sanctioning processes in order to avoid fair hearings and litigation.

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[6]In a new program, the backlog of dropouts may not respond until they are sanctioned, while in an established program teens may already be aware of the procedures for sanctions and therefore may respond before the sanction is invoked.

[7]A key reason that Ohio's sanction rate is higher than Wisconsin's is that the two states serve different populations. Ohio serves pregnant and parenting teens, groups that have high rates of absence and dropping out. Wisconsin serves these groups, and also includes non-parent teens who receive AFDC, a group with lower absence and dropout rates than teen parents. See Dan Bloom et al., *LEAP: Implementing a Welfare Initiative to Improve School Attendance Among Teenage Parents* (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1991).

[8]Not all teens who were referred for sanctions actually had their grants reduced, making the sanction rate considerably lower than 20 percent.

Program Capacity and Flow

- ***A crucial prerequisite of welfare/education programs—estimating the number of new education slots needed for participants (both teens and adults)—has often proved to be difficult.***

For a welfare program to be effective, program operators need to place welfare recipients in schools, which may require expanding the capacity of existing education programs. In California, both GAIN staff and education providers anticipated the need for expansion, but predicting how much would be required was difficult because no one knew how many GAIN registrants would be determined to need basic education. In fact, the number was significantly larger than what the State Department of Social Services estimated at the outset of the program.[9] However, many of these people did not participate in any GAIN activities, for reasons noted in the Appendix, thus mitigating the pressure on education providers.

In most of the eight California counties studied by MDRC, the education system has met the increased demand for slots created by GAIN—a notable accomplishment for a program that mandates participation in education for a large segment of the adult welfare population. However, while there has not been a general shortage of education services, there have been capacity problems in particular geographic areas. During the period of early program operations in some counties, there were problems finding adequate classroom space to house the influx of students. For example, one provider offered ABE for GAIN registrants in a school that had been designated unsafe for children (but not for adults), and some schools rented trailers to use as classrooms. In addition, the closing of many schools for the summer drastically reduced GAIN's ability to access education slots during those months.

In other states, welfare officials reported that they experienced difficulties similar to California's when they tried to estimate the number of welfare recipients they would refer to an education program. In Ohio, the problem was caused by difficulties in counting the number of teen parents on welfare; when a teen parent was a member of another person's welfare case (typically the case was headed by the teen's mother), automated records could not determine whether the teen was herself a parent or simply the non-parent child of the person heading the welfare case.[10] In Florida, the proportion of Project Independence eligibles who would be determined to be job ready was not known before the program began, nor was the proportion who would be referred to education. The number of Oklahoma welfare recipients whose employability plans called for GED classes substantially exceeded the availability of those classes, and the effort to determine how much to increase GED slots has been an ad hoc, trial-and-error process. Wisconsin's Learnfare program has identified the need for increased slots in alternative programs, particularly in the

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[9]The initial estimate of a very low percentage was later revised to 40 percent. As noted above, about 60 percent have been determined to be in need of basic education; however, actual participation has been substantially lower (see the Appendix).

[10]Ohio is currently instituting a new computerized welfare data system that has the capacity to identify the relationships among the members of a case. This feature is facilitating the identification of teen parents who are not the heads of an AFDC case.

state's largest city, Milwaukee. This need emerged gradually, as program operators' efforts to refer dropouts and teen parents to comprehensive high schools met with unanticipated resistance.

The consequences of misestimating the number of slots needed for participants in welfare/education programs include having too many people for the number of existing slots (with resulting overcrowded classrooms and inadequate staffing levels), delays and bottlenecks, and wasted funding if there are too many slots.

If needed slots are not available, they must be developed. If they are available, access to them may require negotiations with education officials or payments to schools with program funds. All of these operational tasks require that welfare offices have access to accurate estimates of the number of slots needed by the welfare/education program. For welfare policymakers responsible for gaining access to education slots, many of whom may not know much about educational institutions, it is important to understand not only what slots are available but also how the education finance system provides funding for needed services.

Differences Among Education Providers

- ***Welfare agencies face considerable pressure to adapt to the differences among education providers because each provider brings different operational issues to the welfare/education program.***

Different types of education providers (school districts, community colleges, and community-based organizations) confront different operational issues, which their welfare agency partners must take into account. For example:

- Attendance data-collection procedures are radically different in school districts and community colleges.
- Community college staff point to the importance of making special arrangements to identify their students who are in a welfare/education program as a first step to better serving them.
- Within community colleges, continuing education faculty members may be more interested in participating in welfare/education programs than are liberal arts faculty members.
- Community-based organizations require prompt reimbursement for expenses incurred, while other providers may have "deeper pockets" (that is, the ability to deal with delayed payments by using their own resources).
- Alternative schools and adult education programs may not have sufficient office staff resources to respond to welfare offices' paperwork requirements.
- High schools can be difficult for welfare agencies to work with because of their very large number of staff and administrators and their complex organization.
- Adult schools that rely on part-time teachers may have relatively high staff turnover, reducing their familiarity with the welfare/education program and requiring frequent training for new staff.

Until welfare staff become familiar with such matters, they are likely to encounter great difficulty when faced with clients' requests for interpretations of school-attendance policies, the need to implement federal and state financial procedures consistently for the range of education providers, and other operational issues. Armed with knowledge about the education programs, welfare staff can tailor their programs to help provide the best possible education services for welfare recipients.

The need to adapt welfare/education programs to the circumstances of local education providers may intensify in the future because some of the important providers of education services are now undergoing changes in their missions. In California and Florida, the community colleges have taken on new responsibilities for providing adult basic education and new services for disadvantaged adult students who need special support to remain enrolled (for example, changes in class schedules and locations, counseling, and employment preparation). These missions create opportunities for welfare/education programs, but require welfare officials to seek information and negotiate with education providers to maintain and improve services to participants in welfare/education programs.

Policy Gaps That Affect Program Operations

Because the states' JOBS programs are relatively new, and were designed somewhat hurriedly to meet federal deadlines, there are several significant policy issues that were not fully addressed by JOBS program designers and that have created significant problems for program operators. The states face increasing pressures to resolve these issues; two of them are described below.

- ***There are unresolved issues regarding self-initiated participants in education programs.***

Many adult participants in welfare/education programs have already started participating in an education program on their own, before entering JOBS. (They are referred to as "self-initiated participants.") This situation requires JOBS program staff to determine whether the program that has been chosen by the self-initiated participant meets JOBS requirements. (Voluntary high school attendance by teen welfare recipients creates no such issues for the welfare office, since high school is the expected JOBS activity for teens.) Florida and California have developed regulations on self-initiated education programs, specifying their length, intensity, and exit requirements. Other states are likely to follow suit. The implementation of these regulations will require JOBS staff to collect information on the provider and the type of program selected by the welfare recipient, and on the recipient's progress in the self-initiated program; these data may not be readily available.

One important issue for self-initiated participants in education is their use of proprietary schools, which may present special problems for JOBS program operators. The well-publicized failure of some proprietary schools to deliver high-quality services and place graduates in jobs has led some welfare officials to be skeptical of programs offered by proprietary providers, as have the costs of tuition and the interest on student loans that welfare recipients must pay. Few JOBS offices have much experience with this complicated, and perhaps

politically sensitive, issue. Interviews suggest that some JOBS program operators' views of proprietary schools may lead them to disapprove self-initiated participation in those schools' programs. California, Florida, and Oklahoma are beginning to deal with this issue, which promises to be a complex and conflict-filled one.

Quite different issues arise with self-initiated participation in college-level education. All of the states in this study make considerable use of post-secondary education for adult welfare recipients; however, their policies regarding the approval of self-initiated college attendance vary. Some states will pay for selected college-level programs, while others will only pay for training certificate programs. The states also vary in the length of the self-initiated post-secondary education they will approve. While the post-secondary education sector clearly offers valuable opportunities for education to welfare recipients, the costs and length of participation in these programs make them politically sensitive. Conflicts over equity may arise when self-initiated college attendance is approved and paid for by some welfare offices in a state, but not others.

- ***Some welfare/education programs have not decided how to implement the federal criterion that participants maintain "satisfactory progress" in an assigned education component.***

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has issued regulations that link continued payments for a client's program activities and support services (such as child care and transportation) to the welfare agency's determination that the client is making "satisfactory progress" in the assigned program activity. The apparent objectives are to assure that participants keep up with the work in their JOBS activity (including education) and to trigger new assignments for those not making progress. MDRC's interviewees said that few clients were failing to make progress (except for people who apparently have learning disabilities, as noted earlier in this section), but their information on participants' educational progress was often quite limited.

MDRC's interviews produced little evidence that the five states have incorporated into their welfare/education programs the federal criterion that JOBS participants show evidence of "satisfactory progress." Some of the states have implicitly or explicitly left this issue to be resolved by local welfare offices. Most welfare staff members who were interviewed said that regular attendance was enough to meet program requirements. Some education staff members argued that rates of educational progress are so dependent on individual characteristics that any uniform standard would be inappropriate. Others argued that educational gains may occur in spurts, rather than in steady, step-by-step increments, adding to the difficulty of gauging progress.

Monitoring of welfare recipients' educational progress, when it occurs, is usually a much less formal process than attendance monitoring and has a lower priority for welfare and education staff. Case managers can monitor welfare recipients' performance in schools that they visit regularly. However, assessing welfare recipients' performance has been much more difficult in the larger programs with numerous education providers and high client-staff ratios, which limit direct interactions between the welfare staff and the teaching staff.

Some schools in California have hired a clerk or an academic counselor to monitor the rate of progress of GAIN students by comparing their attainment

of competencies with the hours of instruction they receive every six weeks. GAIN case managers are then informed of any difficulties their registrants are experiencing. As this example shows, monitoring registrants' progress requires an even greater use of resources by education providers than monitoring attendance.

California is implementing a requirement that education providers test GAIN participants after each 100 hours of education. This method will be used to monitor "satisfactory progress."

Education agencies (including, for example, community-based organizations) that provide JOBS education services under performance contracts have a strong incentive to identify participants who are not making progress. These agencies are not likely to receive payment for such persons, so they typically attempt to remove them from the class and refer them back to the JOBS office. In this situation, the monitoring of satisfactory progress is affected by the contractor's economic interests.

Key Opportunities for Operational Improvements

State welfare and education officials interviewed by MDRC pointed to several areas where improvements could be made without requiring federal action.

- ***More attention needs to be paid to the problem of linking education to subsequent employment. Adding job search skills to education programs offers an opportunity to make JOBS more effective.***

There is a clear need for welfare/education programs to deal with the transition from education to employment; however, few programs currently do so. Among the strategies that are being used are job fairs for welfare/education participants, concurrent education and training programs, and classroom visits by successful graduates of welfare/education programs. A few programs (such as the GAIN programs in San Mateo and Riverside counties) have assigned job developers to work with education providers to place participants who complete their education activity in jobs. California and Florida require that persons who complete an education program engage in job search; if their job search is unsuccessful, they are assessed and referred to further activities to increase their employability. This job search requirement appears to be implemented with differing degrees of mandatoriness among counties in California and Florida.

The activities described here are mostly aimed at welfare recipients who *complete* their education assignment; since completers are a minority of JOBS participants, the services linking education and employment are not received by many who need them. Many JOBS programs would be improved by including employment-oriented activities (such as job search skills) in JOBS education programs, to help those who do not complete their education program, as well as those who do, to enter the labor market.

- ***Programs targeting teenagers on welfare may need to create or expand alternative education programs.***

MDRC interviewers were repeatedly told that JOBS programs targeting teen

welfare recipients who are not enrolled in school must take account of their history of school failure and dropping out. If the regular school system had served this group effectively, many of them would not have dropped out; returning teen dropouts to the same schools in which they have already failed is not likely to be effective. For these teens, an alternative education program may be the only way to gain needed skills and credentials. The experience of communities that have created a wide range of educational alternatives—for example, Beloit, Wisconsin—shows that these programs can be very effective in meeting the needs of teen welfare recipients. Florida and Ohio school districts have placed teen parents on welfare in alternative schools, too. However, many school systems, including even some large urban school systems, have few alternative schools. As part of an effort to expand these opportunities, welfare/education program designers should seek out and examine the best alternative schools for ideas they can use to work successfully with welfare recipients who have previously dropped out of school.

The special issues faced by urban schools—low achievement, drug use in surrounding neighborhoods, and widespread social problems—make dropout recovery particularly difficult in those areas. MDRC's research found that large urban school systems were struggling—and often failing—in their efforts to attract dropouts back to school. Additional alternative schools, tailored to the needs and strengths of disadvantaged teens, may be a significant help to inner-city school systems.

- *Redundant achievement testing of JOBS participants could be curtailed.*

Achievement testing is often a useful tool for deciding who can benefit from a particular education program and for identifying the specific education activities that will benefit them. However, MDRC's interviewers were told that testing during the JOBS assessment process was often repeated by education providers, who used a different test or used the same test but administered it differently.

In some cases, this reflects a disagreement over the purpose of testing. While education providers may use a test that is closely related to the curriculum they use, the local welfare agency may prefer a test that measures employment-related competencies; such tests may provide information about job readiness but may not be useful for placing students in the education provider's curriculum sequence. As a result of such disagreements, welfare recipients may spend an undue amount of time being tested rather than receiving services; some may even drop out during the lengthy and sometimes discouraging testing period.

Some schools are skeptical about the testing procedures used by welfare offices. This problem may arise from the fact that JOBS assessments have a different use from those conducted by education providers. JOBS operators need to decide who is eligible for education; this requires screening a large number of people quickly. Education providers need information on the student's appropriate placement within an education program; this requires more fine-grained information and may lead education providers, for example, to use untimed testing procedures and other anxiety-reducing measures for entering students.

To some extent, repeated testing may be necessary and appropriate. Howev-

er, many officials were dissatisfied with this situation because they regarded the retesting as wasteful and as a burden on welfare recipients (who may find the tests to be discouraging and unpleasant reminders of past school failures). Officials also voiced concern about situations in which education providers disagreed with the placement decision reached by the JOBS program staff. JOBS staff sometimes thought that education providers were placing welfare recipients in programs that were too elementary for them (and too costly because of the time required to complete the initial placement). Education providers sometimes complained that students were given inaccurate information by welfare staff about how long it would take to complete the education program.

These problems appear to be symptomatic of new programs that have not fully adjusted to the particular characteristics of their target population. Because many JOBS participants have not sought education on their own, the process of screening them and placing them in an appropriate program cannot take advantage of their self-selection and self-sorting decisions, as programs serving voluntary enrollees typically do. The result will inevitably be a complicated process for identifying clients' educational needs. Simple, one-shot testing procedures may not meet the needs of this population. In these circumstances, it may be worthwhile for JOBS program designers to try out alternative screening and testing procedures and to analyze the results from the perspective of both welfare and education agencies.

Reductions in redundant testing may be attainable if welfare and education staff meet to review and revise program procedures. The result of these negotiations may be a more efficient use of resources as well as a reduction in the testing burden on JOBS participants.

IV. New Institutional Roles for Welfare and Education Agencies

MDRC's field research found that when the welfare and education systems start to work together, their differences make the process of change difficult. Both governance and funding tend to be more centralized in the welfare system than in the education system. Education is governed locally, because of the strong tradition of local control of the schools, while welfare has been shaped by the centralizing influences of federal program rules and state laws and funding, and by decentralizing pressures from local policy (and sometimes funding) and local implementation choices. In addition, education's institutional mission is based on inclusiveness for large numbers and diverse types of people (rather than on eligibility criteria of financial need) and on services that foster a broad range of goals for individuals' growth rather than focusing primarily on economic self-sufficiency. Welfare agencies serve highly specific categories of people, use financial need to determine eligibility, and have the attainment of welfare recipients' self-sufficiency as a principal goal. Clearly, these institutional differences in mission are sharp and significant.

The institutional roles of welfare and education agencies are already changing in the five states MDRC studied. This section describes the issues that have emerged from these changes.

Institutional Priorities

- ***Welfare and education departments attach different degrees of priority to welfare/education programs, and these differences have created a situation in which welfare agencies have become the advocates for the new programs.***

In the five states studied by MDRC, the welfare/education program is a top priority for state and local *welfare* departments but not for state and local *education* agencies. This is because in most states the program was initiated by the state welfare agency and is focused on people who are the target population for that agency. In contrast, education agencies face many other issues and constituencies that compete for attention with the welfare/education program. These different levels of priority have affected the programs' management and services.

Education

Local education agencies attach the greatest priority to serving their biggest groups of students; when welfare/education programs affect only a small number of an education agency's students, the degree of priority given to the program is often small. For example, in Ohio, participants in LEAP account for approximately 2 percent of the state's high school population; the LEAP percentage is much higher in some Ohio school districts, and lower in others. School districts in which students receiving welfare make up a large proportion of the enrollment have tended to attach a much higher priority to LEAP than other school districts.

Moreover, the traditional limits on the authority of state education officials have kept them from pressing local education officials to increase the priority they attach to welfare/education programs. According to the laws in most states, state education authorities cannot require local education providers to offer particular services for welfare recipients. Wisconsin and Ohio, for example, do not require local schools to offer alternative classes for teen parents; instead, they provide partial funding (and the incentive that goes with funding) to local education agencies for that purpose. In California, the state community college system cannot require community colleges to establish a GAIN liaison office; instead, the state encourages and assists colleges to do so, through technical assistance.

Since local education officials are typically not required to conform to state priorities for serving welfare recipients, state welfare agencies have used incentive funding to stimulate local responses. As a result, many local education officials have turned themselves into experts on the welfare department's financing mechanisms, and they have worked hard to offer services that the welfare system wants to purchase. MDRC interviewers found that in several states, when education officials clearly understand the funding and operations of the welfare agency, the educators have been able to devise a wide variety of methods for adding service slots and making other program adaptations to benefit welfare recipients.

While *local* education officials vary widely in their support for welfare/education programs, *state-level* education officials have given considerable attention to the program in all five states that MDRC studied. However, because state education agencies' large budgets are mostly spent on other issues, and because their control over local education agencies is quite limited, the fate of welfare/education programs has typically depended on the actions and initiative of state and local welfare agency officials, and on a strong desire in both welfare and education agencies to form working collaborations.

Welfare

The five states provided numerous examples of the high priority attached by welfare agencies to their welfare/education program. In some states, the welfare department has become involved in shaping the content of basic education services by offering financial incentives to the education providers. In Santa Clara County and Riverside County, California, this is done by basing education providers' payments on the students' attainment of particular competency levels, which are specified in negotiations between the welfare department and the education providers. The purpose is to stimulate educational institutions to adapt their programs to the needs of welfare recipients. In Oklahoma, the state welfare agency negotiated with a large post-secondary institution to determine the content and support services of a new college program targeted on welfare recipients and funded by both agencies.

In several states, local welfare agencies have been extremely active in shaping the welfare/education program. In California, the county GAIN programs have the discretion to select the educational institutions to which they will send GAIN participants as well as to determine the exit standards for education (until the new state exit standards are fully implemented). While this allows county welfare agencies to adapt services to the particular needs of their

locality, the welfare/education program remains highly dependent on the responses of local education providers, which vary considerably. For example, in most localities studied by MDRC, the local welfare agency chose to have the education providers determine the structures, hours, and curricula of basic education services. In effect, welfare officials decided to rely on the expertise of the education officials.

Even within states, local welfare departments vary in the degree of priority they attach to shaping the content of education programs for welfare recipients. This results in education agencies simply expanding their existing systems in some localities (which explains why there was relatively little institutional change in those places) and developing new education programs in others (thus creating new institutional structures).

If welfare agencies fail to take a leadership role in building the welfare/education program, it is unlikely that education agencies will adapt or revise their programs to meet the needs of welfare recipients. Such adaptations are needed when education programs serve new target groups, cope with new reporting and monitoring requirements, and experience increased enrollment. In many cases, welfare agencies have provided valuable ideas and incentives to cooperating education agencies. The high priority that welfare agencies typically attach to the welfare/education program has been a key ingredient in the growth and acceptance of the programs. One notable consequence of this role has been the fact that many welfare officials have turned themselves into experts on education policies and education financing mechanisms in order to make their collaboration with education agencies work.

Coming Together: Cooperation and Resistance

- ***Educational institutions are often willing to serve welfare recipients but are sometimes reluctant to alter their existing programs.***

When educational institutions in the five states MDRC studied were asked to serve welfare recipients, they typically responded with considerable willingness to provide access to *existing programs.* School officials willingly provided access to high schools and adult education classes, and frequently increased the number of classes offered. Similarly, community colleges enrolled welfare recipients in existing remedial, vocational, and other courses. However, when welfare recipients need education services that deviate from those already offered by education agencies, the response has been mixed. Much of the resistance from education providers stems from an unwillingness to disrupt established practices. There can also be unintended institutional barriers for welfare recipients seeking education. The examples given in this section indicate that states and school systems are often slow to adapt their procedures to serve a population that they have not previously served.

Substantial negotiation between welfare and education officials has often been required to make services available. For example, MDRC found that negotiations were required to establish new GED classes scheduled in the morning instead of the traditional night school GED classes; morning classes are often much more convenient than night classes for mothers who depend on child care providers. Some school systems do not wish to provide classes that are not part of established night schools. However, there are also examples of

school systems that have agreed to cooperate with the welfare/education program by changing the curricula of GED and remedial classes, increasing their use of computer-assisted instruction, or adopting competency-based instructional methods, in response to requests from the local welfare department for programs to be adapted to the needs of welfare recipients.

Some services have proved difficult for local school systems to provide, particularly in systems that are already overburdened with the problems of serving an urban, disadvantaged population. When teen welfare recipients return to regular high schools, there may not be slots available in alternative programs, remedial classes, and counseling. Transportation and child care needs are difficult for some school systems to accommodate; MDRC found one large school district that refused to allow its buses to be used to drop off JOBS participants' children at their day care center until the state education department intervened. In other districts, infants cannot be transported by their mothers on school buses. In many school systems, adult education classes are only available from September through May; welfare officials need summer classes for welfare recipients. The willingness of education agencies to provide summer classes depends principally on funding, which may not be readily available.

Local school systems are sometimes quite inflexible in applying school policies to the welfare population. Some school systems and some individual schools fail students for the year if they exceed a given number of absences, making it impossible for welfare recipients who reenroll in mid-year to receive any credits. In several states, some GED preparation programs resist serving teenage students because of state GED eligibility rules or because they prefer to deal with an adult clientele. Some states (including Ohio) require the local school district to give its permission before a student under age 18 can enroll in a GED preparation program, and some school districts routinely withhold this permission (perhaps in order to receive the higher state average daily attendance payment if the teen then returns to a regular high school).

MDRC's interviews identified scattered reports of strong resistance to serving welfare recipients by some education agencies. In Florida, welfare staff expressed frustration at the differences between two adjoining county school districts. While one district willingly adapted its services to the needs of welfare recipients, the other resisted serving them (for example, by refusing to change bus routes to drop off welfare recipients' children at the child care provider, to permit new uses of currently empty classrooms, to waive the requirement for a parent to enroll a teen in high school, and so forth). In Ohio, a few high school principals denied that any of their students were parents, held negative attitudes toward teen parents, or did not want to appear to endorse the behavior of teens who had become parents because they believed that this might affect the behavior of other students. Others were unhappy that teen parents were receiving "special treatment" from the LEAP and GRADS programs.

Screening and referral mechanisms can interact to deny welfare recipients access to education. When Florida's Project Independence began, the staff offices referred for education services—including vocational education—only persons who dropped out before completing the tenth grade; however, very few tenth-grade dropouts could pass the eighth-grade-level test that was required for them to be admitted to state vocational-technical schools. The result was that few Project Independence participants received vocational education—despite the fact that no one specifically intended to create this outcome. (When Project

Independence regulations were changed in 1991, staff began to refer persons who lacked a high school diploma or equivalent to eduction programs. However, the reading test score requirements for the vocational-technical schools continue to keep out many Project Independence participants.)

In each of the five states, MDRC interviews also found education providers that energetically sought to enroll JOBS participants in their programs. They established new programs and modified existing ones to respond to the needs of local welfare officials and welfare recipients. Examples from two states (Florida and Oklahoma) illustrate this. Florida Community College at Jacksonville (FCCJ) adapted its Displaced Homemaker program to fit the needs of Project Independence participants, combining outreach, assessment, education, training, and counseling activities to encourage welfare recipients to enroll. FCCJ also offered training to welfare recipients to become child care providers. Oklahoma's state colleges used their Trio programs (the small, federally funded programs aimed at encouraging students whose parents did not attend college to enter higher education) to attract welfare recipients to attend college (either a community college or at a state college campus). Oklahoma established an Educational Opportunity Center to provide information on a wide range of GED and post-secondary programs to welfare recipients and other low-income people, offering workshops on career planning and financial aid, tours of GED and college classes, and referrals, and providing a toll-free telephone information line. In several states, community colleges and adult schools altered their existing services to incorporate counseling and employment-related skills into existing programs.

In California, many counties have found that interagency consortia composed of representatives of the welfare department and the education providers can build the cooperation needed to establish new services for welfare recipients. During GAIN's planning stages, these consortia provided a forum for agencies to develop an understanding of the operations, needs, and constraints facing their collaborators. The welfare system can provide valuable information to education agencies about the numbers, participation patterns, and special needs of the new clientele and of the welfare agency's expectations for education providers in the program. The education system can inform the welfare system of the programs that are available to serve this clientele and the reasons that some programs may not be appropriate for certain students. As the program evolves, these interagency groups can work to develop new services and to solve problems. The California consortia—and similar ones in Florida, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin—make it clear that ongoing local interagency planning groups can contribute in important ways to the success of welfare/education programs.

In Dade County, Florida (which includes the city of Miami), the welfare and education departments have created new staff positions that are jointly funded, are supervised by the welfare department, work on managing JOBS education placements, and are filled through a hiring process in which both departments interview applicants and agree on job offers. This degree of cooperation between two large organizations represents the first such agreement between welfare and education agencies at the local level in Florida, and required extensive negotiation. Since the jointly hired staff must constantly deal with both departments, it is in their interest to maintain clear and consistent communication between the two bureaucracies for which they work. In at least two Ohio counties, welfare case managers are stationed at schools, while another Ohio county welfare

department paid for a school district staff member to perform assessments for LEAP teens when they enroll in school and to monitor their attendance.

Resolving the institutional barriers to education for welfare recipients typically requires the welfare department to identify the problems, become familiar with the education providers' policies and practices that are related to the problems, and work energetically with education officials to resolve the problems. The active support of education agencies is essential for welfare/education programs. By coming together, welfare and education agencies can create shared programs to serve a population that has previously fallen between the cracks of agencies' missions.

Funding: A Prime Mover

- ***Funding issues affect the capacity and willingness of educational institutions to deliver services to welfare recipients, and strongly shape the nature of the welfare/education collaboration.***

Some states' funding structures provide economic incentives for education providers to serve welfare recipients, while other states fail to cover the costs of providing services to this group. MDRC's interviews found that the funding structures of welfare/education programs greatly affected the willingness of education agencies to collaborate with welfare agencies to serve welfare recipients.

The education providers in California, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin encountered problems in financing the expansion of their services to the new population of welfare recipients. Because of the complexity of those states' funding mechanisms, providers in several localities experienced delays in having their new allocations approved by state officials. Some providers in California took what they saw as a major risk by operating programs without having received approval for their funding. Some of these providers later threatened to discontinue instruction for GAIN participants unless their funding allocations were approved on a more timely basis.

It may be more expensive for education agencies to serve welfare recipients than other students because of their service needs. Particularly if counseling and attendance monitoring are components of the welfare/education program, the education agency or the welfare system may incur additional costs that need to be funded. Florida's Teen Parent Initiative takes account of this fact: local school systems that serve teen parents receive state funding at a higher rate than they do for services to other students. Ohio's state school funding formula also incorporates this feature. In addition, Ohio districts may apply for state funds to hire special teachers under the GRADS program. GRADS teachers offer a special curriculum (provided in addition to regular high school classes) aimed at helping teen parents (whether or not they are in LEAP) to become self-supporting. In many Ohio school districts, LEAP teens are strongly encouraged to enroll in GRADS classes. In other Ohio school districts, there are not enough GRADS teachers to serve all LEAP teens.

In all five of the states MDRC studied, the funding sources for counseling welfare/education participants and helping to solve their attendance and other school problems remain somewhat uncertain. Welfare agencies often assume that school resources are available for these tasks, but this is rarely the case—and an

influx of difficult-to-serve students can easily overstrain a school's budget.

In Florida, the funding problem has taken a different form. A 1989 state law requires community colleges and area vocational-technical schools to waive tuition and fees for Project Independence students. The result is that program operators now have to serve more students with no increase in revenues—possibly creating resistance among the affected institutions to working with Project Independence.

In Wisconsin, funding for services provided to teen welfare recipients has been a source of disputes between the state's largest school district, Milwaukee, and the state welfare and education departments. The Learnfare program has resulted in the return of numerous students to the Milwaukee Public Schools, and the school district has sought additional funding (at levels exceeding the payments it receives from the state for serving other students) to provide special services for this group. In response, the state education agency has argued that existing funding formulas are adequate. However, in a gradual change from early Learnfare policies, the state *welfare* department has increased the funds available to community-based organizations that provide education to 18- and 19-year-old dropouts in the Learnfare program. The community-based organizations' programs also contain parenting instruction and counseling for teen parents. The welfare department has also increased its budget for case management services targeted on Learnfare teens in Milwaukee who are about to be sanctioned, with the goal of resolving barriers to school attendance and reducing the high sanctioning rate in Milwaukee. These funding decisions will increase the capacity of the welfare and education systems to serve teens in Milwaukee; however, the longstanding conflicts over the Milwaukee Public Schools' funding and services for teens on welfare remain unresolved.

Funding problems should not be seen as the sole responsibility of the welfare system or the education system, but as a challenge that the two systems need to work together to resolve. Through negotiations, local consortia of education providers and welfare officials may be able to devise contractual solutions to difficult funding problems. In addition, the JOBS program offers modest amounts of federal matching funds that can be used to support education services in certain circumstances, and state welfare departments may be able to use their knowledge about this funding source to help state education agencies obtain their share of these funds. The states studied by MDRC have made substantial progress in getting funding sources to work together, according to state officials; in particular, California welfare officials cite this as one of GAIN's key accomplishments, and Oklahoma's welfare officials have built highly productive service agreements with education providers. Oklahoma's Education, Training and Employment (ET&E) Program has used a combination of preexisting and new funding arrangements to foster the needed growth in education services for welfare recipients. The state ET&E staff have worked to persuade education providers, such as JTPA managers, Job Corps sites, and state and community colleges, to accept welfare recipients without receiving any additional funding. In situations in which existing capacity was clearly insufficient to meet the demand for new slots, ET&E staff have negotiated contracts in which the welfare department funds the state department of education and other agencies to supply services to welfare recipients. An advantage of these contracts for the state welfare department is that they enable the department, as the purchaser of services, to specify the scheduled hours of

service. This helps the department comply with the federal government's JOBS participation standards, which focus on the number of recipients who attend JOBS components that are scheduled for an average of 20 hours per week or more. Other examples of creative funds-leveraging were found in Florida, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

Innovations

- ***States and localities can benefit from the many innovations in institutional relationships that have been developed in the five states studied.***

MDRC's interviews found evidence of many groundbreaking innovations in institutional roles that help the welfare and education systems work together. They include:

- Admitting JOBS participants into Displaced Homemaker programs, Job Corps programs, Carl Perkins Act single-parent programs, and other education programs that were originally designed for other populations—and adapting those programs to help JOBS participants become self-sufficient.
- Creating one-stop, single-site welfare/education programs that are targeted on JOBS clients. In Kenosha, Wisconsin, this approach combines the services and problem-solving abilities of a case manager and a child care provider with the basic education services provided to adult welfare recipients, and takes advantage of the economies of scale created by serving a large number of JOBS participants in one place.
- Devising new data-management techniques, new software, and improved management information systems to link welfare department records with school attendance records. In Wisconsin's larger counties, these actions made the Learnfare program possible by providing speedy access to crucial attendance data.
- Linking dropout recovery through Learnfare with existing alternative programs to serve returning dropouts. In Beloit, Wisconsin, a diversified system of alternative high school programs was expanded to serve the students who enrolled because of Learnfare. Once these students were drawn into the alternative programs, they reportedly experienced few attendance problems.
- Reallocating responsibilities between case managers and other welfare staff members (for example, job developers, JOBS staff, and income maintenance staff) to improve linkages with local education providers. In Oklahoma, job developers initially played the leading role in arranging JOBS placements in education programs, but gradually case managers assumed more of these responsibilities. This shift required the ongoing attention of supervisors and state staff.
- Creating special activities to solve the attendance problems of JOBS participants in education programs. MDRC observed the following innovative responses: financial incentives for education providers to seek high attendance (performance contracts), home visits by welfare and

education staff members to welfare recipients who are not attending their classes, creating new education staff positions to counsel and deal with attendance problems, and using financial records that were originally used for JOBS child care and training-related expenses to monitor attendance in JOBS education programs.

- Adding new outreach activities to encourage JOBS participants to attend their assigned education program. These activities have involved solving housing problems, resolving domestic disputes, finding child care, mapping out clients' bus routes, and making referrals to drug and alcohol treatment programs. Hamilton County (Cincinnati), Ohio, has hired contractors for such outreach activities in the past, and Cuyahoga County (Cleveland) continues to do so.
- Combining education programs with work to simultaneously develop clients' basic skills and work habits. Some education providers and JTPA programs mix education and work. California's GAIN is pilot-testing several small-scale, county-developed models of concurrent education and training. In Ohio, the county welfare offices are expected to work with JTPA agencies to help LEAP teen parents gain access to summer jobs.
- Changing the record-keeping of community colleges, schools, and other education providers to meet the data-collection needs of the welfare system.
- Out-stationing case managers in the education sites on a regular (often weekly) basis to answer questions from JOBS participants and represent the shared mission of the welfare and education agencies. The case managers also strongly reinforce the schools' efforts to encourage regular attendance and hard work. In Cleveland, LEAP caseworkers are permanently out-stationed in six of the city's 12 comprehensive high schools, and several counties in California out-station GAIN workers at adult education sites.
- Using JOBS funds to hire community-based organizations to provide support services for welfare recipients in education programs and, in some cases, to provide education when existing education programs are not adequate.
- Involving important community members (including elected officials, welfare office staff, senior school district staff, and local church and neighborhood leaders) in graduations and other important activities. These efforts have broadened community knowledge about the welfare/education initiative and the efforts of persons on welfare to become self-supporting, and have strengthened local support for providing resources to participating education agencies.
- Offering JOBS-related staff development for local school district administrators and teachers. Topics have included adaptations needed to serve welfare recipients effectively, attendance issues, and state JOBS regulations. Funding for these staff development activities has been provided by state education agencies.
- Creating a pilot two-year residential program at Oklahoma State University Technical Branch (OSU Tech) to train a small number of JOBS participants for jobs paying up to $25,000 per year. Dormitories were renovated into

apartments for participants and their families; each apartment has its own computer, and there is a child care center in the building. The university, the welfare agency, and JTPA share the funding responsibilities.

- Developing innovative, computer-assisted basic education classes in ESL, GED, and ABE for JOBS participants, as San Diego, California, has done. These were instituted through an unusually close collaborative effort among the local welfare, public education, and JTPA agencies. The welfare agency has also developed an automated education attendance reporting and tracking system.
- Establishing mentoring programs for AFDC recipients. Such programs have been established by Valencia Community College and other community colleges in Florida, using JOBS funds.
- Providing state matching funds for local welfare agencies' proposals for innovative demonstrations. In Wisconsin, these funds are drawn from the state welfare agency's savings from its federally approved welfare reform demonstrations.

These innovations provide a source of ideas for other states and localities to consider for their JOBS programs.

Service Gaps

- ***The lack of availability of ESL (English as a second language) programs in some areas, and uncertainty about ESL exit standards, raises special problems.***

In numerous localities, ESL programs for adults simply do not exist, and non-English-speaking welfare recipients are routinely deferred from participation in the welfare/education program even if they volunteer for it. This was the case in Orlando, Florida, and in some areas of Oklahoma, at the time of MDRC's interviews there. In some localities in California and elsewhere, the ESL program is oversubscribed because of the demand for services by persons applying for citizenship under the Immigration Reform and Control Act. Lack of trained staff exacerbates the problem.

Furthermore, the degree of English fluency required for employment varies dramatically among jobs, making it hard for program operators to decide how much instruction should be provided to meet the needs of local employers. In interviews, program operators expressed great frustration about the difficulty of making these decisions.

Funding problems may be intensified by lengthy assignments to ESL. Evidence from California suggests that ESL programs for adults can extend for long periods of time when they aim for fluency levels that program operators describe as "advanced." In several California counties, a two-year sequence of 20-hour-per-week classes is prescribed for persons who enter GAIN with no English skills. Early GAIN data show that over half of ESL participants in GAIN were still receiving education four months after their GAIN orientation, making ESL a longer and thus more expensive educational activity than ABE or GED classes (although ABE participation is also lengthy). This cost issue is an

important one for program operators to consider during negotiations between welfare and education agencies.

- ***Education services' availability and quality vary significantly within states, creating service gaps for some welfare recipients.***

Welfare officials often assume that education is a service provided uniformly throughout a state. However, a substantial body of education research demonstrates great variation among school districts, schools, and even classrooms.[1] MDRC field research found that the type of education provided to welfare recipients, and the quality of that education, depended on the locality in which they lived and the school or program they happened to attend.

In the states studied by MDRC, there is a very uneven distribution of alternative education programs for teen parents, education combined with skills training, GED classes scheduled during daytime hours, and English for speakers of other languages. Not surprisingly, rural areas tend to have fewer available services and more problems providing transportation and child care. However, even urban areas vary enormously in the availability and intensity of key education services. In Oklahoma, some GED programs meet for 6 hours per week, others for 10 hours per week, and others (in Tulsa) for 20 hours per week. Thus, participants' location determines how many hours of instruction they receive.

In areas where educational alternatives are not available, welfare recipients may be more likely to drop out. For example, in some of the large school districts in Wisconsin, teens in the Learnfare program may be placed in mainstream high school programs despite their preference for a remedial or alternative education program because those programs are oversubscribed. MDRC interviewers were told that teens in such a situation often drop out.

MDRC also found that the rules governing whether a welfare recipient is assigned to education are applied differently by various welfare offices in the same state. In Florida, the criterion for assignment to education or training as the first welfare-to-work activity is that the welfare recipient has not completed high school or has worked fewer than 12 months in the previous 24 months. However, caseworkers are given discretion to assign other recipients to education first if it seems warranted. In some Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services districts, this option is not exercised: the basic criterion for assignment to education is applied strictly. However, in Florida's major urban areas, caseworkers' placement decisions often take into account whether the welfare recipients have enough education to be hired in the local labor market and whether their previous work paid enough to support their family. The use of these additional, ad hoc criteria leads to increased placements in education. Also in Florida, the state's job placement targets for welfare recipients are applied differently in different welfare offices. In some offices, caseworkers are instructed to maximize job placements and not to place potentially employable welfare recipients in education in order to exceed the job placement targets. In other welfare offices, less emphasis is placed on exceeding the job placement targets, and consequently more people are placed in education. These variations create a situation in which welfare recipients' access to education

[1]See, for example, Murnane, "Interpreting the Evidence on School Effectiveness."

depends on the locality in which they live—a situation found also in California and other states.

The variation in education and placement practices makes it clear that welfare recipients with the same characteristics will receive different amounts of education, and a different quality of education services, depending on which welfare office and education provider they deal with. Making education services and policies more consistent would require cooperation between welfare and education providers to increase the availability of education services in many areas.

V. Recurring Design Issues Facing Welfare/Education Programs

In the five states studied by MDRC, policymakers did not spend much time or energy discussing the broad purposes of their welfare/education programs after the authorizing legislation was passed. Instead they concentrated on practical issues and avoided disputes over program goals. The result has been considerable recurring disagreement about the objectives of the states' welfare/education programs, apart from the widely accepted goal of increasing welfare recipients' self-sufficiency. These recurring issues affect the welfare/education programs in all five states and appear likely to be significant in other states as well. This section describes the principal recurring program design issues found in the five states.

Program Goals

- *The goals of welfare/education programs are sometimes uncertain, fluctuating between preparation for employment, attainment of a certificate or diploma and acquisition of skills useful for citizenship and daily life.*

MDRC's interviews found that many *welfare officials* believe that the goal of the welfare/education program is to prepare welfare recipients to become employed and thus self-sufficient. However, they make an exception for high school students, for whom they postpone the employment goal until a high school diploma or GED has been obtained. In addition, they see welfare/education programs as a valuable way to involve welfare recipients in active participation in the community, even if their educational gains are modest.

In contrast, *education officials* have more varied goals for welfare/education programs. They believe that education can lead to employment in many different ways. Some posit the attainment of an educational credential as the key goal. Others argue that programs should offer many education options (and, for teens, many alternative schools) from which students may choose, to enable them to pursue their own educational goals. Still others argue for education for life as a citizen, family member, and community member, rather than strictly for employment, and argue for including life skills issues in the curricula of welfare/education programs. Some adult educators believe that every adult learner has her or his own distinctive educational and work goals, which should provide the basis for the learner and the case managers to design an education program. These approaches all conflict to some degree with welfare officials' goal of education strictly for employment.

This lack of consensus and clarity of goals has an important effect on program management: it is difficult to assess and to measure the performance of a welfare/education program until agreement has been reached on the goals for which it is being held accountable. Often, it is not clear whether accountability standards for welfare/education programs should focus on the employment record of participants, on their educational credentials, on their basic skills,

or on other criteria, such as mastery of a life skills curriculum. The choice depends on the goal of the program—which may be unstated. Welfare and education officials may not need to agree on the goals to form productive alliances on many key issues, but if they *do* agree, they may work together more smoothly.

Exit Standards

- ***Exit standards have yet to be designed and implemented for adults in many welfare/education ABE and ESL programs. This reflects uncertain program goals, and has led to inconsistent treatment of program participants and to very long stays in education programs for some people.***

Exit criteria determine when a student has "completed" the program-assigned education. In some cases, particularly for adults and teens in GED programs and teens in high school, the exit standard is straightforward: passing the GED test or receiving a diploma. Post-secondary degree and certificate programs also have clear exit points. However, no similar exit standards exist for adults in ABE and ESL courses. ABE courses end at approximately the sixth- to eighth-grade levels, as measured on standardized achievement tests, but local practices vary widely. In some welfare/education ABE programs, completers are routinely enrolled in GED instruction; in others, completers are referred back to the welfare office, where the person's next assignment is determined. That assignment might be job search, a GED course, job training (if an appropriate program is available), or unpaid work experience. ESL classes also vary greatly in their completion standards; some aim for students to achieve fluency in English, while others are less ambitious. In addition, some ESL programs refer completers to GED programs.

There are disagreements within state and local welfare agencies regarding the appropriate exit criteria for adult welfare recipients enrolled in ABE and ESL programs. The result is that welfare staff give varied messages to welfare recipients on the question of when they should end their participation in education. In interviews, some school administrators expressed their frustration with having no standardized exit criteria set by the welfare agency. In some cases, school staff said that exit standards were too low, since welfare recipients who met the exit standards were still unable to find employment. Many school officials thought that additional education beyond the ABE level was necessary in order for the students to be competitive in the labor market.

A particular issue is the status of an adult who completes an ABE program and wishes to enroll in a GED program. Some welfare and education staff members argue that she or he should attempt to find a job and, if unsuccessful, should undergo an assessment to determine whether additional education would increase her or his employability. Others argue that since GED preparation is the first activity for many JOBS participants, it should be freely available to all ABE completers.

California has issued statewide exit standards for ABE and ESL programs

(with a state-specified CASAS test score[1] as the key exit criterion) and is implementing an established, but previously unenforced, standard that requires ABE completers to engage in job search. Only if they are unsuccessful in finding employment will they be eligible for GAIN-supported GED classes. Florida has a similar policy in its formal regulations, but because the labor market in some urban areas limits the job opportunities that are available to ABE completers, GED preparation is often assigned for those who complete ABE in these locales.

Policymakers should consider when long stays in education classes are appropriate and make sure that welfare and education officials are aware of state policy goals on this issue. Policymakers must also decide whether they believe their goals are more likely to be met by specific, fixed exit standards or by individualized decisions in schools and welfare offices. MDRC interviews found that the individualized approach resulted in completion standards that varied from locality to locality and even from school to school.

The Use of Voluntarism in Mandatory Programs

- ***Welfare/education programs that use mandates and financial sanctions to increase participation in education also rely heavily on voluntarism, persuasion, and incentives.***

California's GAIN program, Ohio's LEAP, and Wisconsin's Learnfare, more than other initiatives to date, have embraced the idea of mandatory education, although it is not yet clear how strongly the mandatory participation requirements are being enforced. These states' mandates are intended to induce welfare recipients who would not seek education on their own to participate in education as a condition of receiving their full AFDC grant. This approach, which is controversial for adult welfare recipients, is even more controversial for teens. Some states, including Florida and Oklahoma, have mandated welfare recipients to participate in a welfare-to-work activity but have left the decision on whether to choose education to individual participants.

All five states' programs use both mandates (participation requirements, in some cases backed by financial sanctions) and voluntarism. Their efforts to gain the voluntary participation of welfare recipients in education include developing attractive education programs, offering needed support services, and persuading welfare recipients that additional education will improve their opportunities for employment. Ohio's LEAP program is an example of an approach that combines the use of incentives and disincentives to increase participation within a mandatory program. Oklahoma relies heavily on the persuasive abilities of its case managers to gain the cooperation of welfare recipients in its nominally mandatory program. The relatively low incidence of financial sanctioning in California's GAIN program suggests that it, too, relies on both mandates and voluntarism. Clearly, there are a wide variety of ways to get welfare recipients to participate in education activities. The goal of participation in education can be achieved by identifying and using the combination of incentives and

[1]CASAS, the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System, is a test development and publishing organization that is one of several organizations providing tests for JOBS, JTPA, and other program operators.

disincentives that works best in a given state. The specific mix of mandatoriness and persuasion that is chosen for each state's welfare/education program is likely to be a recurring issue, particularly until evaluations that are now under way are completed. Information on the effectiveness of various incentives and disincentives will be available from evaluations of California's GAIN program, Florida's Project Independence, Ohio's LEAP program, and other state JOBS programs.

Returning Teen Dropouts to School

- ***For teens on welfare, a recurring issue of program design is how to deal with dropouts because it is much more challenging to induce teen dropouts to return to school than to work with those who are already in school.***

In Wisconsin, most teens on welfare attended school regularly *before* the introduction of Learnfare. Moreover, approximately 90 percent of Wisconsin teens on welfare are not subject to Learnfare's monthly attendance monitoring provisions because their attendance meets state requirements. Significantly, however, the school attendance of teens on welfare has been poorer in the state's largest urban center, Milwaukee, than in the balance of the state, and poorer for teen parents than for other teens.[2] In Ohio, approximately one-half of the teen parents eligible for LEAP were in school before they entered LEAP.[3]

As school administrators know well, it is much easier to get teens who are already attending school to stay in school than it is to get teen dropouts to return to school. If a state welfare agency does not attempt to do anything with teens on welfare, most will continue to attend school on their own. However, if the state wishes to make a substantial *difference* in teenagers' school attendance, it must focus particular attention on those teenagers who have dropped out of school, are at risk of dropping out of school (such as teen parents), or have poor attendance. Teenage parents on welfare are very likely to drop out of school and therefore have been targeted by Ohio's LEAP program and Florida's Teen Parent Initiative, and they are included in Wisconsin's Learnfare program.[4]

Participation requirements, by themselves, may have some effects on the behavior of teen dropouts, but other policy tools are also relevant. Some school districts have created alternative high schools because many dropouts—particularly those who are overage for their grade placement—say they do not want to return to regular high schools. Wisconsin welfare officials decided to fund numerous additional GED and other alternative education slots in Milwaukee in order to accommodate the increased enrollments of students that resulted from the Learnfare program, and to create programs capable of attracting dropouts back to school. Ohio's GRADS program uses special teachers to work with teen parents, helping them to stay in school. Florida's Teen Parent Initiative

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[2]See Corbett et al., "Learnfare."

[3]See Bloom et al., *LEAP*.

[4]According to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' JOBS regulations, states may not include teens who are enrolled in high school and have not previously dropped out in their JOBS participation rates. This ruling does not create strong incentives under JOBS for states to support dropout-prevention programs.

uses intensive case management to identify and resolve problems that cause teen parents on welfare to drop out. These approaches share a common element: a flexible and evolving approach to providing services for dropouts and teen parents at risk of dropping out. As program operators learn more about the effectiveness of particular techniques for keeping this population in school, these should be added to the design of existing programs.

VI. Building Welfare/Education Programs for the Future

Four dominant lessons emerge from this study.

The first is the most obvious: *Education programs targeted on welfare recipients, both teenagers and adults, have grown substantially* and the pressures for additional growth are likely to continue. Although it will be several years before the impacts, benefits, and costs of such programs are known, many people are convinced that these programs offer an important opportunity to increase the self-sufficiency of many disadvantaged people and their families. The energies of welfare and education officials will be needed to manage this growth in productive ways.

This study's second lesson is that *the education and welfare systems have very different missions, histories, organizational structures, funding arrangements, management information systems, and incentives for the people who are targeted for services.* Building institutional linkages between these two large, separate structures will be challenging and time-consuming. This study has attempted to describe some of the positive first steps that these two systems have taken in their shared effort to serve welfare recipients.

The third lesson is *the crucial role of negotiations between welfare and education officials at both the state and local levels.* In all five states studied by MDRC, there were important interagency negotiations that designed and established new services, organized funding, removed barriers that prevented welfare recipients from receiving education, created linkages between welfare and education agencies, and improved the effectiveness of record-keeping and management information systems.

Additional rounds of give-and-take between welfare and education agencies lie ahead, as welfare and education officials consider the important emerging issues discussed in this study:

- program quality
- attendance follow-up and monitoring
- exit standards
- links between education programs and employment
- creation and funding of additional alternative school programs and slots

These issues are certain to be politically and institutionally sensitive. Considerable flexibility and persistence will be required of all parties if the negotiations are to result in increased effectiveness for welfare/education programs.

State and local welfare and education officials have a great deal to gain from effective negotiations on welfare/education programs. Smooth implementation and program operations obviously benefit all participating agencies. Welfare agencies can benefit from gaining access to appropriate education slots and placements, high-quality education services, and timely feedback on welfare recipients' attendance. Education agencies benefit from having access to a reliable flow of students who have much to gain from education. At the level of the individual school building, education officials also benefit from the

availability of support services, child care, crisis support, and casework. Since all parties involved in the welfare/education programs can gain from them, the value of negotiations to make them work is very clear.[1]

If one of the parties to a negotiation is not interested in cooperating in the welfare/education program, intervention from a higher political level may be required. However, none of the five states studied by MDRC has reached this impasse.

What incentives can bring welfare and education agencies together? MDRC interviewers were told that it was important for education agencies to share "ownership" of the welfare/education program with the welfare agency. This implies bringing all parties into the design process early on so they can shape the content of the program. Moreover, as this study has pointed out, simply dividing program operations between the welfare and education agencies may reduce the attention given to the quality of education and other important issues. In addition, financial incentives are important to program operators. Welfare/education programs may require additional funds to serve their increased enrollments; in addition, funds are needed for "extra" services such as attendance problem-solving.

The fourth lesson of this study is *the importance of program activities to stimulate school enrollment and attendance by welfare recipients who have not enrolled in school on their own.* Many recipients want to be in school, and welfare/education programs can help them solve the problems associated with attending and completing their school programs. It is unlikely, however, that simply offering such support services will cause the less motivated welfare recipients to attend an education program.

Helping teenage dropouts return to school and stimulating adult dropouts to enroll in and attend education programs are complicated tasks. They may require the development of new education services, child care, and other services that are more attractive and convenient for welfare recipients than the ones that currently exist. They will surely require greater efforts to solve the stubborn problems of achieving regular attendance. It is not yet clear which policies will be most effective in increasing the school attendance and educational achievement of welfare recipients. The ongoing evaluations of state welfare/education initiatives—including the evaluations of several of the initiatives discussed in this study—will provide important information on whether education programs are effective in increasing the self-sufficiency of substantial numbers of welfare recipients.

[1]See Job Training Partnership Act Advisory Committee, *Working Capital.*

Appendix: Participation in Education Activities in California's GAIN Program

This Appendix presents a brief summary of MDRC's findings on participation in California's Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) Program, drawn from the ongoing GAIN evaluation.[1]

As described in Section II, the first GAIN activity for persons determined to be in need of education is either education or job search (which may be chosen at the registrant's discretion). GAIN registrants who complete their initial activity (education, job search, or both) without having found a job must, after a formal assessment, enter another activity specified in an individual employability plan. These may include vocational or on-the-job training, work experience, supported work, or other forms of education and training. GAIN registrants who are already in approved services when they enroll in GAIN may continue in them for up to two years.

Information on the participation patterns of welfare recipients in GAIN's education activities will be of interest to JOBS program operators and education officials in many states as they try to assure an adequate supply of slots in their welfare/education programs and to establish effective communication and monitoring linkages with their cooperating agencies. This information may help them estimate how many students will be referred to their program and how long they will stay. Data on participation in GAIN education were collected as part of MDRC's study of the early period of implementation in 8 of the first 10 counties to operate GAIN. They come from field research, a survey of program staff, and program casefile records, and analyze the first 16 to 24 months of GAIN operations in the 8 counties. Participation rates are presented for individuals who registered with GAIN during the first 2 to 12 months of operations, a start-up period when the programs were still developing basic policies and procedures. Although comparable data were not available for the other four states in the present study, California's experience is itself quite informative.

Figure 1 traces 100 typical single-parent (AFDC-FG, or Family Group) GAIN registrants through the GAIN program during the first four months after their attendance at an orientation. Of 100 registrants, 58 were determined to be in need of basic education (ABE, GED, or ESL). However, only 31 were referred to a basic education program because many were temporarily excused from the program (primarily for part-time employment or medical reasons) or left welfare, or for other reasons. Nineteen actually enrolled in such a program and participated in it. (At least an additional 3 registrants participated in basic education after the four-month follow-up period.)

Thus, about one-third of those meeting GAIN's criteria for being in need of

[1]This section is based on Riccio et al., *GAIN*. Also see Stephen Freedman and James Riccio, *GAIN: Participation Patterns in Four Counties* (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1991), and James Riccio and Daniel Friedlander, *GAIN: Program Strategies, Participation Patterns, and First-Year Impacts in Six Counties* (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1992), for more recent general findings on participation in GAIN.

basic education actually entered it. Basic education was the most common GAIN activity, undertaken by about 42 percent of all registrants who participated in any GAIN activity. About half of those in basic education were in ABE, and the remainder were in GED or ESL.

Participation in basic education was characterized by relatively low completion rates (a problem also experienced by most adult basic education programs that serve volunteers) and moderately long periods of enrollment during the four-month follow-up period available,[2] as illustrated by Table 1. Approximately one-half of the basic education participants were still enrolled at the end of the follow-up period. ESL participants were most likely to still be enrolled at the end of the follow-up period, whereas GED students were least likely. Completion rates in GED were higher than in the other basic education components.

Within the four-month follow-up period, roughly one-third of the single-parent welfare recipients dropped out of their program—a dropout rate roughly comparable to the rates in other adult education programs.[3] The most common reasons for leaving were employment or other reasons determined to be "legitimate" by GAIN staff, such as problems with transportation or child care.

Participation rates in GAIN education programs were lower than program planners had expected, despite the fact that the proportion of registrants found to be in need of education was higher than anticipated. In a few counties in California, education agencies made plans and allocated funds to serve a large number of welfare recipients but received well below the anticipated number of referrals.

This discussion of participation data from GAIN suggests two factors that welfare and education officials should bear in mind in planning a welfare/education program:

- It is useful to identify the proportion of the welfare caseload that is in need of education in order to adequately plan slots for the program.
- Estimates of participation should take into account the reality of legitimate reasons for nonparticipation, the dynamics of normal exits from the welfare rolls, and reluctance by some to attend an education program. Also, a program model that places education later in the sequence than GAIN does should be expected to have lower participation rates in education because many welfare recipients will leave the program before reaching its later stages.

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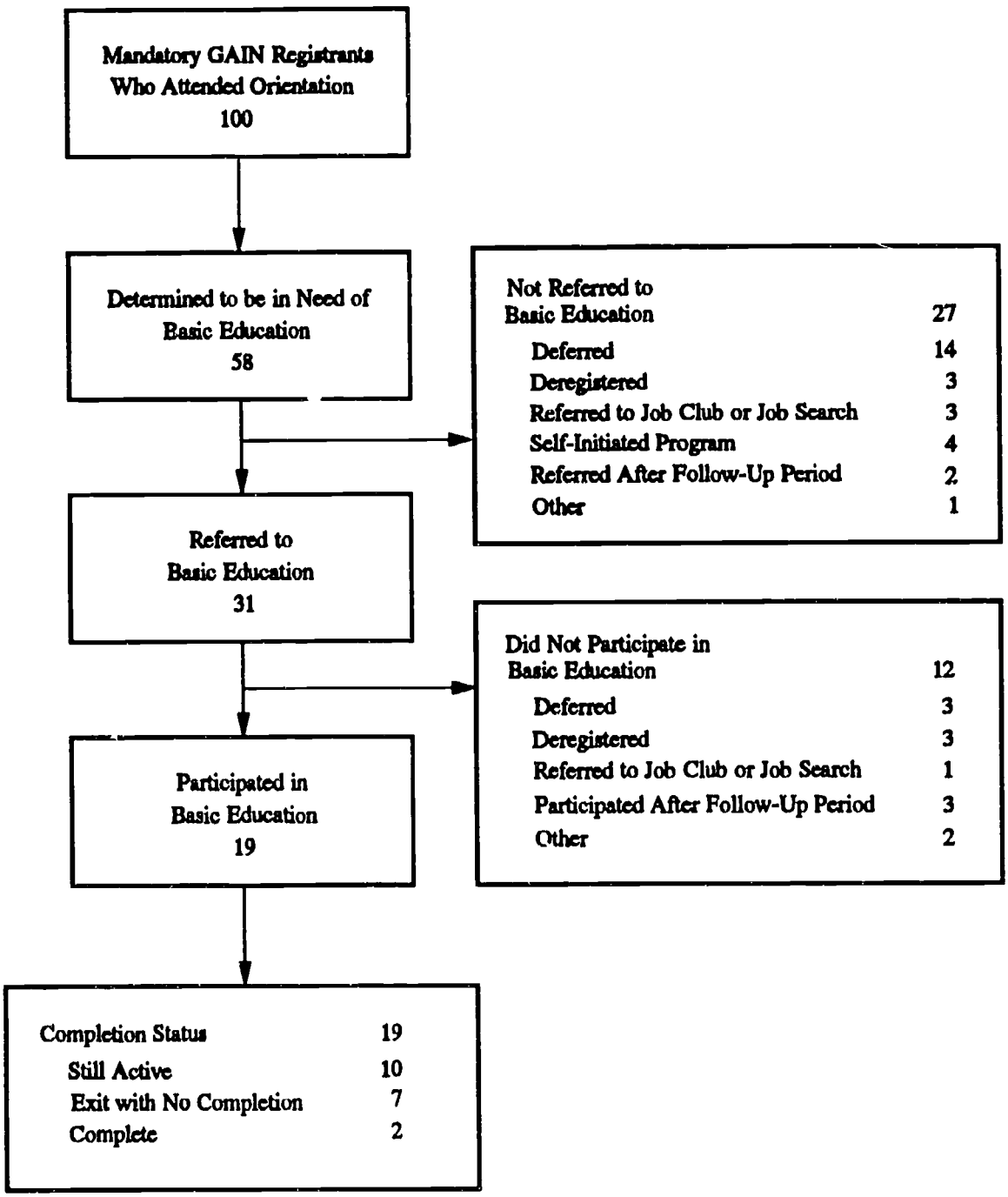
[2]MDRC studied GAIN registrants who entered the program in the first 2 to 12 months of GAIN operations and followed their activities for at least 4 months. In order to provide information on the same length of follow-up for all registrants studied, a four-month follow-up period is used here.

[3]See, for example, Association for Community Based Education, *ACBE Evaluations.*

FIGURE 1

BASIC EDUCATION REGISTRANT FLOW
WITHIN FOUR MONTHS OF ORIENTATION
FOR 100 TYPICAL AFDC-FG ORIENTATION ATTENDERS



SOURCE: Adapted from James Riccio et al., *GAIN: Early Implementation Experiences and Lessons* (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1989), p. 192.

TABLE 1

COMPLETION STATUS AND AVERAGE NUMBER
OF DAYS OF PARTICIPATION
FOR BASIC EDUCATION PARTICIPANTS
WITHIN FOUR MONTHS OF ORIENTATION

Basic Education Component	AFDC-FG Mandatory Registrants (%)	Average Number of Days
Adult Basic Education		
Exit[a]	38.1	32
Complete[b]	5.7	54
Still Active[c]	55.3	81
Status Unknown[d]	0.9	--
Total	100.0	61
GED Preparation		
Exit[a]	33.1	32
Complete[b]	14.8	36
Still Active[c]	47.0	66
Status Unknown[d]	5.1	--
Total	100.0	48
English as a Second Language		
Exit[a]	27.9	18
Complete[b]	4.7	58
Still Active[c]	67.3	86
Status Unknown[d]	0.0	--
Total	100.0	66
All Components		
Exit[a]	34.4	30
Complete[b]	8.0	42
Still Active[c]	55.3	79
Status Unknown[d]	2.3	--
Total	100.0	58

(continued)

TABLE 1 (continued)

Basic Education Component	AFDC-FG Mandatory Registrants
Sample Size[e]	
Adult Basic Education	44
GED Preparation	44
English as a Second Language	15
Total	102

SOURCE: Adapted from James Riccio et al., *GAIN: Early Implementation Experiences and Lessons* (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1989), pp. 205-206.

NOTES: The sample includes members of MDRC's participant flow sample who attended orientation within two months of registration.

The sample for this table is weighted to reflect county caseload sizes.

Fresno is not included in these participation rates because of unavailable data.

Participation rates include registrants who participated in the activity for at least one day. The rates include registrants' "first occurrence" of participation only.

Basic education includes adult basic education (ABE), GED preparation (GED), and English as a second language (ESL). This table includes participation in program-referred basic education only; very few registrants were active in self-initiated basic education.

Distributions may not total 100.0 percent because of rounding.

[a]"Exit" means that the participant left without completing the component because of employment, a transfer to a new component, a "good cause" reason, or other reasons.

[b]"Complete" means that the participant reached the appropriate skill level, according to county or provider standards.

[c]"Still active" means that the registrant participated for at least one day and did not have an interruption or end date for that component within the follow-up period.

[d]The average number of days of participation is not reported when completion status is unknown.

[e]Sample sizes for ABE, GED, and ESL do not total 102 because one AFDC-FG registrant participated in two basic education components during the follow-up period; the "total" row in the component panels reflects the completion status for the second basic education component and the total number of days of participation in both basic education components for this registrant.

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