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Executive Summary

All States in a recent study undertook at least one "re-engineering" activity in their Food Stamp Programs (FSPs) as a result of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). In addition, 35 States implemented changes in 3 or more re-engineering categories, while 24 States planned changes for FY 2000 in 2 or more categories. PRWORA dramatically changed the systems that provide cash assistance and food stamps to low-income Americans. Along with mandatory changes in food stamp eligibility, States were given greater flexibility to administer their programs to meet their unique needs. While States had begun changing the way program services were delivered before passage of welfare reform legislation, PRWORA provided additional opportunities for them to "re-engineer" FSPs. The purpose of the study was to examine State-level administrative changes to FSPs as a result of PRWORA, both those made before fiscal year (FY) 2000 and those planned for FY 2000.

To facilitate analysis of the broad array of State FSP re-engineering changes, the information gathered for this study was categorized into six subject areas, as follows:

1. Changes in State organizational structure;
2. Changes in the role of the caseworker;
3. Efforts to improve program accessibility and client certification;
4. Changes in client tracking and accountability systems;
5. Attempts to conform the FSP and TANF program rules; and
6. Efforts to increase program monitoring and evaluation.

The major research questions driving the study were:

- To what extent have States implemented administrative or operational changes to their FSPs from the passage of PRWORA through FY 1999?
- To what extent were States planning to make changes to their FSP administrative practices or program operations during FY 2000?
- What were the primary motivating factors identified by States for making administrative and operational changes to their FSPs, and to what extent did the re-engineering efforts require the approval of different branches of government?
- How did efforts to re-engineer FSPs vary between States with county-administered programs and those who administer their FSPs at the State level?

Overview of the Study Methodology and Organization of the Final Report

A total of 49 States and the District of Columbia agreed to participate in the study. Data were collected from States by a three-step process. First, States were asked to provide documents that contained descriptions of their re-engineering efforts, such as budget proposals, strategic planning documents, and legislative initiatives. A total of 24 States were able to provide these documents, and data for each of the 6 re-engineering categories were abstracted from them. Second, all States in the study participated in a followup telephone survey, either to clar-

- ***Conforming FSP and TANF Program Rules.*** This includes information describing the extent to which States decided to align TANF Program rules and FSP rules.

- ***Program Monitoring and Evaluation.*** This category summarizes States' efforts to monitor and evaluate their FSPs. For the purpose of this study, efforts to monitor the FSP include: (1) routine assessment of program operations, (2) attempts to track food stamp clients after they leave the program, and (3) formal evaluations States have undertaken to assess the impact of policy or operational changes.

The data collected and analyzed for this study are based on information gathered from the States in FY 2000 (see the data collection methods section). At the time of the data collection, States were asked to provide information about changes they had implemented since the passage of PRWORA, as well as any changes they were planning to implement during the remainder of the fiscal year. While some States have already made many of their welfare reform-related FSP policy changes, implementation is proceeding in others at varying speeds. Some of the administrative changes discussed in this report have yet to be completed and others are still in the planning stages, as State officials assess how best to rework their administrative systems to support their policy choices. However, it is clear at this point that a number of the changes under PRWORA have important implications for administrative practices and information systems.

Research Questions

Since the overall purpose of the study is to provide a description of the re-engineering efforts made by States since the passage of welfare reform, the research questions were designed both to capture information that describes these initiatives and to examine how the initiatives varied among States. In addition, to the extent possible, the study examines some of the motivation of State FSP administrators for implementing the changes. The major research questions were as follows:

- To what extent have States implemented administrative or operational changes to their FSPs since the passage of PRWORA through FY 1999?

- To what extent were States planning to make changes to their FSP administrative practices or program operations during FY 2000?

- What were the motivating factors identified by States for making administrative and operational changes to their FSPs, and to what extent do the re-engineering efforts require the approval of different branches of government prior to implementation?

- How did States' efforts to re-engineer their FSPs vary between States with county-administered programs and those who administer the FSP at the State level?

Data Collection Methods

A three-part data collection process was developed to gather detailed information on administrative changes States have made or are making to their FSPs as a result of PRWORA. This process included: (1) abstracting data from State documents that describe the program changes, (2) administering a followup telephone survey to State officials to clarify and enhance the data abstraction, and (3) conducting a series of six case studies to examine local-level implementation of different re-engineering categories. The primary focus of each of the individual case studies was on one of the six major re-engineering categories. The studies are presented and discussed in Section II of this report.

Data Abstraction. The first step in the data collection process was gathering existing documents from States that described their re-engineering efforts in the six categories of change. The goal of the data abstraction process was to minimize the data collection burden on State government officials. Allowing officials to send existing documents for the project team to review and cross reference with the survey document meant that less of their time would be needed to obtain the data required for this study. The data abstraction process would also enable the team to ask fewer questions during the survey phase of the data collection process. In addition, because few States were likely to have made changes in all six categories, the review of existing documents meant that the followup telephone survey could focus on pertinent areas of administrative change, reducing the burden on respondents.

States were asked to send documents to the study team describing relevant changes to their programs. The types of documents gathered in this way were those used by States to obtain legislative authorization or project approval through an executive authority before implementing any FSP changes. The research team assumed that a number of documents generated from the States' planning and approval process could be for-

warded for data collection. The specific documents requested were legislative budget change proposals, departmental decision packages, strategic planning documents, advance planning documents, and other implementation plans.

However, because of the broad scope of the re-engineering categories and because the proposed changes may have affected other programs beside the FSP, some States informed the research team that gathering relevant documents would be a very cumbersome process. These State officials noted, for example, that since a number of re-engineering efforts were initiated outside the food stamp division, they would have to retrieve documents from other organizational units. Participants also indicated that relevant changes were not always documented in a way that would be helpful to the research team. In the end, 24 States were able to forward documents, 26 States asked to participate in the telephone survey only, and one State elected not to participate in the study because its food stamp office was significantly understaffed and it had not made any re-engineering changes that qualified under the six categories. A listing of the 24 States that were able to provide documents is found in appendix table 1.

Followup Telephone Survey. The second step in the data collection process consisted of conducting followup telephone surveys with State officials to clarify information from State documents, gathering information that was lacking in the material collected, and undertaking a data collection effort with States that could not provide documents for the data abstraction. The followup survey was useful not only for collecting data, but also for ensuring that the information the project team gleaned from the State documents was correctly interpreted.

The survey played the central role in the overall data collection. The survey instrument was divided into six sections of questions, corresponding to each of the re-engineering categories. Each section began with a screening question to determine whether a re-engineering effort in that specific category had taken place or was being planned for FY 2000. If the screening question received a negative response, that whole section of the survey was skipped.

As noted earlier, 49 States and the District of Columbia participated in the study. Forty-eight respondents participated in the followup telephone survey. One variation in the data collection methods did occur towards the end of the data collection period: at the request of two States, the survey form was modified so it could be completed by mail. These two States provided written responses to the survey questions but did not participate in the followup telephone survey. The combined data collection instrument for the document abstraction and followup survey is presented in the State data collection instrument at http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan01009.

Limitations of the Data

This study was designed to gather descriptive information about State re-engineering efforts in order to present a picture of how States have changed the administrative and operational practices of their FSP as a result of welfare reform. Though the research was able to accomplish this objective, a number of limitations to the data must be considered in reviewing the findings, as explained below.

- Since this study was designed to capture changes that occurred as a result of PRWORA, information on reforms that took place before PRWORA is not included. It is well known that States' welfare reform efforts began before the passage of PRWORA through the use of program waivers. For example, Utah made changes to its organizational structure by consolidating five agencies into a single Department of Workforce Development, but the restructuring was not included in the study because it took place prior to the passage of PRWORA.

- Planned changes may not have been implemented. The findings include information on changes that were planned for FY 2000 but that had not been fully implemented. A "planned" activity was defined as one that had been approved for implementation but had not begun or been completed at the time of the survey. However, this does not mean that the plan will be implemented in FY 2000. Problems such as budgetary or staffing limitations might interfere with full implementation of a State's re-engineering changes.

- Information was not collected to reflect changes made at the county level in county-administered States. Thirteen States pass on the responsibility of running their TANF and FSP to local county jurisdictions. In these States, the local jurisdictions often have the same kind of flexibility States have, and as a result modify their administration of the FSP to meet their own local needs and requirements. While variations between county-administered programs and State-administered programs are examined in the

findings section of this report, it was beyond the scope of this study to examine variations in the administration of the FSP among local areas within county-administered programs.

- Finally, it is important to note that the scope of State re-engineering efforts is both diverse and, in some cases, unique to particular situations within a State. When States were developing their re-engineering plans, they were not thinking about them in the categorical fashion used for this report, but rather were considering how they might modify their overall FSP administrative operations to meet the demands of welfare reform. While this report can provide a broad overview of re-engineering efforts, capturing data about specific State-by-State implementation steps and the level of effort needed to implement changes was beyond the scope of this project. To capture this type of detail would have required an expanded data collection process and created a significantly heavier burden on State program administrators.

The methodology used for this study tried to capture operational changes at a level that would allow comparable data to be examined across States. However, the research team was aware that there was a great deal of interest in examining some of the more innovative approaches used by States to implement their changes. Therefore, these new approaches were included in the six case study reports, which are the subject of Volume II of this report. These case study reports provide a higher level of detail with regard to the implementation and operational aspects of the specific State's re-engineering effort.

Findings from this study are organized into three chapters. Chapter I provides an overview of the extent to which States implemented re-engineering efforts in one or more of the categories described previously. Chapter II provides a detailed description of changes made by States in each of the re-engineering categories. Chapter III presents a discussion of the implications of the findings for future research. Tables presenting more detailed information on key survey responses from individual States are presented in appendix A.

Section A: State Survey

I. Overview of State Re-engineering Efforts

Categories of Administrative Change

Each of the six categories of State FSP administrative change analyzed for this study was chosen for its relevance to the FSP in a post-welfare reform environment. These categories were also chosen, in part, because these areas were of greatest policy interest to program managers at the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and were items for which FNS had no standardized means of collecting information. The policy premise upon which each of the six categories of administrative change was determined is briefly summarized below.

- ***Change in Organizational Structure of the State FSP Agency.*** In the broader context of State efforts to reorganize the State agency administering TANF and to increase the emphasis on moving clients into the workforce, many States have been merging agencies or consolidating functions at the State level. With the increased flexibility in developing program rules for the TANF block grant, some States are also moving from a centralized to a decentralized approach in the administration of their TANF programs. It was the purpose of this study to determine whether and how the administration of the FSP was altered during this same period.

- ***Changes in the Role of the Caseworker.*** As States are changing the orientation of the TANF program to focus on promoting work and self-sufficiency, and on identifying barriers to employment and how to overcome them, the role of the caseworker is pivotal. While States are required to pay more attention to client eligibility restrictions in the FSP, they are also changing the role of caseworkers who see TANF clients into more of a case manager role. As a case manager, the caseworker has added responsibilities, related to helping clients to become more self-sufficient, to find support services such as child care, and to identify opportunities for finding and maintaining a job. In addition, some States began dividing caseworker responsibilities by the type of client being served. For example, some States created classifications for caseworkers who handled clients eligible for multiple social and health services programs (TANF, FSP, and Medicaid), while creating separate classifications for workers who saw FSP participants only. This study sought to determine whether and how States changed the caseworker's role and the division of caseworker roles within local offices, including how caseworkers served both TANF and non-TANF clients.

- ***Changes To Improve Program Accessibility and Modify Client Certification Systems.*** The need to improve access to the FSP became increasingly clear in the mid-1990s, as program statistics indicated not only a dramatic decline in TANF participation nationwide, but also a significant decline in food stamp participation. This study sought to determine whether and how States varied in terms of their efforts not only to bring in eligible clients to apply for food stamps, but also whether and how they were encouraging eligible households to stay in the FSP after they took jobs and lost cash assistance. PRWORA gave States more flexibility in the food stamp application process, and the study also looked at how States modified the initial application and recertification processes in ways that may have affected program efficiency and coordination at the local level.

- ***Client Tracking and Accountability Systems.*** Unlike those in the other categories, the State changes assessed in this category are mostly a consequence of new Federal requirements enacted by PRWORA. Because of these new requirements, States need new methods for collecting and tracking information about applicants and current food stamp recipients in order to determine FSP eligibility and prevent errors in program certification. Examples of the new data States are required to maintain or be able to track through database matching efforts include: information on TANF clients' participation in work programs and their employment status; information on ABAWDs' employment, participation in FSP employment and training activities, and months of participation in the FSP; information on the immigration status and year of entry into the United States of legal aliens; and information from Federal and State records on clients' prior convictions for felonies.

- ***Conforming FSP and TANF Program Rules.*** Because of the new option of the Simplified FSP, along with Federal and State policymakers' interest in reducing program complexity and promoting conformity between TANF and the FSP, an important category of change was the extent of conformity that States initiated between these two programs. The study assessed the number of States that had con-

formed the FSP to their State TANF rules, either through the Simplified FSP option or by shaping TANF rules to existing Federal FSP rules.

- ***Program Monitoring and Evaluation.*** With the significant changes in welfare reform, it became important for public policymakers to know how the changes were affecting client outcomes. In the FSP, it is important to know whether and how States are investing in systems or special studies to monitor and evaluate the success of the FSP, both in terms of employment outcomes and of ensuring that families are receiving the food assistance to which they are entitled.

Number and Type of State Administrative Changes in the FSP After PRWORA

This section discusses the extent to which States made changes in their FSPs that fall into the six categories of re-engineering changes. Two approaches were used to examine these data. First, the total number of activities that fell into each of the six re-engineering categories was examined. These results are presented by displaying the number of States completing or planning an activity that fell into the specific re-engineering category. Second, the total effort made by States is displayed, that is, the number of States that undertook or planned re-engineering activities in one or more categories. Analyses of these data are therefore designed to provide a "big picture" view of the efforts made by States to re-engineer their FSPs. Details on the specific activities themselves within each of the six categories are presented in chapter II.

When viewing these data, it is important to remember that from the State agency's point of view, the changes to its FSP were likely the result of a single effort to change the way the program is administered. It was the purpose of this study to examine the State efforts and place the various activities into the six categories of re-engineering changes. For example, if a State decided to implement a project that redefined the role of the caseworker, and at the same time restructured reporting relationships by creating new organizational units, the State was classified in this study as having made changes in two re-engineering categories.

The data discussed below are divided into two general categories: activities implemented after PRWORA but prior to FY 2000, followed by activities planned for FY 2000.

How Many FSP Administrative Changes Did States Implement After PRWORA?

Every State agency included in the study (49 States and the District of Columbia) reported making administrative changes to their FSP that fell into one or more re-engineering categories. Figure 1 displays the number of States that have made changes, by the number of categories into which those changes fall. As can be seen, 48 (96 percent) of the States made changes that fall into two or more categories, while 19 States (38 percent) made changes falling into four or more re-engineering categories. Figure 2 displays each of the States and the number of re-engineering categories in which they made changes after PRWORA.

What Categories of Administrative Change Were Most Common?

As can be seen below in fig. 3, three categories of change were reported by the majority of respondents (see appendix table 2 for specific States). Forty States reported they had enacted re-engineering efforts in the category of client tracking and accountability systems—not a surprising finding, since this category of change was driven in large part by new requirements in the law. Thirty-nine States reported changes to improve FSP accessibility and client certification systems. Responses in this latter category included States' efforts to improve FSP participation by those eligible, as well as efforts to modify their application and certification systems. While efforts for improving access were consistent with the concern over large declines in FSP participation and the increasing public attention being paid to this, efforts to change the certification system may also have been a result of needing to reduce FSP certification error rates.

Of interest—and an unexpected result—was the third most frequently reported category of change: changes to conform FSP and TANF rules. Though only a small number of States opted to utilize the Simplified FSP option, a total of 34 States reported some efforts to conform the State's TANF and FSP rules.

A large number of States made changes in more than one of these three categories. Specifically, 22 States made changes in all 3 of these categories and 32 States made administrative changes in both their client tracking and accountability systems and in improving pro-

Figure 1

Number of States implementing re-engineering efforts as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by number of category changes

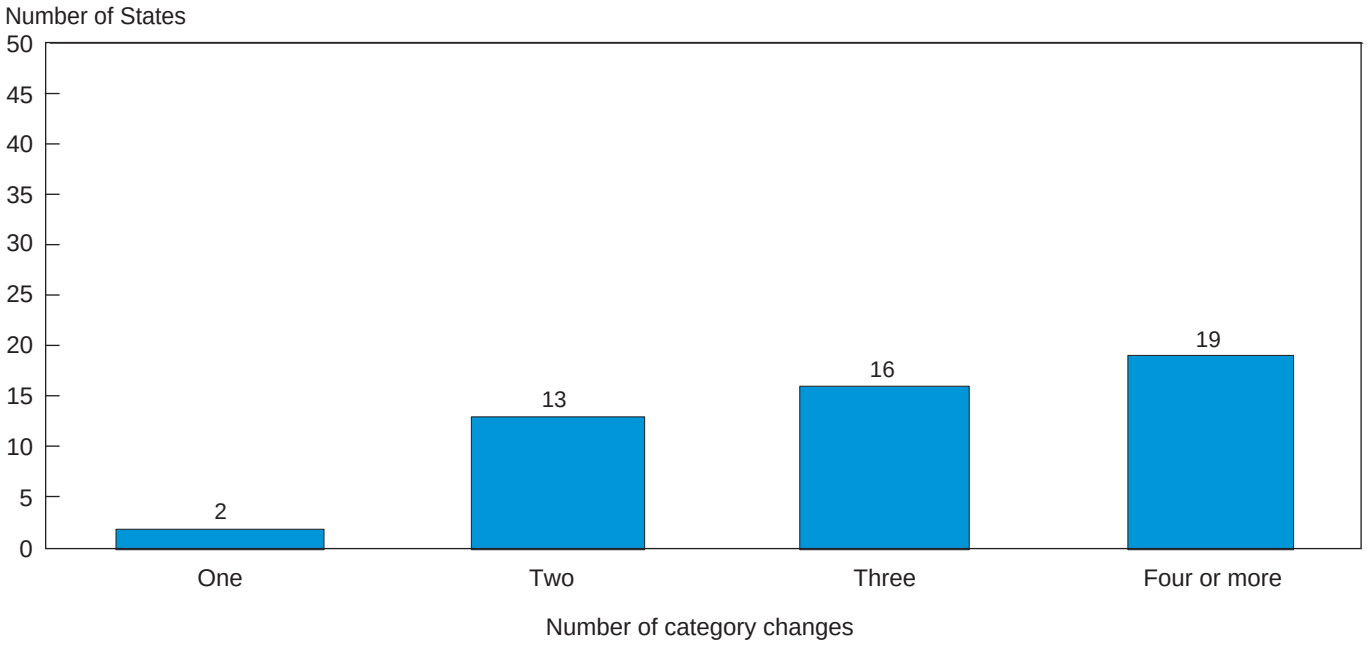
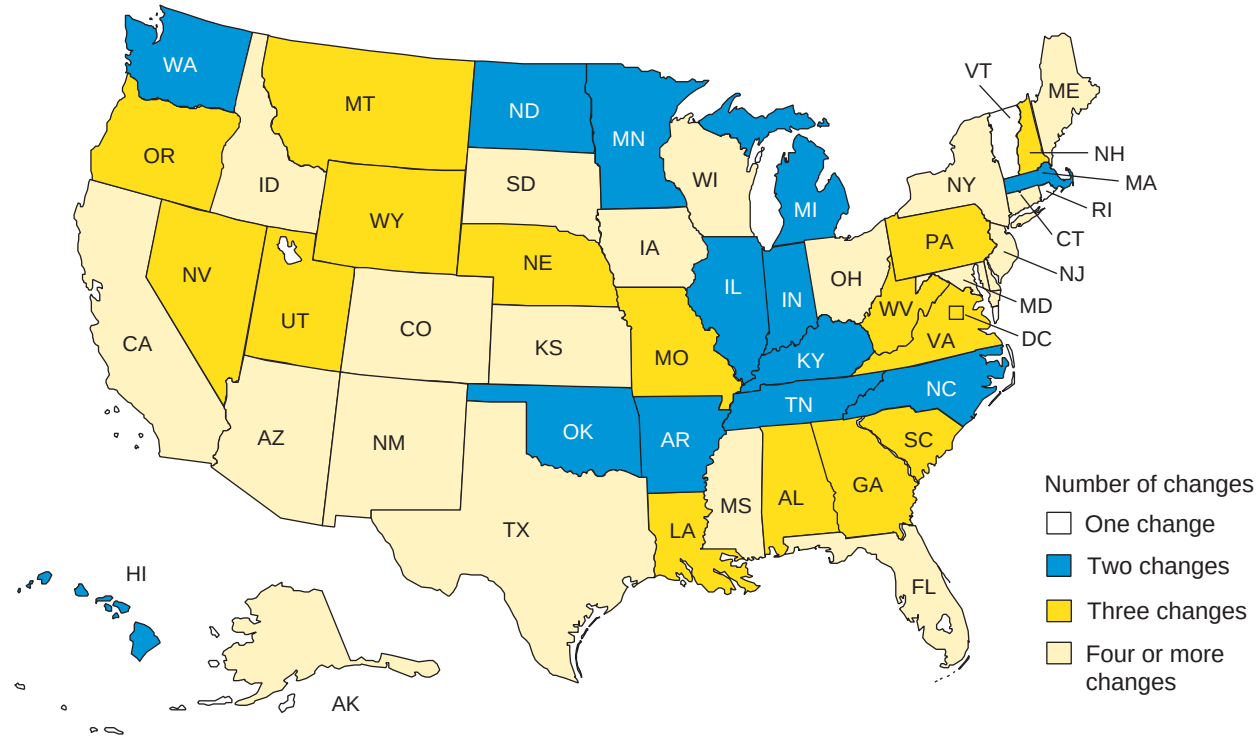


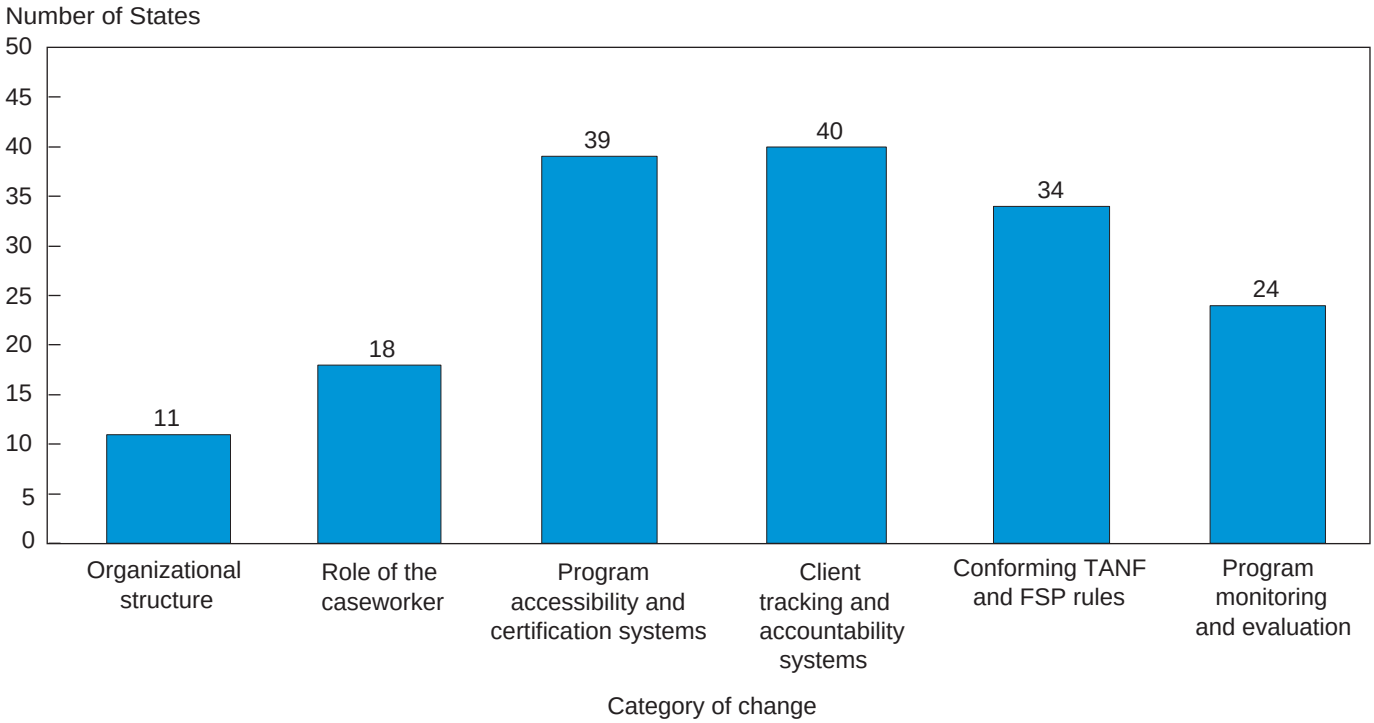
Figure 2

Number of re-engineering efforts by States as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000



Note: Delaware did not participate in the study.

Figure 3
Number of States implementing re-engineering efforts as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by category of change



gram accessibility and/or modifying their FSP certification systems.

What Changes Did States Plan to Implement by the End of FY 2000?

In addition to asking about activities implemented since 1996 as a result of welfare reform, the study also questioned State officials about plans for implementing re-engineering efforts in FY 2000. States that were planning to enact one or more re-engineering changes in FY 2000 are displayed on the map in fig. 4. As can be seen in fig. 5, only 10 States reported no plans to implement any re-engineering efforts. One-third (16) of States reported plans to implement one change, 17 planned to enact 2 categories of change, 6 planned on implementing 3 changes, and one planned on implementing 5 changes by the end of the fiscal year. All 10 of the States not planning to implement any further changes had already implemented 2 or more changes in the prior years.

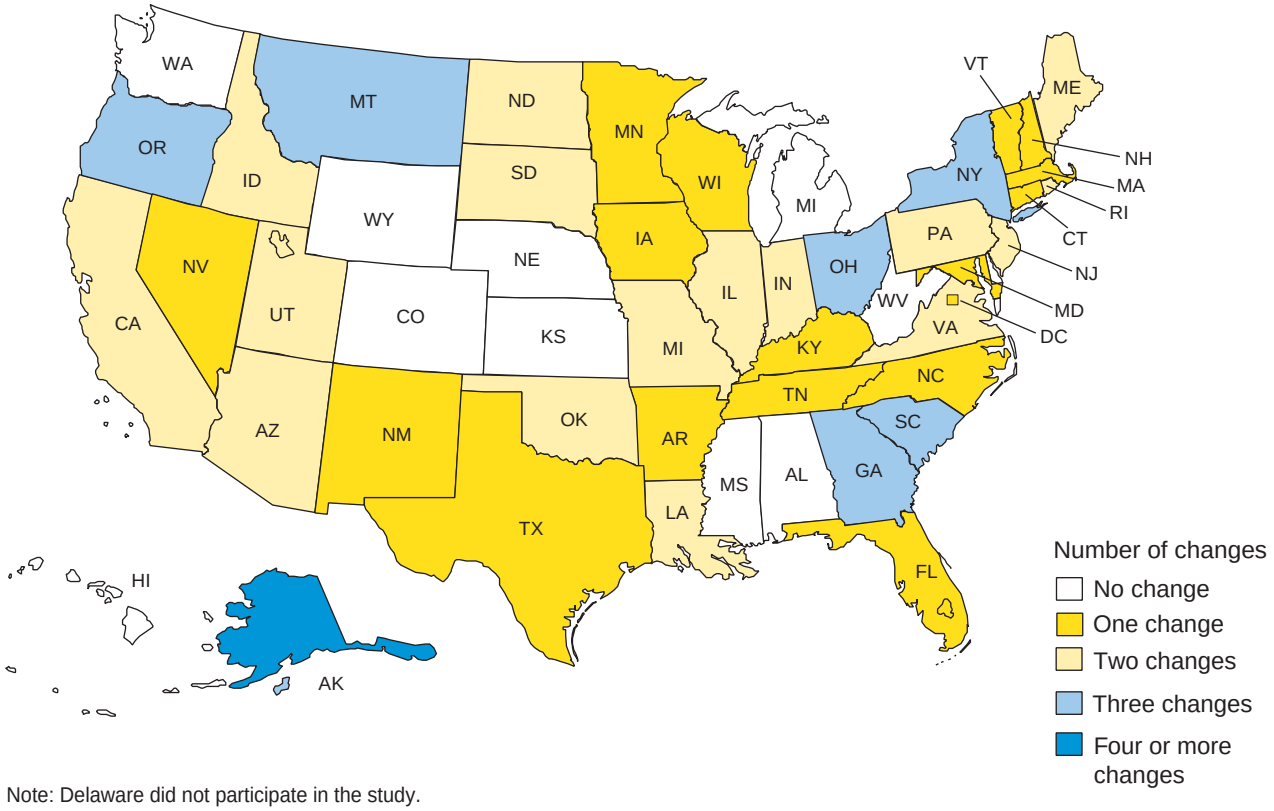
Of the States planning to implement changes in FY 2000 (see appendix table 3 for listing of States), the majority (28 States) planned to implement changes in program accessibility and certification systems (fig. 6). This may be a direct result of the concerns regarding drops in FSP participation rates. It was also interesting to note that nearly one-third of the States (15) planned to increase their program monitoring and evaluation activities in FY 2000. This also may be related to the drop in program participation, as States may be wishing to analyze the impact of welfare reform on client services and caseload. The increased interest in program monitoring and evaluation will be discussed further in chapters III and IV.

Comparison of Changes By State FSP Characteristics

In examining the level of the effort with which States have re-engineered their FSPs, it is important to assess whether the extent of State changes was correlated with the level at which the FSP is administered (county or State) and the size of the FSP caseload, as measured by the average number of monthly FSP participants in each State.

Figure 4

Number of re-engineering efforts planned by States for FY 2000



Note: Delaware did not participate in the study.

Figure 5

Number of States planning re-engineering efforts during FY 2000 by number of category changes

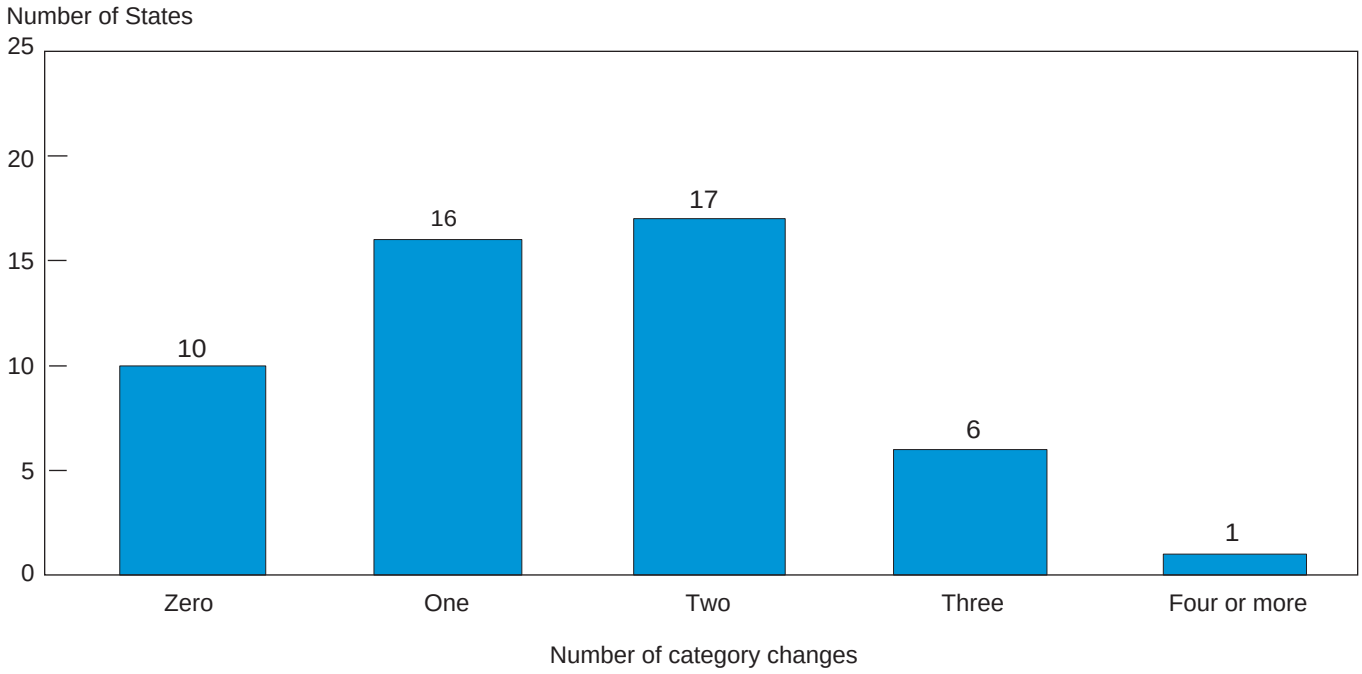
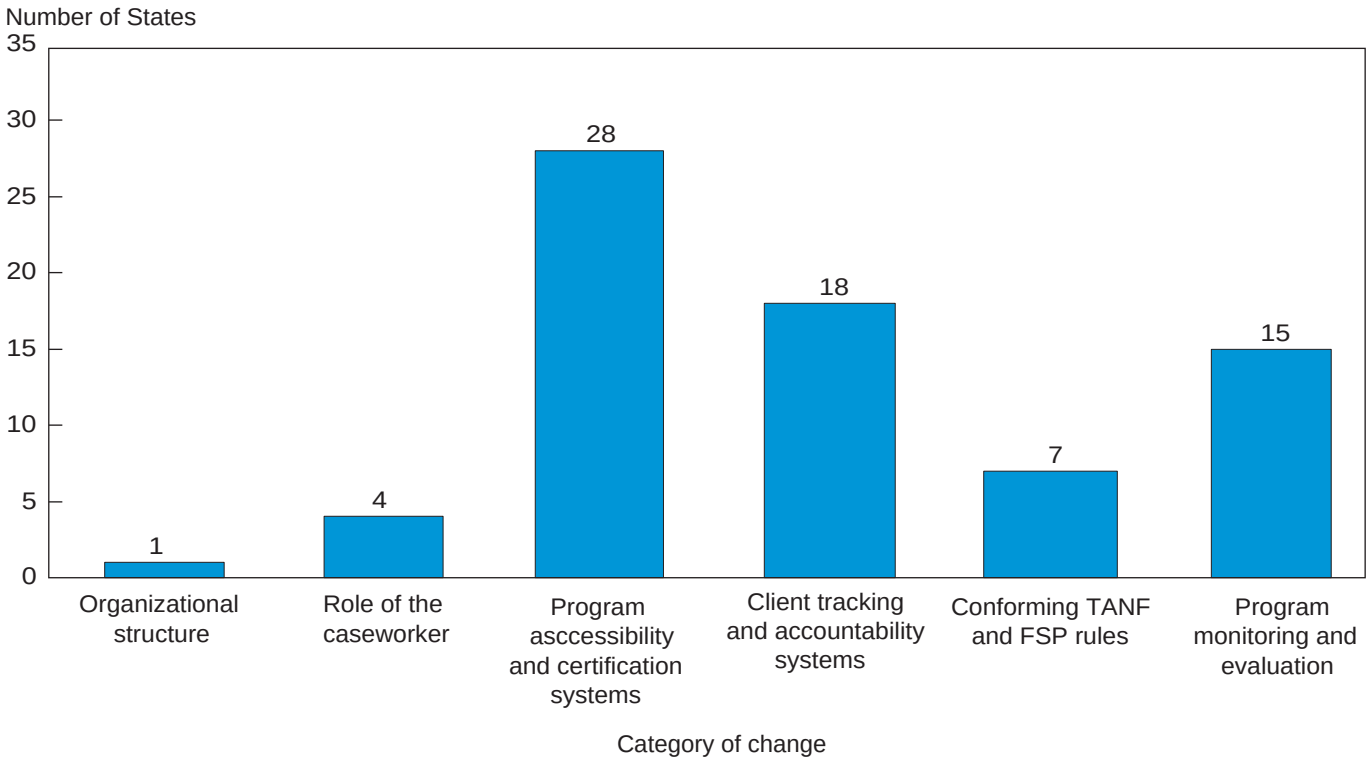


Figure 6
Number of States planning re-engineering efforts during FY 2000 by category of change



Are There Differences Between States With County-Administered and State-Administered Programs?

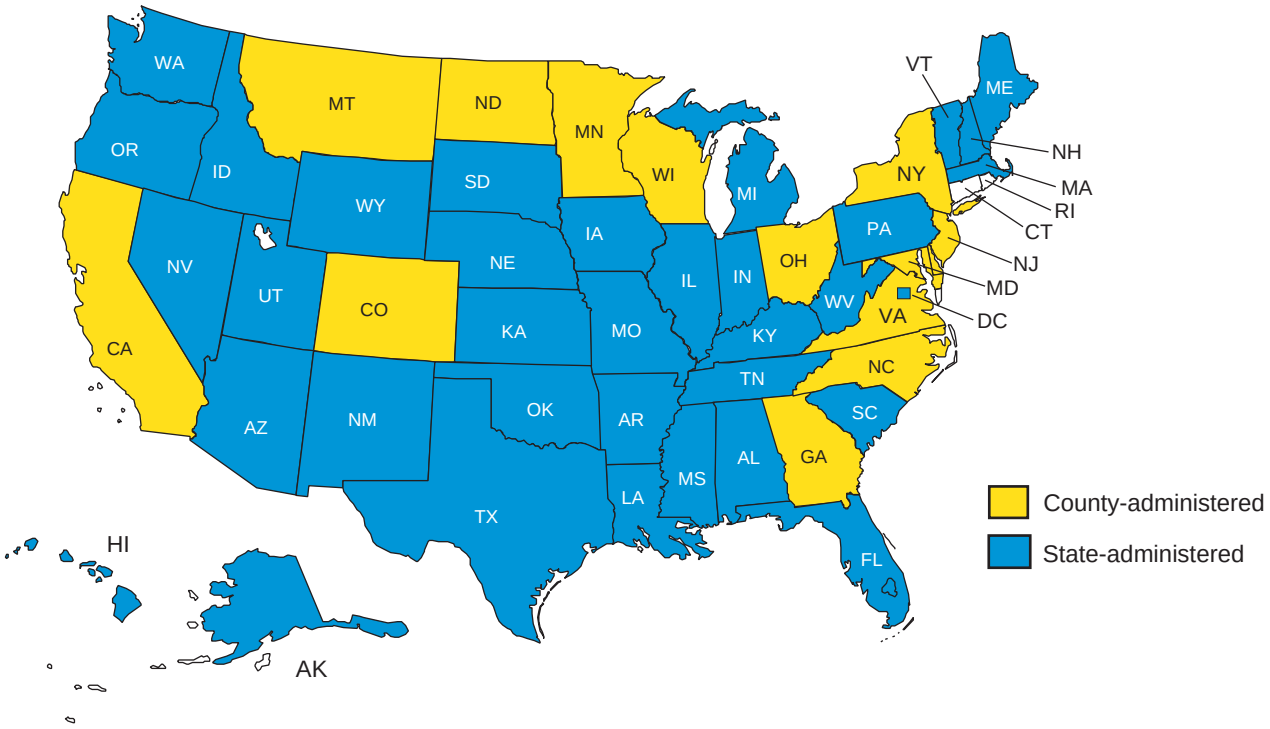
One hypothesis underlying this study was that States that allow counties to administer their FSPs would be more likely to place less emphasis on their re-engineering efforts than States that administer their programs at the State level. A total of 13 States (26 percent of the study States) have county-administered FSPs. The map in fig. 7 shows which States run county-administered FSPs and which run their FSPs from the State level.

Since the FSP rules are determined primarily at the Federal level, the major difference between county- and State-administered FSPs is that, in the former, a number of the decisions about administrative activities related to direct client services are passed down to local jurisdictions, depending on the level of flexibility allowed by the State. It was therefore thought that in county-administered States, the survey of State officials would find a smaller number of reported administrative changes because the re-engineering efforts might occur at the local level, where staff were not being surveyed.

However, when the data were examined, this assumption was not validated. County-administered States were just as active as, and in some categories more active than, their State-administered counterparts. When States with county-administered FSPs were compared with States administering their programs at the State level as to the number of re-engineering efforts enacted since PRWORA, some interesting contrasts were noted. Figure 8 compares the number of reengineering efforts enacted by the county- and State-administered programs. As can be seen, 7 of the States with county-administered programs (54 percent) made 4 or more changes, while 12 States with State-administered programs (32 percent) made 4 or more changes. All of the States with county-administered programs made more than two changes.

When the States reporting different categories of re-engineering efforts were broken down by county-administered and State-administered programs, some variations were found (fig. 9). While the most frequent categories of change in both kinds of States were the same—tracking and accountability systems, program accessibility and certification systems, and conforming the TANF and FSP rules—the most common types of administrative changes among county-administered

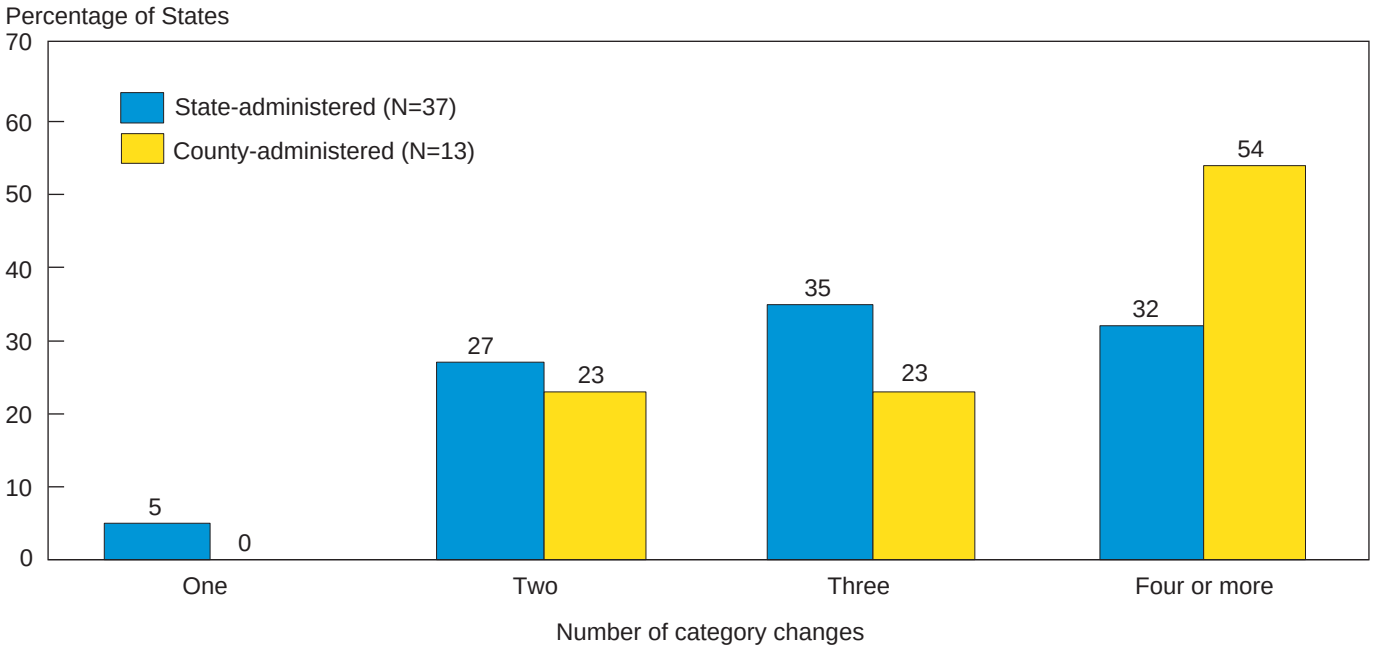
Figure 7
County- and State-administered programs[1]



[1]State-administered refers to States whose FSP's are administered at the State level; in county-administered States, FSP responsibiity has been given to the counties.

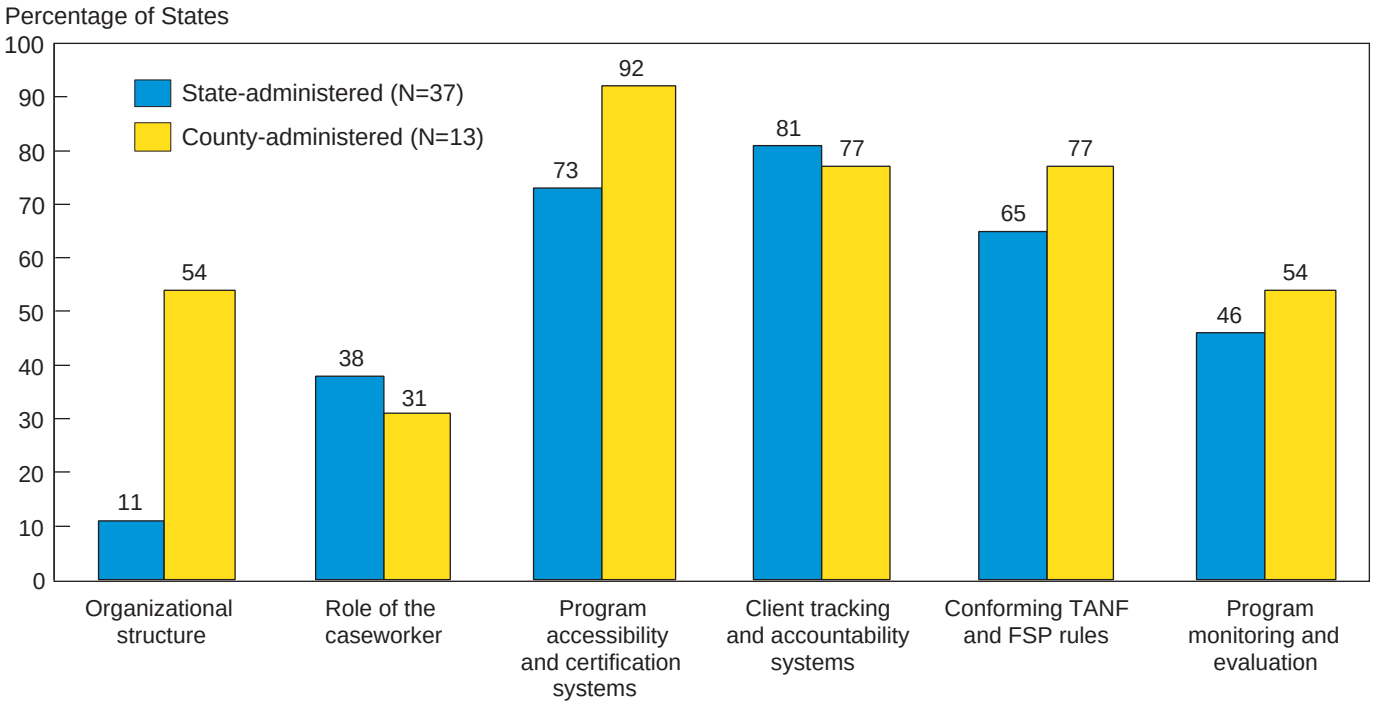
Note: Delaware did not participate in the study.

Figure 8
Percentage of State- and county-administered States enacting re-engineering changes as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by the number of category changes[1]



[1]State-administered refers to States whose FSP's are administered at the State level; in county-administered States, FSP responsibiity has been given to the counties.

Figure 9
Percentage of State- and county-administered States implementing re-engineering efforts as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by category of change[1]



[1]State-administered refers to States whose FSP's are administered at the State level; in county-administered States, FSP responsibiity has been given to the counties.

States (for 92 percent of the States) were changes in program accessibility and certification systems, while the most frequently reported administrative changes among State-administered programs (for 81 percent of the States) were changes to their client tracking and accountability systems.

When the types of changes planned for FY 2000 were examined (fig. 10), the county- and State-administered States had similar responses. For both kinds of programs, the most frequently reported planned change was to their program accessibility and certification systems—a program area that is being heavily stressed by FNS and the public to ensure FSP access for the working poor and those leaving the welfare rolls. In the latter case, the county-administered States reported planning additional changes in their program accessibility and certification systems, since the majority had made such changes prior to FY 2000. While 7 of the 13 States with county-administered programs (54 percent) made organizational structure changes prior to FY 2000, none were planning any changes of this type in FY 2000.

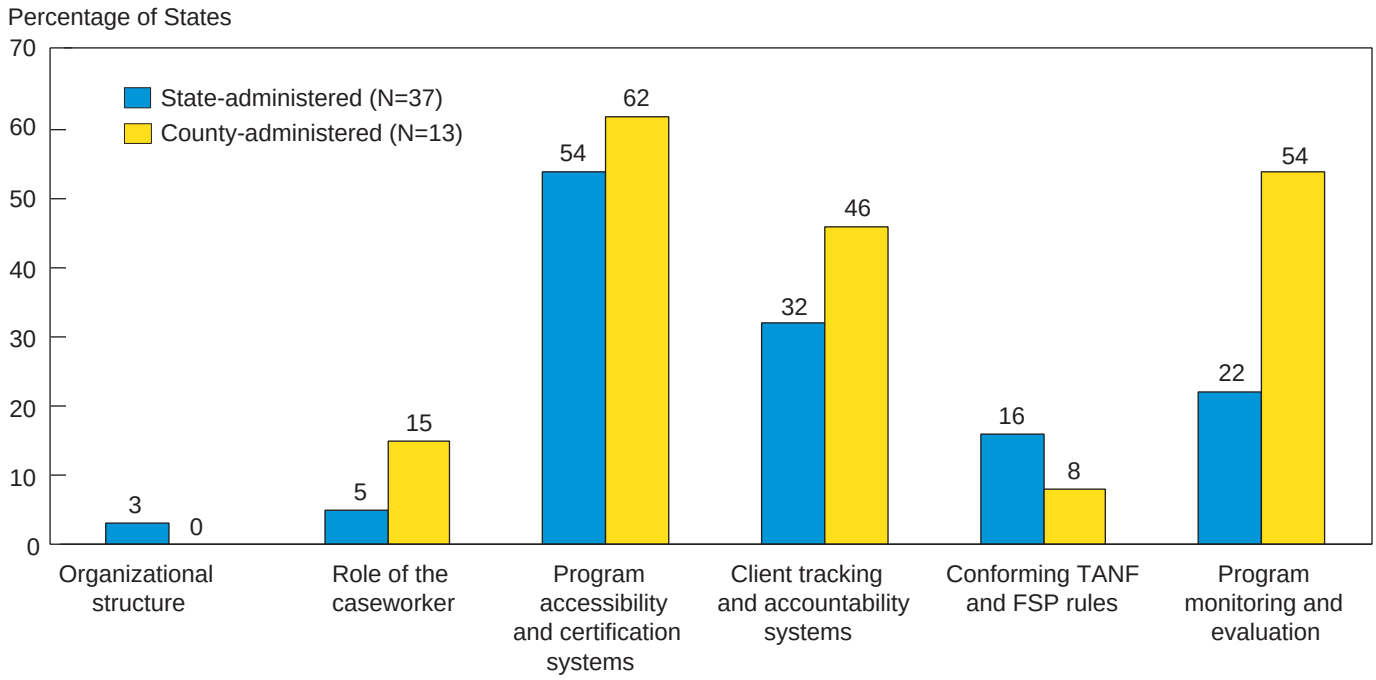
Do Differences Across States Relate to Caseload Size?

Another factor believed to influence the variability of State re-engineering efforts was the size of the State's food stamp caseload. For purposes of this study, States were divided into those with small, medium, and large FSPs, based upon their average monthly caseload in FY 1999, the latest fiscal year for which final FSP participation data were available. A small State was defined as having a caseload of 100,000 persons or less, and a medium-sized State as having a caseload of between 100,000 and 500,000. Large States had caseloads over 500,000 (Food and Nutrition Service 2000(b)). (See appendix table 4 for specific State groupings.)

A total of 13 States fit into the small category, while 25 States were considered medium-sized and 12 were defined as large. When comparing the variation in the number of administrative changes across States by caseload size, minimal differences were found (fig. 11). All of the States with medium and large caseloads had enacted two or more administrative changes through FY 1999, while 85 percent of the small States

Figure 10

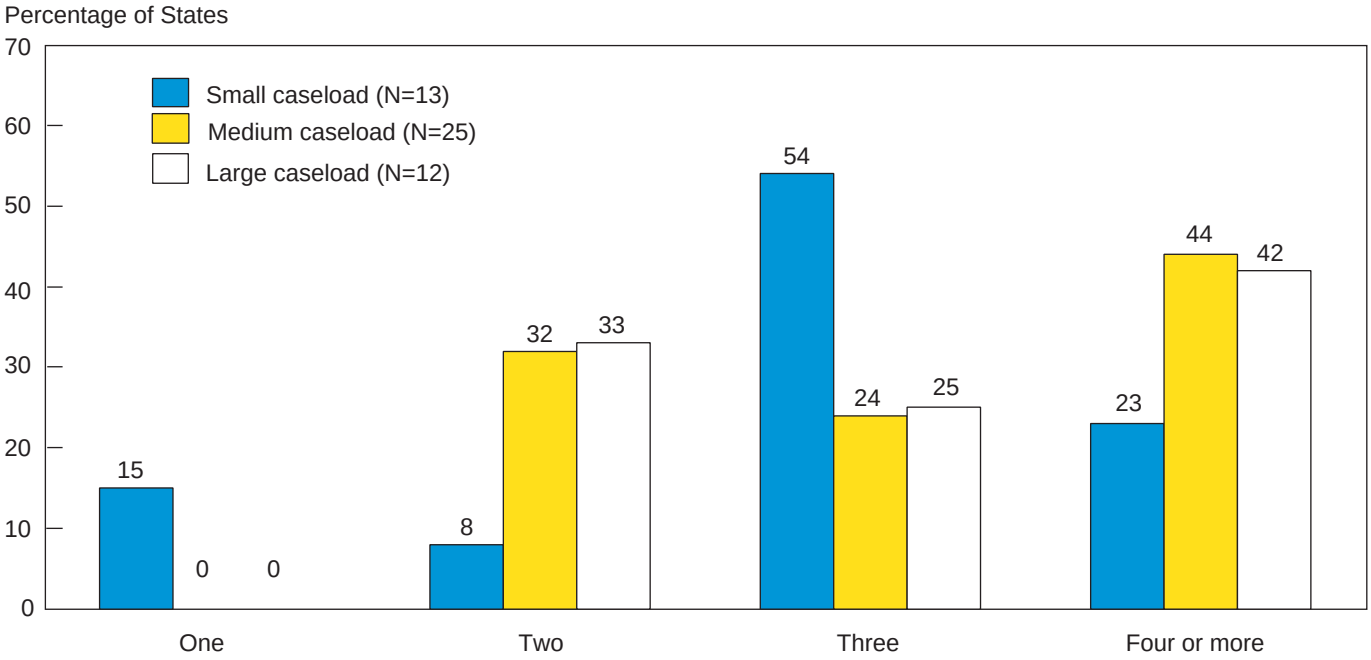
Percentage of State- and county-administered States planning re-engineering efforts during FY 2000 by category of change[1]



[1]State-administered refers to States whose FSP's are administered at the State level; in county-administered States, FSP responsibiity has been given to the counties.

Figure 11

Percentage of States implementing re-engineering efforts as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by number of category changes and by State caseload size



had enacted changes in two or more categories. Seventy-seven percent of the small States had enacted changes in three or more categories, as compared with 68 percent of the medium States and 66 percent of the large States.

In contrast, there were some differences found by State caseload size in the type of administrative changes most frequently reported, as illustrated in fig. 12. All 13 States with small caseloads reported making changes in their client tracking and accountability systems prior to FY 1999. Among States with medium-sized food stamp caseloads, the most common re-engineering efforts were in program accessibility and certification systems, with 20 of 25 States (80 percent) noting changes in this category. The 12 States with large caseloads divided their preference, with 10 (83 percent) making changes in client tracking and accountability systems and the same percentage making changes in conforming their FSP to their TANF program.

States Reporting Variation in Administrative Changes for Rural Areas

In examining the activities States undertake to re-engineer their FSPs, one can not assume that the changes in a particular category are the same across the State. For example, States might modify their re-engineering plans to accommodate the special needs of areas they consider rural. As part of this study, State officials were asked if they made different types of changes within their States based upon whether the program was providing services in a rural or an urban/suburban area. For example, accessibility issues may be greater in rural areas, which have limited transportation and long distances between clients and FSP offices. In addition, fewer staff may be available in rural areas, requiring adjustments in the role of the caseworker, such as creating generic caseworkers to serve all types of food stamp clients; conversely, the availability of a larger number of caseworkers in more urban areas may result in more specialization of caseworker activities.

For purposes of this study, States were not given a standardized definition of what constitutes a "rural" area, but were simply asked if different re-engineering changes were made based upon their own definitions of rural. A total of 18 States indicated that they implemented different types of re-engineering efforts based upon their perception of differing needs in rural areas of their State. The map in fig. 13 displays the States that decided to vary their re-engineering efforts in this way.

Figure 12
Percentage of States enacting re-engineering efforts as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by category of change and State caseload size

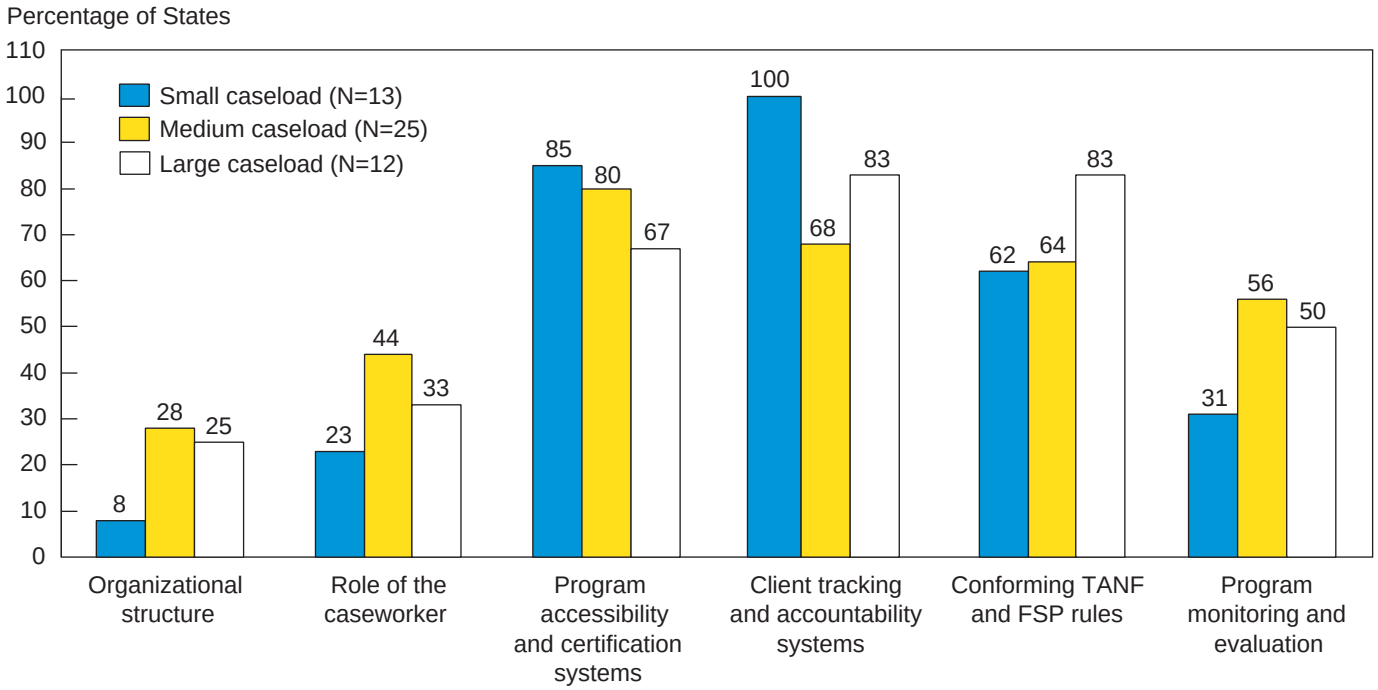
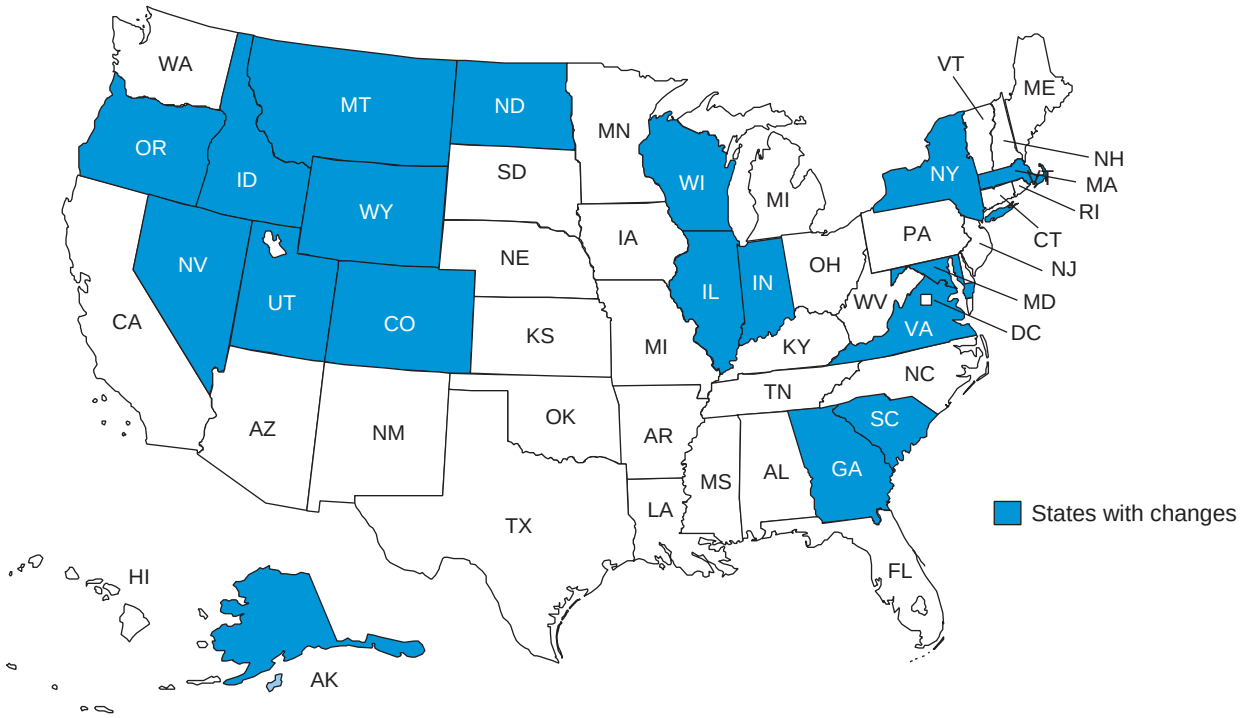


Figure 13
States making changes based on differing needs for urban and rural areas



Note: Delaware did not participate in the study.

States were specifically asked if they took different approaches in their rural areas when they implemented changes in the categories of program accessibility and certification systems or when they changed the role of the caseworkers serving food stamp clients. Nineteen States reported some variation between changes they made in rural versus nonrural areas, with 14 States reporting variation in the area of program accessibility and certification systems and 3 States reporting they had customized changes in the role of the food stamp caseworker for their rural areas.

This chapter has provided a general overview of the level of effort engaged in by States in re-engineering their FSPs as a result of welfare reform. While an examination into the categories of changes is necessary, it is important to note that the specific activities undertaken by States within each category may vary significantly. The next chapter provides an in-depth look at the specific administrative and program operations activities that States performed within the various re-engineering categories.

II. State FSP Administrative Changes Since Welfare Reform

The key findings of the re-engineering survey are presented in this chapter. While the previous chapter described aggregated categories of change in State FSP administrative practices, this chapter details specific changes within these categories. Each of the six re-engineering categories is broken into subcategories to show in detail how States changed or planned to change their FSPs.

Changes in Organizational Structure

Reorganization efforts undertaken by States can vary from simply restructuring reporting relationships within the organization to transferring major program units and/or functions in or out of existing organizational structures. Of interest to this study was whether the increased FSP requirements of PRWORA, combined with the added flexibility provided by PRWORA, resulted in State reorganizations of FSP administration. As was noted in chapter I, 11 of the 50 States included in the study decided to undertake organizational changes related to PRWORA.

The primary goal of States' reorganization efforts was to increase overall program efficiency, expressed in varying ways, with 6 of the 11 States noting this as their main goal. Better coordination between TANF and the FSP were cited by three States as their reason for reorganizing. Other goals included becoming more responsive to local needs, focusing on work issues and self-sufficiency of clients, and improving program accountability.

States used a variety of approaches in changing their organizational structures to meet their intended goals. One of the key areas of interest for this study was the extent to which State FSP administrative responsibilities were expanded or reduced as a result of PRWORA. To obtain information on this, a series of questions were asked regarding the movement of program functions or operations in or out of the FSP administrative unit. Of particular interest was whether the State FSPs added functions or program operations to their existing organizational units, moved functions or program operations out of the FSP administrative unit, or made changes that could be classified as having done both. Second, the study examined whether program operations and functions were added to the responsibilities of the State agency administering the FSP, whether the State eliminated functions that were no longer necessary, or whether it created new functions within its organizational unit that did not exist within the FSP before. The findings in these two areas are discussed below.

Movement of Organizational Functions and Program Activities

One reason States may change their organizational structures is to increase the span of control over program activities by moving functions into a single organizational unit (centralization) or to spread functions that once had been carried out by a single organizational unit into multiple units (decentralization). This study examined whether changes in organizational structure resulted in a more centralized FSP or a more decentralized program.

- ***Centralized Activities or Functions***. States were considered to have centralized an activity or function if one or both of two activities took place. First, if a single State agency absorbed functions that were previously performed by different organizational units within State government, it was considered to have centralized its operations. Second, if States decided to assume activities or functions formerly conducted by local jurisdictions (counties or other localities), then they were considered to have centralized a component of their FSP operations. For example, if a State decided to take over monitoring and evaluation activities that had been the responsibility of local or regional food stamp offices, it was considered to have centralized this operation.

- ***Decentralized Activities or Functions.*** States were considered to have decentralized activities or functions when the converse of the above activities took place. First, if a State decided to identify functions that had been the responsibility of a single organizational unit and distribute these functions to a number of organizational units within the State government, it was considered to have decentralized its operations. In addition, if the State decided to move functions that were previously the responsibility of the State central office to regional or county agencies, then the State was classified as having decentralized that function as well. For example, if States moved

the responsibility for conducting staff training to their regional offices, then they were considered to have decentralized that component of their operations.

The moves to centralize and decentralize State FSPs are not mutually exclusive. A State can make changes in one part of its program that result in a more centralized structure and at the same time can make other changes to decentralize it. This was observed in this study. Of the 11 States that made changes to their organizational structure, 5 States undertook activities that would be characterized as centralizing activities or functions, while 6 States engaged in efforts that decentralized a program activity or function. However, 3 of the 11 States reporting the above changes indicated that they had taken actions that centralized one component of their program while decentralizing another. Therefore, in an unduplicated count, three States decentralized activities, two States centralized activities, and three States implemented a combination of both. Also, three States implemented changes to their organizational structure that resulted in no change in centralization or decentralization of activities. Table 1 displays the States falling into each of these four categories. The case study conducted in Connecticut, discussed in the second section of this report, provides a detailed description of how State reorganization efforts can affect Food Stamp Program operations.

In the States where functions were transferred to another organizational unit or agency, the program elements most commonly transferred were activities related to employment and training. Five of the six States that decentralized functions either transferred employment and training units to a different agency or department or contracted with outside agencies or private organizations to perform this function.

Table 1—States changing organizational structure by type of approach

Centralized activities only	Decentralized activities only	Both centralized and decentralized activities	Neither centralized nor decentralized
Virginia	Colorado	California	Maryland
Washington	Idaho	Connecticut	Ohio
	New Mexico	New York	Wisconsin

Changes in the Responsibilities of the FSP Administrative Agency

One focus of this study was how the changes in organizational structure discussed above affected the overall operation of the State FSP agency. In particular, State officials were asked about two ways change might have occurred. First, the officials were asked if they made any efforts to take over functions or organizational units that were previously the responsibility of organizations located in other State departments. Two States reported that they had absorbed functions previously performed by different departments into the State FSP agency.

Second, State officials were asked if they had eliminated any organizational units or functions that were no longer necessary as a result of PRWORA, or whether new functions or organizational units were created that had not been part of the State FSP agency prior to PRWORA. None of the 11 States reported having eliminated any functions or organizational units as no longer necessary. Four States (California, New York, Virginia, and Washington) noted that they had created new organizational units that had not existed prior to PRWORA to implement time limits for ABAWDs or to increase employment and training programs targeted to this population. This is likely the result of increased tracking requirements for ABAWDs and the increased funding of employment and training programs resulting from the Balanced Budget Act of 1997.

One of the interesting aspects of this re-engineering category is the extent to which States eliminated jobs or positions as a result of their organizational changes. With State reorganization efforts, particularly those that involved consolidating or transferring functions from one organizational unit to another, it would seem reasonable to expect that some jobs or positions would be eliminated. However, none of the States that made organizational changes reduced the number of State positions in the FSP, even when organizational units were consolidated. Finally, States were asked if they planned to make any changes to their organizational structure in FY 2000. The only State reporting a planned change in FY 2000 was Arkansas, which had adopted the Simplified Food Stamp Program option but was planning to return to the standard Federal food stamp rules.

Changes in the Role of the Caseworker

The second re-engineering category examined in this study comprised changes that affected the role of the caseworker. As noted in the previous chapter, the focus of the welfare system on a "work and self-sufficiency" model was likely to change the role of the caseworker. Prior to PRWORA, the caseworker's main role was to determine eligibility and then to monitor changes in income or other factors affecting eligibility status. Often caseworkers specialized in particular programs, which meant that clients participating in multiple programs dealt with different caseworkers. With the passage of PRWORA, States had the opportunity to change the role of the caseworker in a number of ways. Additionally, innovations in program administration, such as the establishment of call centers to recertify clients—along with the increased emphasis on helping clients become self-sufficient—brought about changes in caseworker responsibility in some States.

These changes involve a redirection of program responsibilities and activities beyond the traditional role of determining eligibility. In some States, caseworkers have begun to assume responsibility for assessing eligibility for both the TANF and FSP, as well as for assisting clients with finding employment or support services such as child care or transportation. These changes in caseworker responsibility are documented through job descriptions and employment requirements.

However, there is a second type of change that, while not detailed here, should be mentioned. This more informal change in the role of the caseworker takes place at the level of individual interaction between caseworkers and clients. By taking on responsibilities for helping the client become more self-sufficient, the caseworkers may find themselves spending much more time getting to know the needs of their clients and helping them to develop plans for improving their overall well-being. For example, there may be pressure on the caseworker, whether real or implied, to move clients off the welfare roles and into a job, or there may be an effort on the part of the State to increase support services to allow clients better access to employment opportunities. As a result, the caseworker may find that the fundamental relationship between the client and caseworker has changed in ways that cannot be described by examining civil service job descriptions. It is important to recognize that these types of changes most probably occurred, even though examining them was not within the scope of this study. The case study conducted in Kansas, in Section II of this report, provides an excellent example of how caseworker roles were changed to consolidate functions. It also demonstrates the dilemma faced by caseworkers responsible for moving clients off the TANF rolls while at the same time promoting FSP and Medicaid participation.

State Goals Related to Changing the Role of the Caseworker

Of the 50 States included in the study, 18 reported that they made changes to the role of their caseworkers (see appendix table 5 for specific States). When they were asked about their goals related to these changes, four specific goals emerged. As was true with their reorganization efforts, the States often had more than one outcome in mind when planning changes to the role of the caseworkers. The four main goals noted by States were to:

- ***Increase coordination between the FSP and the TANF program***. This was the most frequent goal, cited by 11 of the 18 States. In particular, some States noted the importance of coordinating eligibility and case management services in order to increase continuity between these programs. This resulted in some caseworkers serving clients who were eligible for both TANF and the FSP (and Medicaid as well) and other caseworkers being responsible for FSP-only participants.

  Note that one State, Arizona, is piloting a project that takes the responsibility for certification of TANF clients, and the commensurate responsibility of helping them find employment, away from government workers and puts it in the hands of a private company. In addition, Arizona Native American tribes are allowed to run their own TANF programs, with State employees remaining responsible for FSP certification. This means that FSP caseworkers must work with the private provider and tribal caseworkers to coordinate certification activities, program change reporting, and followup on persons leaving the TANF program. The case study conducted in Arizona describes how these two programs are functioning and the issues faced by public, tribal, and private caseworkers.

- ***Reduce Fragmentation in the Provision of Services.*** Nine States noted that they changed the role of the caseworker as a way to accomplish this,

often by making caseworkers responsible for the eligibility process for multiple programs. Some States noted the benefits of information not having to be collected repeatedly on the same household by different workers and of caseworkers being able to work with clients to identify additional services and benefits for which they may be eligible.

- ***Increase Efficiency of the FSP.*** Six States reported improved efficiency in the operation of their FSP after changing the role of the caseworker. Examples included better management and coordination of client self-sufficiency activities by caseworkers and less time spent by caseworkers on the recertification process. For instance, Utah, Georgia, and Texas established centers to handle client status-change reporting and recertification activities. Removing this responsibility from the local caseworkers has both helped to reduce error rates and allowed caseworkers more time to assist clients at the time of certification. Case studies in Texas and Georgia describe how such "change centers" have affected both the role of the caseworkers in those States (one State being "State-administered" and the other "county-administered") and the process by which clients are recertified for the FSP.

- ***Increase Coordination Between the FSP and Programs other than TANF.*** Four States noted that their main goal for changing the role of the caseworker was to improve the coordination of food stamp services with other social and health services for non-TANF food stamp households. In particular, better coordination with Medicaid and employment and training activities was cited as a reason for broadening the role of caseworkers serving non-TANF applicants.

Changing the responsibilities of the caseworker often requires formal revisions to civil service job descriptions, which also may alter the education and experience requirements for the job. In addition, the caseworker may assume duties that were previously performed by staff in other job classifications. As a result, the State FSP agency may have been required to obtain formal approval for these changes from other governmental agencies, labor unions, or the State legislature. In addition, once the changes were approved, a transition period was likely to have been allowed so caseworkers could receive training for their new responsibilities. The extent to which changes in the role of the caseworker required formal changes in civil service job classifications, the approval of other organizations, and retraining was examined.

Changes in Civil Service Job Requirements

Of the 18 States reporting that they changed the role of the caseworker, 10 did so by retiring or reclassifying the civil service positions used for the caseworker and by restructuring the caseworker's job description to include responsibilities previously conducted by employees in other job classifications. However, while 10 States made changes to the civil service job classifications, only 3 States altered the education and experience requirements for their new caseworkers. Several States noted that they added new responsibilities to the caseworker job description that were once performed by staff in other State programs. In particular, duties related to helping clients find employment opportunities were most often cited as roles removed from outside agencies and added to the job description of caseworkers serving food stamp clients, thereby changing the role of the caseworker. Figure 14 shows the number of States that combined functions in FSP with those previously performed by other agencies, by the type of programs from which these functions were transferred.

The extent to which States were required to obtain the approval of other governmental agents to implement changes to the caseworkers' role was also examined to determine which State agents were indirectly involved in State re-engineering efforts. In addition, it was assumed that since State agencies receive funding from different sources, they often need approvals before they can implement any programmatic changes they have planned. Figure 15 displays the type of governmental agency or organization from which approval for changing the role of the caseworker was obtained (see appendix table 6 for specific States). The most common agency approvals, as might be expected in changing the job descriptions of civil service employees, were requested of formal civil service boards or personnel agencies. Eleven States reported having to obtain this approval. The governor's office in five States approved the changes to the role of the caseworker, while four States went to their State legislature for approval.

The extent to which the caseworkers themselves were involved in the planning process for changing their roles was also examined. Three States obtained approval of State employee unions or organizations to which the caseworkers belonged, while 12 States

Figure 14

Number of States combining food stamp activities with those previously performed by other agencies as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by type of program

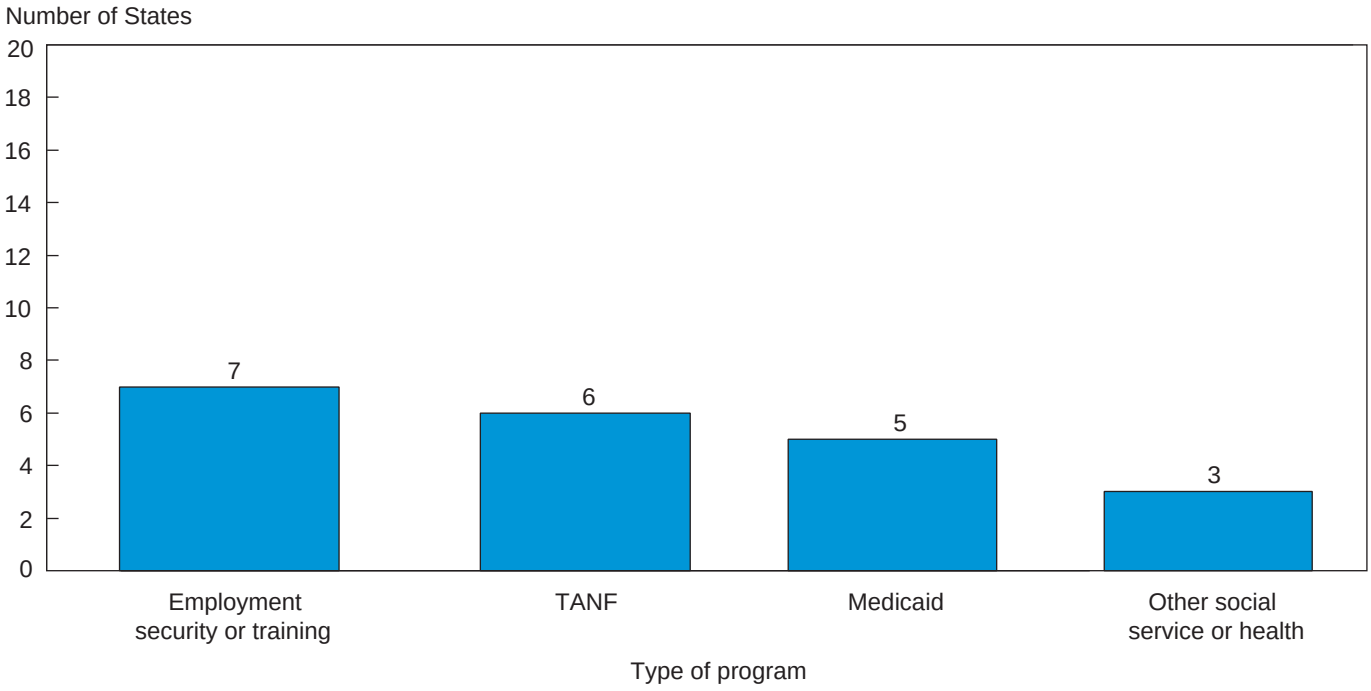
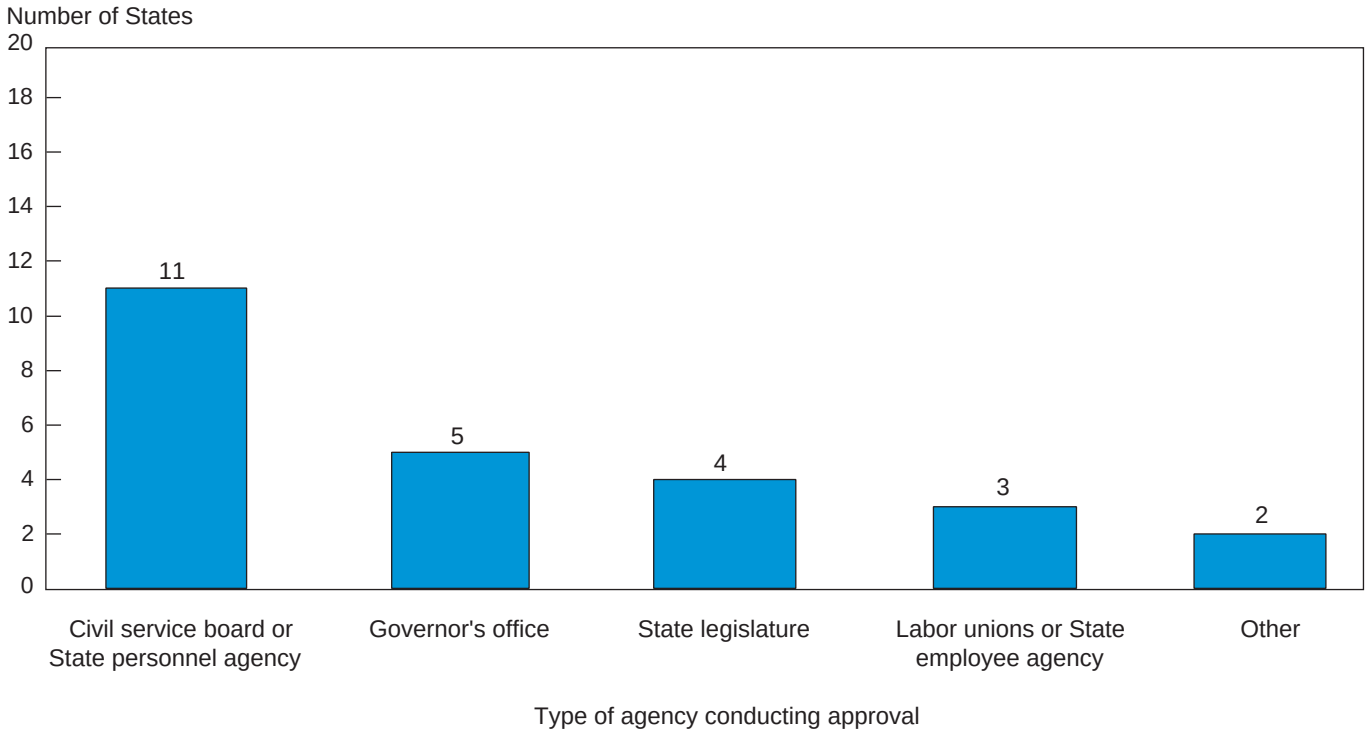


Figure 15

Number of States obtaining approval for caseworker role changes as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by type of agency conducting approval



reported involving the caseworkers themselves through less formal means when changes were being planned. An issue of interest to this study was the extent to which State officials felt they had increased the overall workload of caseworkers when their duties were changed. Of the 15 States that changed the role of the caseworker, officials in 10 of the States believed they had increased the overall workloads and 5 felt the workload remained about the same. Officials in Idaho, Virginia, and Wisconsin reported that they believed caseworker workloads had changed, but they were uncertain of the extent.

Additional Training for Caseworkers

In States where the role of the caseworker was expanded to incorporate new activities, it seemed likely that States would need to retrain caseworkers to assume their new responsibilities. This proved to be the case, since 16 of the 18 States making changes identified additional training to their caseworkers as critical to their re-engineering efforts.

Most frequently mentioned was training to increase the case management skills of former eligibility workers. Seven States noted that caseworkers who once worked only on client eligibility determination were now trained in topics that required both new program knowledge and improved interpersonal skills. Topics for training mentioned by States included how to assist clients in finding employment opportunities and improving case management skills to help clients access health care and other support services.

Six of the 18 States noted that they were required to train their caseworkers on new program requirements, such as changes in eligibility rules, employment requirements, or job training programs. Three States noted that they were required to provide training to TANF workers on FSP rules, and vice versa. Two States reported that they had to train their caseworkers on new computer systems being used to implement new program requirements.

While eligibility determination is still a primary responsibility of the caseworker, States that had made changes in the role of the caseworker noted that other responsibilities related to management of the client cases were important as well. When asked to describe how the roles of the caseworker had changed, the most common response from State officials was that caseworkers now tend to spend more time working with their clients on individual issues related to self-sufficiency. Officials in six States commented that the caseworkers had become more like case managers, assisting clients with both eligibility determination and issues related to finding employment, accessing child care, and accessing other social and health services.

Changes in Program Accessibility

With the increased flexibility provided by PRWORA and the fundamental changes brought about by altering the focus of the welfare system, a number of States have also begun to develop approaches to improve accessibility to their FSPs. As was noted in earlier chapters, there have been dramatic declines in FSP participation since the mid-1990s that are greater than could be accounted for by the economic boom during this period. This is of concern to State and Federal officials as well as advocates. Improving access to the FSP has been viewed as an important component of the continuing food security efforts of Federal and State food assistance programs.

Thirty-nine States reported that they made re-engineering changes to improve program accessibility as a result of PRWORA. As shown in figures 16 and 17, 10 States made 1 change to their program to improve accessibility, while 29 States made 2 or more. Equally important, 28 States reported they planned to make changes in this area in FY 2000, with 18 of those States planning 2 or more activities (figs. 18 and 19).

Program accessibility is related to a number of different activities that affect how clients may access the FSP. For purposes of this study, changes made by States to improve accessibility were divided into three classifications. First, activities related to changing certification systems were examined, both by looking at efforts to improve automated eligibility systems and at other steps taken by States to make it easier for clients to complete the application and recertification process for the FSP. As noted earlier, the complexity of State applications and certification systems may have an impact, positive or negative, on clients' willingness to complete the certification process. Second, the study examined the extent to which States have altered local office practices to help improve access to the FSP, such as changing office hours, providing transportation services and onsite child care, and establishing satellite offices. Finally, efforts made by State FSPs to increase their program outreach services were examined. Each of these three areas is discussed. (See appendix table 7 for specific States.)

Figure 16

Number of States implementing changes to improve accessibility to the Food Stamp Program as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by number of changes

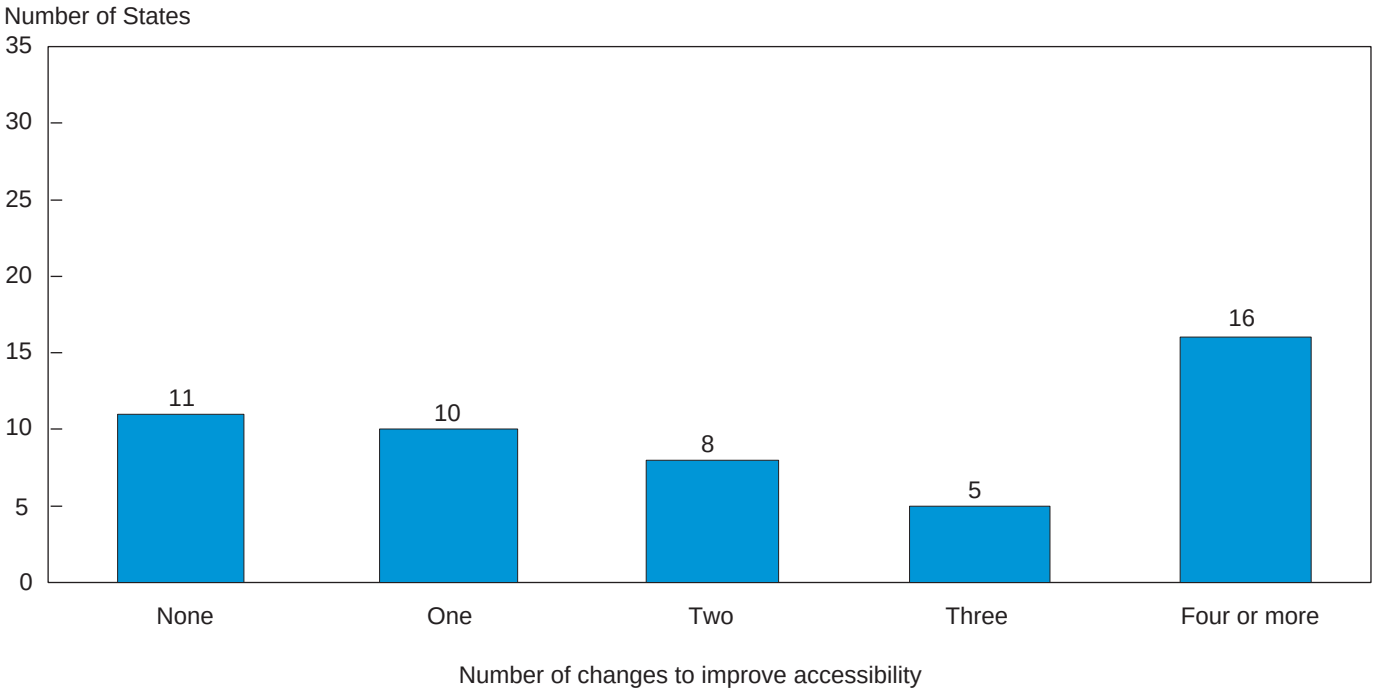
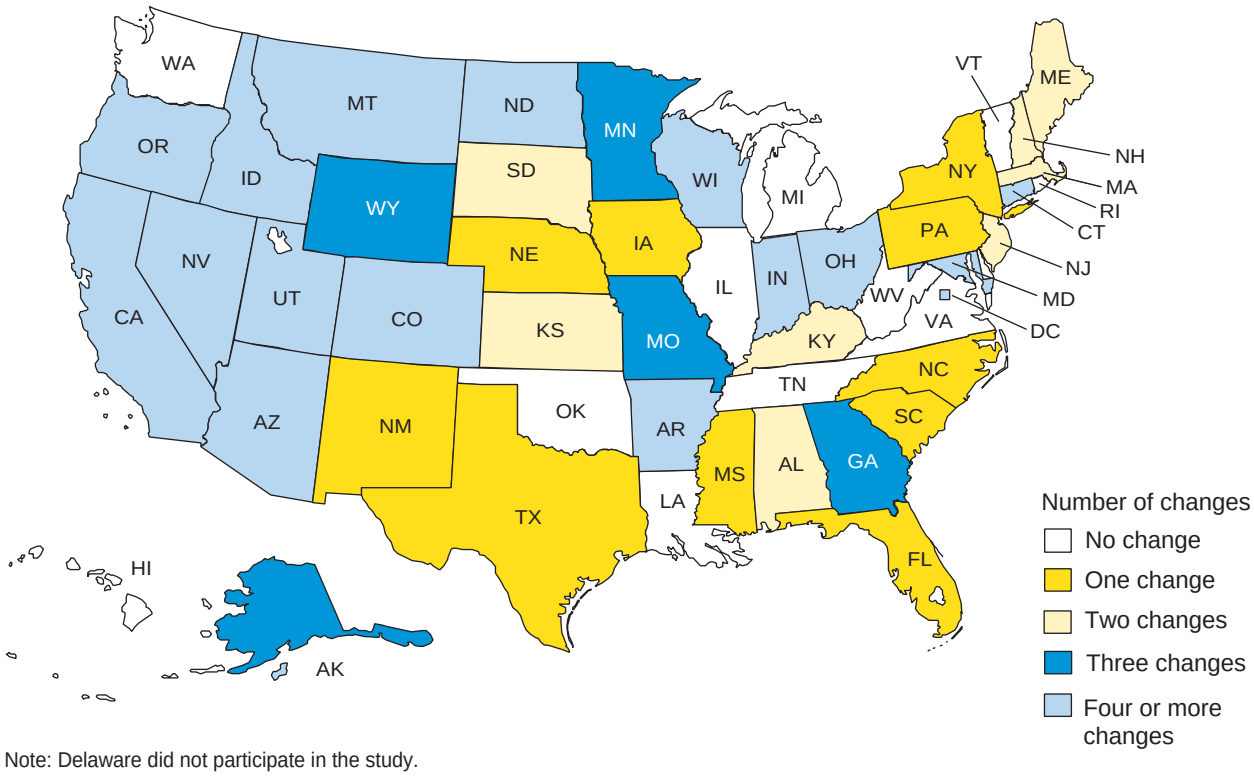


Figure 17

Number of changes to improve accessibility to the Food Stamp Program as a result of welfare reform implemented by States before FY 2000



Note: Delaware did not participate in the study.

Figure 18

Number of States planning changes to improve accessibility to the Food Stamp Program during FY 2000 by number of changes

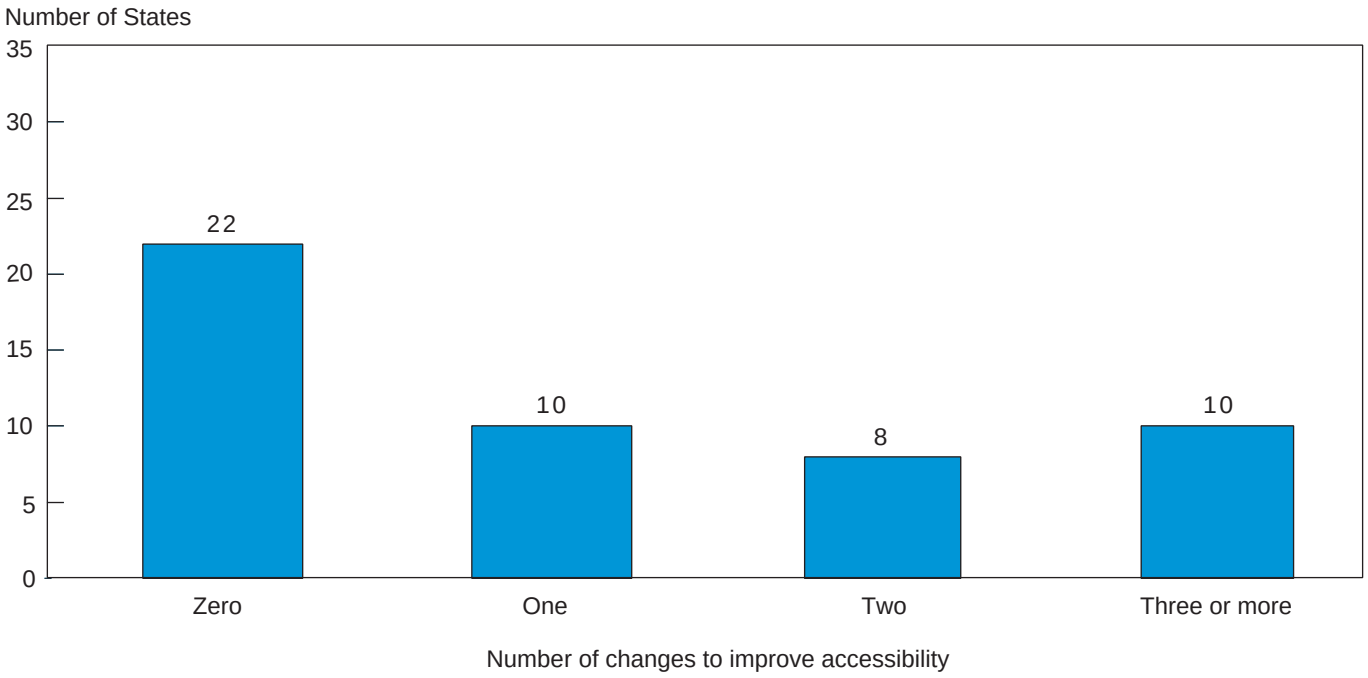
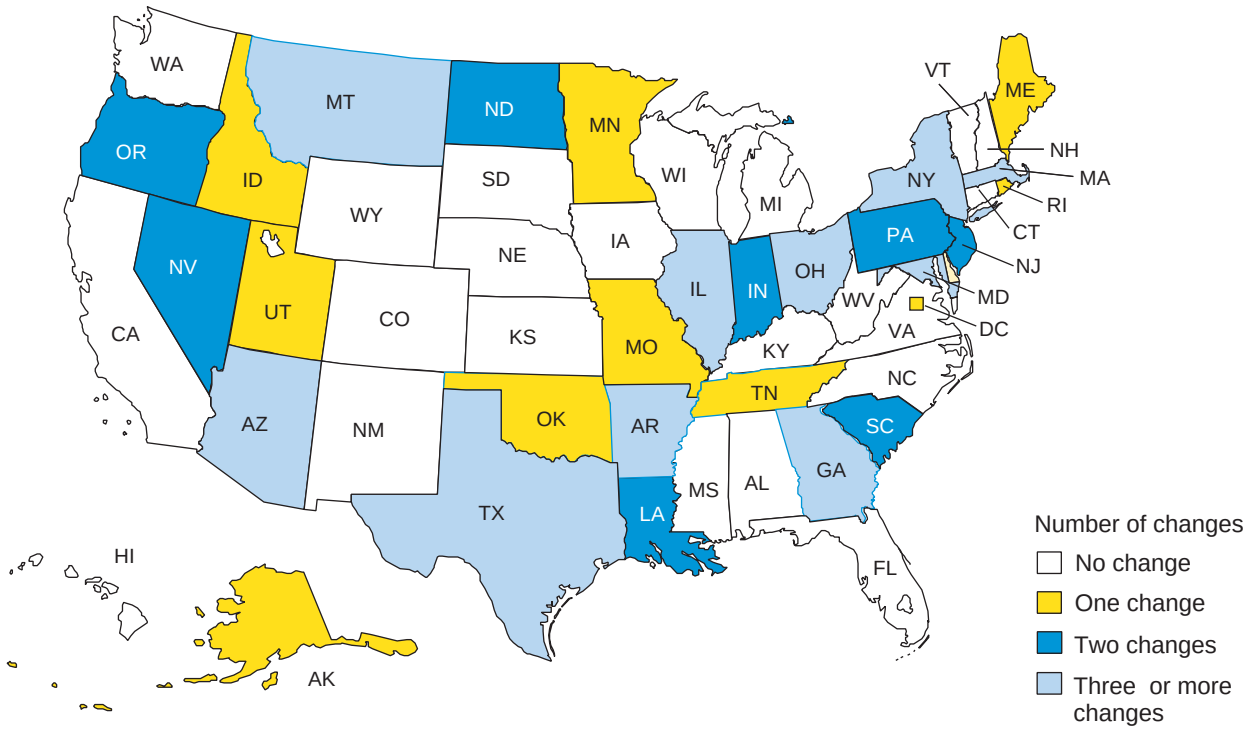


Figure 19

Number of States planning changes to improve accessibility to the Food Stamp Program during FY 2000



Note: Delaware did not participate in the study.

Changes to the Food Stamp Application Process

The food stamp application process has traditionally required significant effort on the part of the applicant, which has served as a barrier to food stamp participation. Research conducted by USDA found that applicants spent an average of 5 hours and $10.31 to complete the FSP application process (Food and Nutrition Service, 2000). Working households and those with long trips to the food stamp office were more likely than other types of households to drop out of the application process before their eligibility was determined (Bartlett et al., 1992). Other surveys of food stamp nonparticipants have found that 10 to 25 percent of respondents report administrative hassles in the application process as their reason for not participating (Coe, 1983; GAO, 1988). The current study reveals that in the last several years States have taken a number of steps to reduce the burden on clients and improve the reapplication and certification processes, utilizing the increased flexibility granted by PRWORA and the technological development of State computer systems.

Twenty-one States reported making changes to their FSP application process as a result of PRWORA. States gave different reasons for changing their certification systems, with several reporting multiple goals. Of the 21 States who made changes, 9 reported that improving the overall efficiency of their certification system was a major goal, while 8 said that reducing the number of certification errors was their primary reason. Six States hoped to reduce the time it took a caseworker to certify a client, and five hoped to improve access to other social service programs by changing their certification procedures.

Changes in the certification system were divided into two categories: changes in computer systems and changes unrelated to computer systems. A total of eight States made changes to their computer systems to improve client certification, with the two most frequent reasons being the need to update the systems to reflect policy changes (three States) and the need to better integrate programs or services (three States).

A larger number of States, however, made changes to their client certification systems that were unrelated to their computer systems. The most frequent was a reduction of the number of questions on the FSP application form; five States reported that they had made this change. Ironically, the second most popular change, implemented by four States, was requiring clients to provide caseworkers with additional documentation of their eligibility. Interestingly, three States combined their FSP application with applications used by other social service programs to allow for certification in more than one program. Table 2 below displays the States that made changes only to their computer systems, made changes unrelated to their computer systems, or made changes to both.

Regarding changes planned for FY 2000, three States reported planning to increase computer automation in their certification systems, while nine States indicated that they planned to make changes in their certification process that are unrelated to their computer systems. Of these nine States, two planned to reduce the number and type of questions on their application, while none planned to increase the documentation requirements of people applying for benefits.

Local Office Practices

States also increased accessibility to program services by changing local office practices. These practices have become an important part of the overall FSP. In particular, States made a number of changes to allow food stamp applicants to have their interviews at more convenient times and more accessible places. States' efforts in this area are discussed below.

A total of 28 States made efforts to improve their local office practices in order to facilitate client accessibility (see appendix table 8 for specific States). As has been true in other categories, States may have made more than one such change. Figure 20 displays the number of States that made changes to their local office practices to improve FSP access, along with the types of changes made.

As can be seen, the most frequent change was extending the hours of operation of local offices by adding or expanding weekend and evening hours to allow clients more convenient times to apply for food stamp benefits. Nine States involved private partners in their efforts to increase accessibility to the FSP. These partners are often nonprofit agencies concerned with food security issues who help the States identify and overcome barriers to FSP participation.

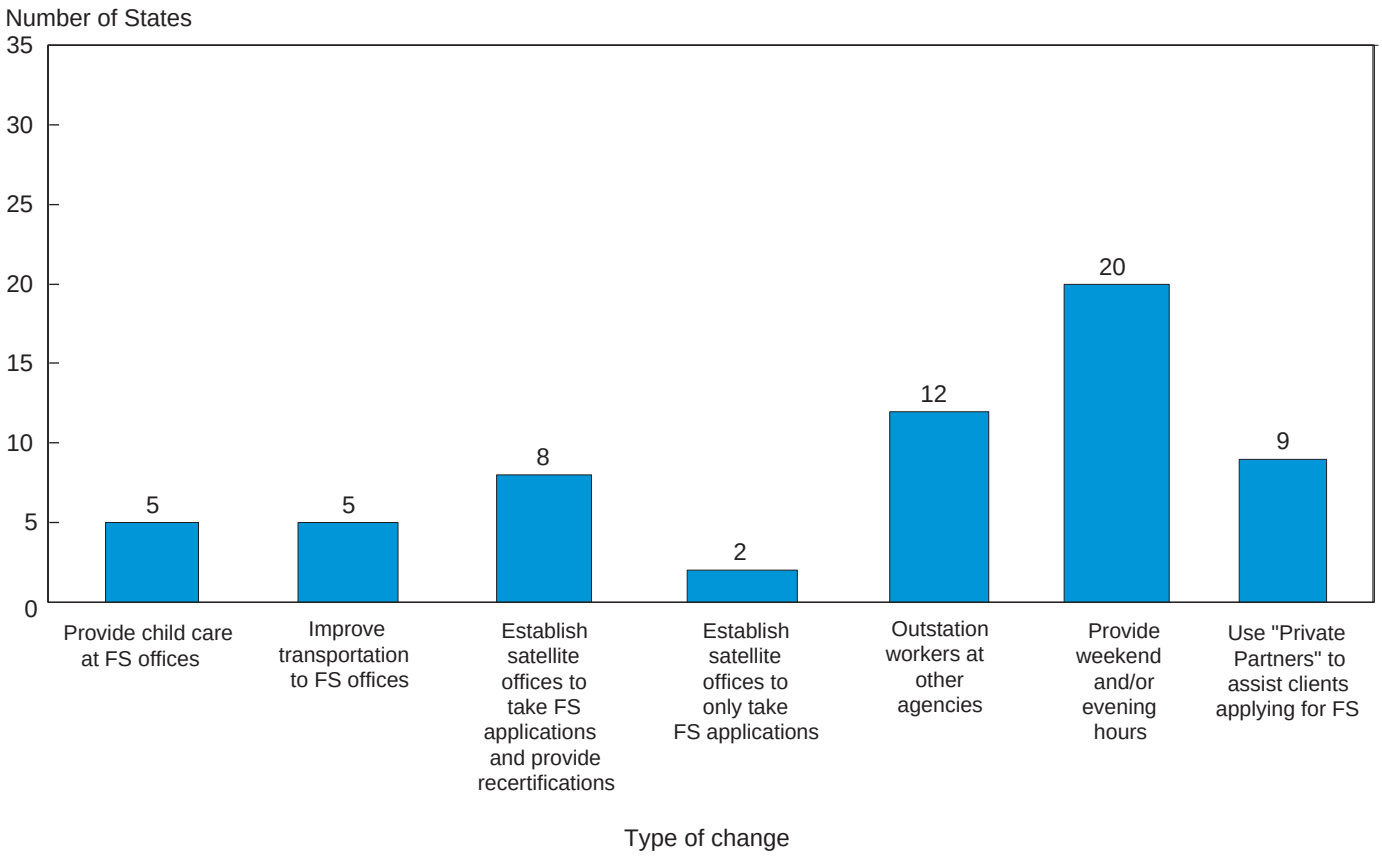
Eleven States planned to increase services provided by local offices in FY 2000 (see appendix table 9 for specific States). Of these, seven planned to increase the times available for clients to apply for food stamp ben-

Table 2—States making changes to their food stamp application processes by type of change

Computer changes	Changes not involving computer systems	Both computer and noncomputer changes
Connecticut	Alabama	Alaska
	Arizona	California
	District of Columbia	Colorado
	Georgia	Maryland
	Idaho	Montana
	Indiana	Nevada
	Kentucky	North Dakota
	Maine	
	Nebraska	
	New York	
	Oregon	
	Utah	
	Wyoming	

Figure 20

Number of States changing local office practices as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by type of change



efits by expanding evening and weekend hours. However, while only five States had implemented programs to assist with transportation for food stamp clients after PRWORA, five States planned to implement transportation assistance in FY 2000.

Efforts To Increase Outreach to Clients

The final type of changes examined with regard to program accessibility involves the efforts States made or are making to improve outreach to potential clients. This has become particularly important because of the decline in food stamp participation discussed earlier in this chapter. Outreach is also important in connection with the extensive efforts being made by States to improve accessibility to local food stamp offices. While making certification times more convenient and welfare offices more accessible is an important part of State efforts to re-engineer the FSP, ensuring that potential clients understand they may be eligible for FSP benefits is also critical. The case study conducted in Massachusetts describes an extensive campaign being made by State officials to reach potential food stamp clients.

Many States are concerned about reaching eligible individuals who are experiencing food insecurity and are not participating in the FSP, as well as about former food stamp clients who have left the FSP but remain eligible for benefits. State efforts to conduct food stamp outreach are exemplified by the number of States making changes in this area or who were planning changes in FY 2000. A total of 24 States (see appendix table 10 for specific States and outreach methods) began or increased outreach efforts prior to FY 2000, with an additional 18 States planning outreach efforts in FY 2000 (fig. 21). These efforts were often targeted at special populations that were identified by State officials as being underserved by the FSP. Figure 22 displays the various target populations and the number of States that tried to reach those populations after PRWORA and on through FY 2000. As can be seen, the populations targeted by the largest number of States were the elderly, the working poor, and ABAWDs. Figure 22 shows that the elderly and working poor populations remain targets for program outreach efforts planned by States for FY 2000. States are also planning to target new groups, including former TANF recipients and persons with disabilities.

The groups targeted least often by the States that increased their outreach before FY 2000 were the disabled and former TANF recipients. In contrast, ABAWDs were the least likely to be targeted by States in the outreach efforts that were planned for FY 2000, followed by the parents of young children and "others."

States used a variety of methods to reach their target populations. Thirteen States distributed printed materials such as brochures, posters, and flyers in low-income communities, while five States relied on public service announcements on television and radio and five expanded referral services at other means-tested programs. Three States noted that they had begun distributing FSP applications at locations such as food banks and hospitals.

As mentioned above, States expanded their use of referrals. Seven States reported efforts to increase the number of referrals to the FSP from other means-tested social service programs. Among the programs mentioned were TANF, where clients leaving the program may still be eligible for FSP benefits, Medicaid, and the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

Finally, as was noted in chapter I, efforts to increase program accessibility sometimes varied within States with regard to urban and rural areas. A total of 14 States reported making different changes to promote accessibility based on the special needs of these areas within their State. Of the 14 States that mentioned urban-rural differences, 4 placed a greater emphasis on providing transportation services to rural clients. Other differences reported by States included establishing more satellite offices in urban areas, providing nutrition education services in urban areas to increase the program's exposure, moving toward a system of telephone contact for initial certification interviews in rural areas, giving greater decision-making authority to offices located in rural areas, and allowing rural offices to develop their own methods to improve accessibility. Table 3 displays the 14 States that accommodated the different needs of rural and urban areas with regard to accessibility issues.

Changes in Client Tracking Systems

While PRWORA created a great deal of flexibility in how States manage their FSPs, several mandatory provisions, as described in the introduction, were also enacted. These mandatory provisions have greatly increased the pressure on States to meet program compliance and audit requirements and to reduce error rates in client certification and the provision of benefits. As a result of these increased pressures, States

Figure 21

Number of States targeting specific populations with outreach efforts as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by type of population

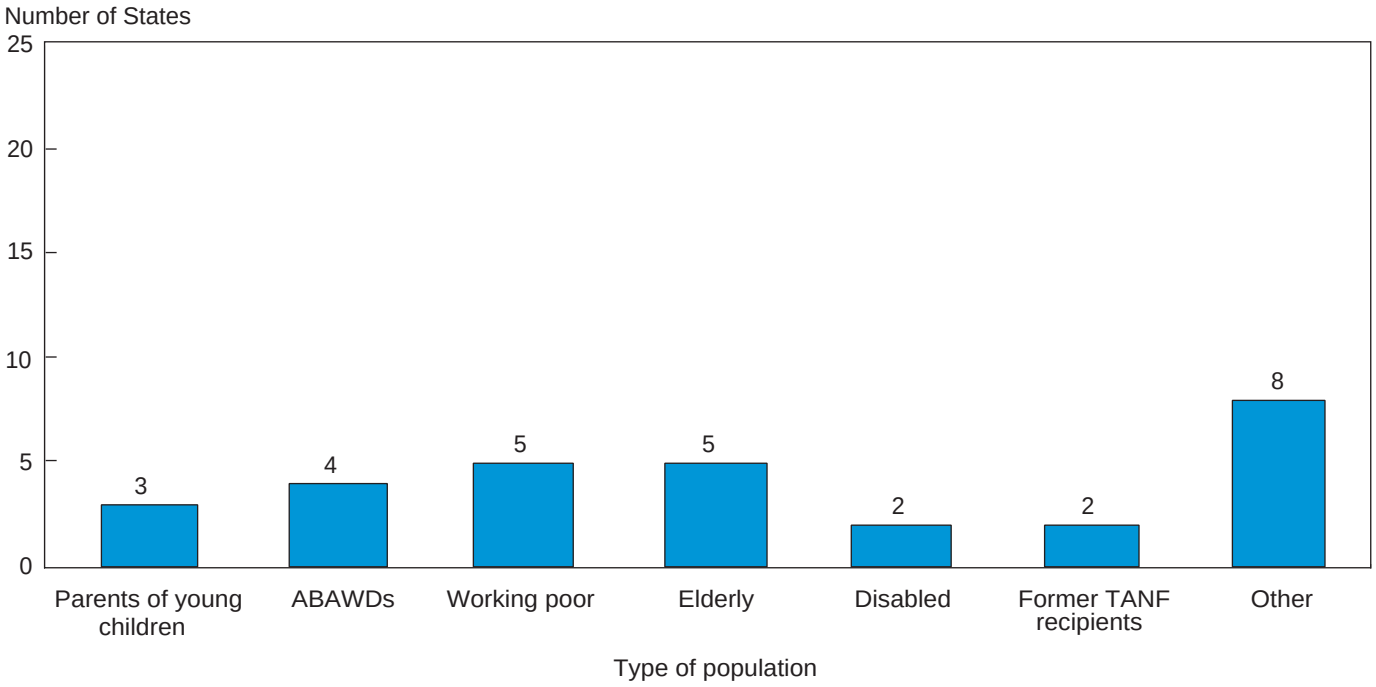


Figure 22

Number of States planning to target specific populations with outreach efforts during FY 2000 by type of population

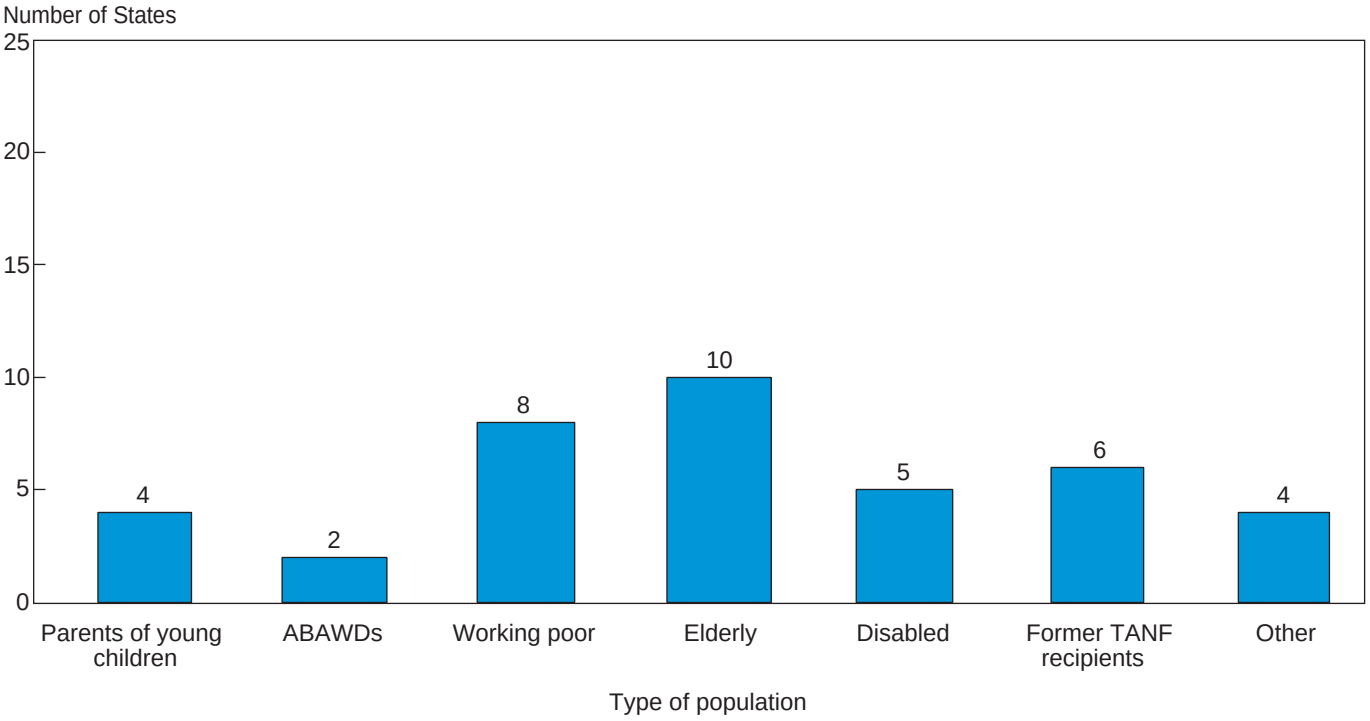


Table 3—States making changes to improve accessibility based on differing needs for urban and rural areas by type of change

Food stamp application process	Local office practices	Efforts to increase outreach to clients
Georgia		
Montana	Colorado	Connecticut
	Idaho	Georgia
	Indiana	Idaho
	Maryland	Oregon
	Massachusetts	Utah
	Montana	
	Nevada	
	South Carolina	
	Utah	
	Wisconsin	
	Wyoming	

have had to rethink how they collect and maintain information about clients.

One of the methods States used to improve program integrity efforts, improving technology and computer systems used to certify clients, was noted above. Another method is matching client databases for the FSP with those of other social service programs. The purpose of this section is to examine some of the ways that States have increased efforts to improve program accountability through enhanced client tracking systems and computer matching.

While States have collected data regarding client eligibility and program benefits for years, the new approaches taken by States to meet the demands of PRWORA have created a need to collect new types of information. Because of the increased complexity of the FSP, as well as the interest shown by States in improving program accessibility, caseworkers may need information about clients' participation in other social service programs in order to be effective in moving them toward self-sufficiency. In addition, matching food stamp administrative data with data from other social service programs has been found to be an effective tool in controlling error rates in client certification and detecting fraud in the delivery of program benefits. Through the use of sophisticated computer programs, States can determine whether clients should be disqualified from FSP benefits because they are categorically ineligible (for instance, as a fleeing felon), have reported different income information to other social service agencies (such as to Medicaid), or have attempted to participate in the FSP in more than one location (dual participation).

A total of 40 States increased their efforts to improve client tracking and accountability systems as a result of PRWORA. The single largest group of States making changes to their client tracking systems did so to meet the PRWORA requirement for tracking time limits on ABAWDs. Of the 40 States that enhanced their client tracking systems, 33 focused their efforts on developing systems for tracking time limits on ABAWDs. In FY 2000 three States were planning to adopt systems to better track the same limits.

While States have been matching FSP administrative data against other databases for years, the passage of PRWORA seems to have motivated them to increase these efforts. A total of 29 States reported that they had increased the number and type of databases within their States with which FSP data were matched. Six States reported that they had begun matching records with programs in neighboring States. Four of the States reported that they also began using private contractors to assist them with client record matching. In addition to these efforts, nine States reported that they had planned to increase the number of databases against which to match FSP records in FY 2000, while two States planned to begin matching records with neighboring States. States noted a number of programs or departments against whose databases their increased FSP matching efforts have taken place (see appendix table 11 for specific States). Some of the more common programs or departments with which matching activities have taken place, or were planned for FY 2000, include:

- ***New-Hires Databases.*** In order to track employment of individuals receiving TANF and food stamps,

States enhanced their tracking of new hires, particularly those reported through State departments of labor or employment. A total of 17 States reported having increased their data-matching with new-hires data, and 3 States reported planning to increase data-matching in this area during FY 2000.

- ***Criminal Records Databases.*** Because PRWORA restricted certain persons with criminal records from receiving FSP benefits, States began matching FSP client information with databases maintained by various criminal justice organizations. A total of 13 States began matching FSP records with criminal justice organizations as a result of PRWORA, and 2 States planned to expand their data-matching to this area in FY 2000.

- ***Records of the Social Security Administration.*** A total of eight States began matching their FSP databases with records from the Social Security Administration. Two additional States planned to begin matching with the Social Security Administration in FY 2000. The purpose is to verify the social security numbers of clients in order to be sure clients are who they say they are and to match clients' social security numbers with the Social Security Administration's records of deceased clients, to be sure fraud is not being attempted.

Changes in Program Monitoring and Evaluation

In addition to making changes in client tracking systems for purposes of controlling fraud and abuse, States also began to recognize that the fundamental changes to the FSP created by PRWORA would result in program outcomes requiring new measurement tools. As a result, some States began to develop systems by which changes in the FSP could be monitored for evaluating program outcomes. These systems, which differ from client tracking systems designed to preserve program integrity, monitor key program outcome measures established by program administrators. In addition, some States have begun to conduct formal evaluations of FSP activities. In this section, the extent to which States increased activities to monitor and evaluate their FSPs is examined.

For the purposes of this study, efforts to monitor the FSP include routinely assessing program operations (such as tracking the number of cases each case manager has or the number of clients enrolled in FSP). Efforts to evaluate the FSP, on the other hand, were generally more formal studies that assessed the program's effectiveness.

A total of 22 States developed new program monitoring tools to help them examine components of their FSPs. In addition, seven States planned to implement changes in program monitoring in FY 2000. Figure 23 displays the types of monitoring activities implemented by States as a result of PRWORA. As shown, monitoring efforts were most often focused on tracking changes in client participation rates (14 States), evaluating client satisfaction (12 States), and evaluating efforts to increase program accessibility (10 States). In addition to the categories identified in figure 23, 11 States noted other areas in which they were increasing monitoring activities. Areas in the "other" category included increased monitoring of error rate reduction measures of the status of TANF recipients who leave the TANF program but may still be eligible for food stamps (leaver studies), of outreach efforts, and of client progress toward finding employment. Table 4 displays the States that undertook these monitoring activities, by type of activity.

In addition to the monitoring efforts noted above, States began conducting formal evaluations of Food Stamp Program activities. Evaluations are considered important because they enable States to determine whether their administrative changes are accomplishing the goals for which they were implemented. Once that assessment is made, States can begin to modify or redirect their re-engineering efforts to maximize the benefits of their programmatic changes. A total of 9 States conducted formal evaluations of one or more FSP activities prior to FY 2000, and 10 States planned evaluation activities in FY 2000. Eleven States noted that they conducted evaluations of program participation levels, as well as the level of client satisfaction with the FSP. These evaluations were primarily done by FSP staff, with seven of the nine States reporting having used State FSP staff for conducting the evaluation.

Conforming FSP and TANF Program Rules

As noted in the introduction, PRWORA provided States with the opportunity to coordinate the program policies and activities of the FSP with their TANF programs. The purposes of this coordination were to assist States in simplifying program policies, to improve the overall efficiency of the two programs, to allow States

Figure 23
Number of States increasing monitoring efforts as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by type of activity

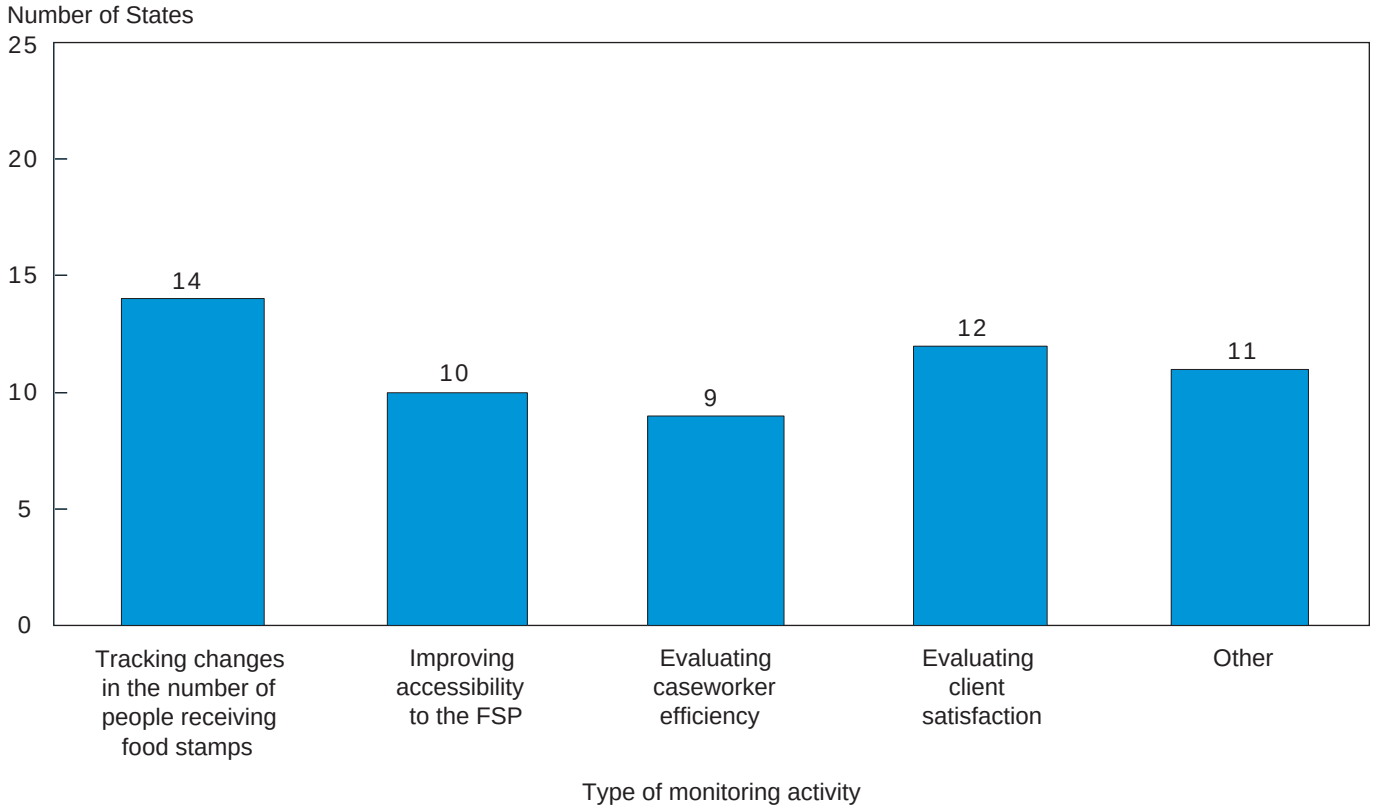


Table 4—States reporting program monitoring activities by type of activity

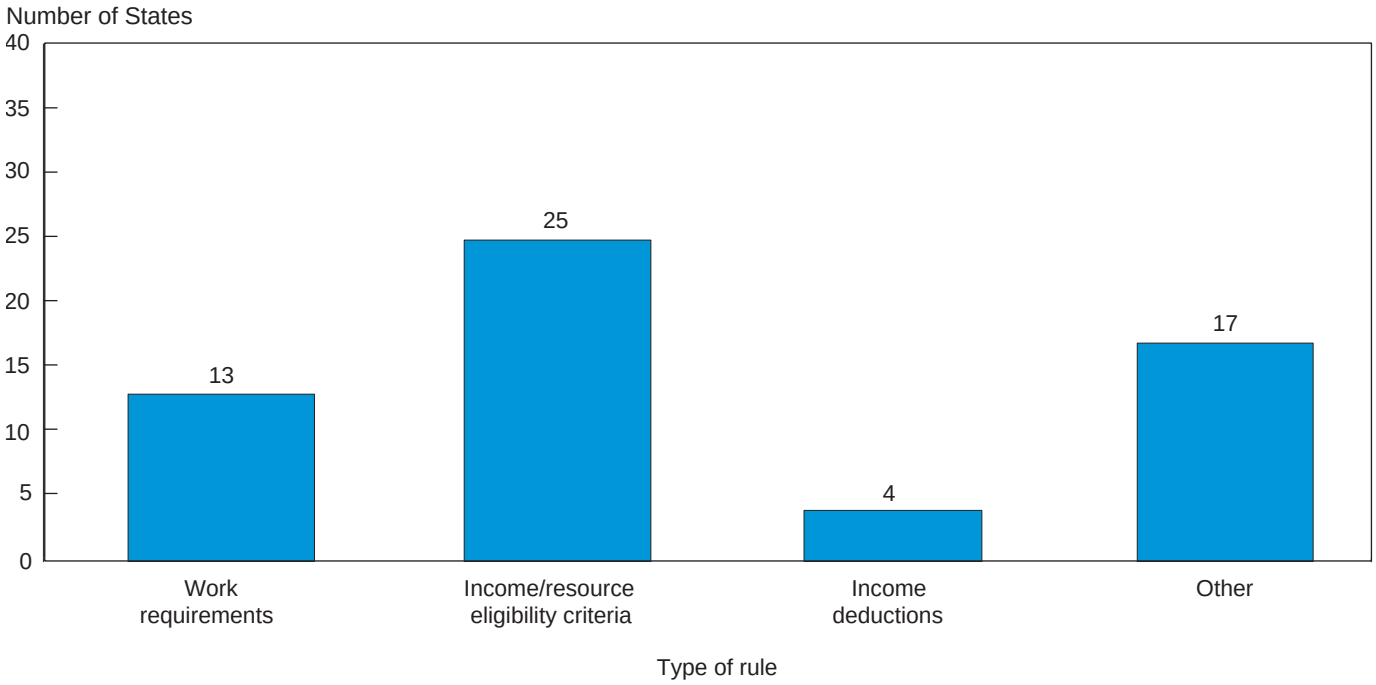
Tracking changes in program participation	Improving accessibility to FSP	Evaluating caseworker efficiency	Evaluating client satisfaction
Alaska	Arizona	Arizona	Alaska
Arizona	Colorado	Colorado	Arizona
California	Idaho	Florida	Colorado
Colorado	Iowa	Idaho	Florida
Florida	Kansas	Iowa	Idaho
Idaho	Maryland	Maryland	Iowa
Iowa	New Jersey	New Mexico	Maryland
Maryland	New York	New York	New York
New Jersey	Washington	Wisconsin	Ohio
New York	Wyoming		Utah
Ohio			Washington
Washington			Wisconsin
Wisconsin			
Wyoming			

to better coordinate caseworker activities at the local level, and to increase case management activities that promote client self-sufficiency.

A total of 34 States coordinated some portion of the TANF program rules with their FSP. As can be seen in figure 24, the most common attempts to conform the FSP with TANF were in the area of income and resources eligibility criteria, with 25 States adopting conformance measures. In addition, a total of seven

Figure 24

Number of States coordinating TANF program rules to conform with Federal food stamp program rules as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by type of rule



States planned to coordinate FSP and TANF program rules in FY 2000.

Another way States coordinated program rules was by adopting the Simplified Food Stamp Program (SFSP). Because TANF and the FSP have separate rules, applying to both programs can be a cumbersome process, both for clients and caseworkers. In order to streamline the determination process for individuals applying for TANF and food stamps, PRWORA gave States the option of adopting the SFSP. Under the SFSP, States may establish one set of rules for both programs. The law also allows States to establish a limited SFSP, which involves only aligning food stamp work requirements with work requirements in the TANF program.

Respondents noted two administrative drawbacks of the SFSP. First, States that adopt an SFSP must also continue to operate a separate FSP, since not all clients receive both TANF and food stamps. Second, the law requires States to prove that the costs associated with operating the SFSP do not exceed the costs incurred by operating two separate programs, which has been difficult to accomplish.

A total of seven States adopted a limited SFSP by coordinating work requirements for TANF and the FSP. As noted earlier in the chapter, Arkansas was the only State to attempt to implement a complete SFSP. However, Arkansas officials made the decision in 1999 to abandon their SFSP and return to a more traditional FSP. The main reason cited by Arkansas officials for this change was the complexity that the State faced in trying to administer the SFSP, while administering a separate FSP for non-TANF food stamp households. The officials noted that caseworkers found the systems confusing and were often unable to determine which clients of the SFSP should receive certain benefits. No State planned to implement either a limited or a complete SFSP in FY 2000.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the specific re-engineering efforts States implemented or planned to implement were described. As can be seen, the numbers and varieties of changes States made have significantly altered how the FSP is administered across the country. Because State re-engineering efforts are not static, it is likely that the landscape of the FSP will continue to change in the future. In chapter III, the study findings are revisited and implications for future research are presented.

This report has provided a description of the efforts undertaken by States to re-engineer their FSPs.

III. Discussion and Implications for Future Research

However, the results of this study should not be viewed as an end in themselves, but rather as the first outcome of a process through which the effectiveness of re-engineering efforts are examined over time. The very notion of re-engineering a program the size of the FSP carries with it issues related to the time needed to fully implement changes and the additional time needed to assess the results of these changes.

With the flexibility created by the passage of PRWORA, States have begun the process of restructuring how they deliver services, including changing the role of the caseworkers, increasing program accessibility, tracking client participation, and evaluating program components. While many States have implemented changes in these areas, it will require additional time for them to fine-tune these changes to improve their program operations.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize some of the key findings of this report and to provide Economic Research Service with suggestions for future research. It is important to note that while this was a point-in-time study, the survey collected information on both changes implemented and activities the States planned to undertake as a result of PRWORA. The survey also was designed to capture information about a wide variety of re-engineering efforts that States made to the administration of their FSPs and about the States' goals for these changes. It is not, however, designed to assess how effective these changes have been. The consequences are unknown, and States will need time to assess how well they were able to meet their goals in re-engineering their FSPs.

Discussion of Key Findings

The number of re-engineering activities that took place as a result of the passage of PRWORA is impressive. While some States began re-engineering their FSPs prior to the passage of the bill, there is no doubt that Federal welfare reform led States to restructure administrative activities related to their FSPs. When the findings of this study are examined together, some interesting aspects of State re-engineering efforts can be noted. A summary of these key findings follows.

- While States have focused on implementing mandatory provisions of PRWORA, a significant amount of effort has been focused on improving access to the FSP. It would be expected that States would make major efforts to restructure their administrative activities in order to implement mandatory provisions of PRWORA. The findings of this study confirm this, as 40 of the 50 States (80 percent) reported completing re-engineering activities in the category of changes to their client tracking systems. However, it is interesting to note that 39 of the 50 States (78 percent) implemented changes to improve program accessibility. In addition, 28 States planned to implement changes to improve accessibility in FY 2000. This finding clearly shows that States are attempting to address concerns related to the decline in FSP caseloads over the past several years.

- The number of States that implemented and planned activities that fall into multiple re-engineering categories was higher than expected. Because State FSP agencies are likely to have limited resources, one would assume that undertaking a large number of activities across multiple re-engineering categories would be uncommon. However, 35 States (70 percent) implemented activities falling into three or more re-engineering categories.

- It would appear that changing organizational structures to implement activities related to PRWORA is not a high priority with States. With the opportunity to conform FSPs with their TANF programs, one might have expected a large number of States to combine or consolidate program functions by changing their organizational structures. However, while 34 States (68 percent) took steps to conform TANF and FSP rules, only 11 States reported changing their organizational structures, and of those, only 3 cited conforming TANF and FSP as the goal of the changes. In addition, only one State reported that it planned to make changes in its organizational structure in FY 2000, and that State was going to discontinue its SFSP.

- There appears to be growing interest on the part of States to increase program monitoring and evaluation activities within their FSPs. Twenty-four States had implemented some form of increased monitoring and evaluation, while 15 States planned to do so in FY 2000. While tracking client participation rates was the primary focus of this monitoring, a number of States also recognized the importance of tracking

and evaluating client satisfaction and efforts to improve program accessibility.

- The level of re-engineering activity demonstrated by county-administered States was also noteworthy. As mentioned in chapter I, less re-engineering activity was expected from county-administered States because it was assumed that many of the re-engineering efforts would take place at the county level. However, 87 percent of the county-administered States undertook changes that fell into three or more re-engineering categories, as compared to 67 percent of the State-administered States. In addition, the finding that 92 percent of the county-administered States undertook changes to improve program accessibility was not expected.

Implications for Future Research

While the findings of this study provide a strong baseline for examining State re-engineering efforts, they must also be viewed in terms of opportunities for future research. Simply knowing that these activities took place, while important, should not be viewed as an end in itself. Over the course of collecting and analyzing data for this study, a number of factors came to the attention of the study team that have implications for further research. These factors are discussed in detail below.

Evaluating County Efforts To Re-engineer FSPs

More research may be warranted in States that pass down the responsibility of administering their FSPs to county governmental agencies. With the flexibility afforded by PRWORA, along with the decisions by States to decentralize FSP operations, counties may have had the same opportunity to adjust how they administer their FSPs as many States have. However, because of this local flexibility in how county programs are administered, State officials were unable to provide information about the types of change taking place within their counties.

Examining the extent to which counties re-engineered their FSPs was beyond the scope of this study. In order to have a complete picture of how the FSP has been re-engineered, a survey of county-run programs would be useful. It must be considered that some county-run programs may have caseloads as large as some State programs (such as Los Angeles County, California) or have some of the same issues related to urban and rural divisions (for example, Riverside County, California) that the States have. A complete picture of the extent to which county-administered programs have re-engineered their FSPs within the categories identified for this study would add significantly to the overall picture of State re-engineering efforts.

Evaluating the Extent to Which Planned Re-engineering Efforts Were Fully Implemented

This study gathered information about the re-engineering efforts implemented prior to FY 2000 along with the activities being planned for FY 2000. In the introduction, it was noted that while planned activities could be described, there was no way of knowing whether they were actually implemented. A followup study would provide a more complete picture of State re-engineering efforts. In particular, States planned a number of initiatives for increasing program accessibility. Because of concerns about decreases in the FSP caseload, it would be interesting to know if the plans for increasing client accessibility were actually implemented.

Evaluating Components of State Re-engineering Efforts

Another area that deserves consideration is the evaluation of some of the specific re-engineering changes made by States as a result of PRWORA. As mentioned earlier, the amount of time to fully implement a re-engineering change will vary, but the change will not often produce measurable results until years later. The changes described in chapter II were each designed to improve some components of the FSP. They should be evaluated individually in terms of whether the proposed change met the goals of the State, whether the re-engineering change was modified as a result of problems identified during implementation, and whether the State plans to continue the change over the next several years.

Specific research questions could be developed for each of the re-engineering categories, including specific measures for evaluating the process and outcomes of the changes. A number of areas raise questions and stand out as deserving further evaluation, as follows:

- How has the changing role of the caseworker affected the interaction between caseworkers and clients? One of the key results of this study is the description of the changes States have made to the role of the caseworker. But as noted in chapter II, the formal

changes in the role of the caseworker may not fully describe how the interaction has changed between caseworkers and clients.

Because interviews and surveys with caseworkers and clients were not within the scope of this study, there was little information available about how the changing role of the caseworker may affect delivery of services. However, the ways that caseworkers now interact with clients, particularly how they manage client cases, the extent to which they provide services to clients in order to support self-sufficiency efforts, and the attitudes of the caseworkers and clients with regard to the changed role, deserve further examination.

- Have efforts to improve client accessibility been effective? Because of the concern over falling caseloads in the FSP, it would seem important to evaluate the numerous efforts being made by States to improve client accessibility. Of particular interest would be an examination of how well efforts to improve accessibility through expanding office hours, improving transportation services, and adding child care have been coordinated with outreach efforts to bring in new clients. In addition, the methods used by States to conduct outreach efforts to potential clients should also be examined. By evaluating the critical components of re-engineering efforts in the area of accessibility, valuable information could be provided to States who are in the beginning phases of developing increased accessibility efforts.

- Have States' efforts to improve client tracking systems resulted in increased program integrity? Chapter II discussed how a number of States have increased their efforts in tracking clients to meet the new requirements of PRWORA. These efforts have included increased use of computer technology to track client groups (such as ABAWDs) and of matching FSP administrative files against those of other social service programs and new-employment databases. Because these efforts are often complex and costly, it would make sense to determine which ones seem to be the most cost-effective in reducing program errors.

- To what extent have efforts to conform FSP and TANF rules simplified or complicated the administration of the FSP at the State and local levels? In chapter II, it was noted that the programmatic and eligibility links between the TANF program and the FSP might be conducive to better coordination between the two programs. However, the practical implementation of efforts to conform program requirements may be too difficult for States to implement. The extent to which States have successfully integrated components of the two programs, and the extent to which problems or issues have discouraged this practice, would also seem to deserve future research.

Tracking State Efforts To Evaluate Re-engineering Changes

As described in chapters I and II, States have begun conducting their own evaluations of FSP components. Developing a mechanism to collect and catalog State evaluation efforts would enable tracking of the extent to which individual States have evaluated their re-engineering efforts.

In addition to State-sponsored evaluations of FSP components, there may be other evaluation efforts at the State level that it would be important to include in such a catalog. A number of State governments have audit agencies in their executive or legislative branches, and these agencies evaluate the effectiveness of such areas as governmental reorganization, local service delivery systems, and State data collection systems. While these evaluations may not be specific to the FSP, they may encompass the entire department or division in which the FSP is located. Because changes in these administrative areas comprise a significant part of States' re-engineering efforts for their FSPs, they may be of value in assessing the effectiveness of administrative changes brought about by State re-engineering efforts.

Future research might also focus on creating a mechanism by which evaluation reports commissioned by State food stamp or welfare agencies, as well as by other evaluation or audit agencies, could be collected on a periodic basis and made available to researchers and FSP program administrators. This would provide a secondary source of data on how well individual State re-engineering efforts have worked.

Ongoing Tracking Systems To Describe Changes in State Re-engineering Efforts

Re-engineering State FSPs is a continuing process, with States conducting ongoing efforts to fine-tune existing re-engineering changes as well as to develop new initiatives. ERS may want to consider a method for promoting continuing research into the types of re-engineering changes being made in State programs. The regional offices of FNS may be able to play a strong role, as they often are made aware of changes in how State FSPs are administered. Information concerning ongoing State efforts may be found through State FSP management evaluations or through changes in the State's Plan of Operations.

Section B: Case Study Reports

Overview and Summary of Case Studies

In 1998, the Economic Research Service (ERS) commissioned a study of State-level efforts to re-engineer Food Stamp Programs (FSPs) in response to welfare reform. The purpose of the study was to provide ERS with descriptive information about the types of administrative changes States had implemented since the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). As a part of that study, six case studies were conducted to examine how local programs have implemented State policy changes. This report presents information obtained from the six case studies.

Overview of Case Study Site Selection

The flexibility provided to States through the passage of welfare reform has resulted in some creative and innovative approaches in program administration and client services. The goal of this case study report is to provide descriptive information about some of the innovative approaches used by States to implement re-engineering efforts in response to welfare reform, and to examine how local programs implement these changes. In order to select appropriate case study sites, information was obtained from a review of data compiled for the national survey of State re-engineering efforts. The process for selecting the specific State and local programs is described below.

- Selection of specific States was based upon two factors. First, States were grouped by the type of re-engineering efforts they were undertaking.This grouping matched the six categories of re-engineering examined in the main study. These categories are:
  - ➢ Changes in State organizational structure;
  - ➢ Changes in the role of the caseworker;
  - ➢ Efforts to improve client accessibility and certification;
  - ➢ Changes in client tracking and accountability systems;
  - ➢ Attempts to conform the State FSP with the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program; and
  - ➢ Efforts to increase program monitoring and evaluation.
- Next, a determination was made regarding which categories of re-engineering efforts would be represented in the case study selection process. ERS officials indicated that there was more interest in expanding the scope of some of the categories than in ensuring that all categories were represented. As a result, a decision was made to eliminate the categories of client tracking and accountability systems and efforts to increase program monitoring and evaluation.
- Once the categories were determined, it was agreed that the States selected should include at least one that administers its FSP through county governmental agencies. In addition, when possible, States that implemented re-engineering changes in more than one category would be given priority consideration. Finally, survey interviewers were asked to provide input into the selection process, as they were in a better position to identify innovative approaches that States may have used to implement their re-engineering efforts.
- A preliminary list of diverse States was forwarded to ERS for consideration. Upon review of the information provided about the re-engineering effort in each State, ERS selected the six States for inclusion. Individual States were contacted and asked to participate in the case studies. In addition, State program administrators were asked to recommend local programs for site visits.

Each of the six case study sites, along with the rationale for their selection, is described below.

- ***Massachusetts.*** *(Innovation: Efforts to increase program accessibility and outreach.)* Massachusetts has two very innovative outreach projects targeted to persons who are not participating in the FSP. For a number of years, Massachusetts has contracted with Project Bread, a nonprofit agency located in Boston, to provide outreach to potential food stamp clients. Project Bread offers a variety of services, including a toll-free Food Source Hotline that responds to more than 30,000 calls a year. Callers can obtain information in 140 languages. In addition, the program funds community agencies to help potential FSP clients complete the application.

After implementing welfare reform, Massachusetts officials were concerned that clients who left the TANF program might also be leaving the FSP, even though they were still eligible for the FSP. A second outreach project was developed, to target the clients who have left TANF. Clients who drop off both Temporary Assistance for Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC, Massachusetts' name for TANF) and the FSP are contacted by a caseworker and staff from contract agencies, sometimes through home visits, to ensure that they are aware that they can continue to receive food stamps. The FSP is promoted in nutrition education classes and advertised in Head Start newsletters, posters placed in high school teen centers, and flyers provided to clients in other social and health services programs.

In FY 2000, Massachusetts planned to expand categorical eligibility for the FSP and extend office hours to include evening and early morning hours to improve access to the FSP. Officials also planned to use Public Service Announcements and print advertisements on public transportation to increase program awareness.

- ***Texas.*** *(Innovation: Changes in program certification in an urban area.)* In February 1997, Texas established a pilot program in two regions (Beaumont and San Antonio) to allow clients participating in the TANF, FSP, and Medicaid programs to report changes in eligibility status over the telephone. A year later, a change center was opened in Houston and an additional center is currently being established in Arlington. Officials stated that they established the change centers to make the certification process more efficient and to make things easier for clients by putting them in direct contact with eligibility workers when reporting changes. Clients in these regions constitute an estimated 40 percent of the State's TANF, FSP, and Medicaid populations. Texas hopes to open change centers in all regions of the State by 2001. Clients must still go into local offices for initial eligibility determination for the three programs, and for FSP recertification every 3 to 6 months.

- ***Georgia.*** *(Innovation: Changes in program certification in a rural area located in a county-administered State.)* Georgia has begun piloting a centralized call center that may be used by clients being served by local offices in nine counties, eight in the metropolitan Atlanta area and one in a rural county located in the center of the State. The purpose of the call center is to allow clients to report ongoing changes in their eligibility status without having to go into a local office. The call center is open to participants in TANF, Medicaid, and the FSP. At present, the services are available to 15 percent of the State's total food stamp caseload. Recertification continues to be conducted in the local offices. With the implementation of the call center, Georgia State employees will be directly involved for the first time in client certification and change reporting, as client service activities in the past have only been handled by county employees.

  In FY 2000, Georgia officials hoped to add another change center in the southern part of the State to expand these services. In addition to serving the clients noted above, the new center will allow elderly and disabled clients who do not have earned income to call in ongoing changes. This population has a certification period of 12 months. Georgia just received a waiver that allows the State to conduct annual recertification interviews for the elderly and disabled over the telephone.

- ***Kansas.*** *(Innovation: Changes in the role of the caseworker; efforts to conform TANF and the FSP.)* As a result of welfare reform, Kansas undertook major efforts to conform its TANF, Medicaid, and FSP rules. In addition, officials made major changes to the role of their caseworkers by combining functions from the three programs with employment-related functions that had been performed by staff in separate job classifications. The implications of these changes were examined in a rural county located in the northeast corner of the State.

- ***Arizona.*** *(Innovation: Changes in the role of the caseworker; changes in certification systems.)* Caseworkers in Arizona have assumed the responsibilities of case managers whose primary role is to move clients towards self-sufficiency. In addition, Arizona is conducting a pilot program that privatizes their TANF program in a portion of Phoenix. FSP caseworkers must coordinate with caseworkers employed by the private company that manages the TANF program when clients are enrolled in both programs.

- ***Connecticut.*** *(Innovation: Changes in organizational structure.)* Connecticut officials changed the organizational structure of their agency from a centrally administered program to a regionally administered program. They also contracted with another State

agency, the Department of Labor, to provide all employment and training services. A case study was conducted in a rural region of the State to determine how the change in administrative structure and increased flexibility affected program operations.

Overview of the Case Study Methodology

Individual site visits were conducted at each of the six selected local programs over a 3-month period. The primary method of data collection was interviews with key program staff at the State and local level. Because each State included in the case studies represents a different re-engineering category, customized interview guides were developed for each State. Data from the entire data collection effort in each State were aggregated and summarized into an individual case study report. The six individual case study reports follow. Each report provides an overview of the State's innovative re-engineering efforts and State FSP administration, along with findings from the interviews with State and local staff.

Individual Case Study Reports

Massachusetts

Re-engineering Category

Massachusetts was selected as one of the six case study States because of its innovative approach to implementing outreach initiatives to increase accessibility to the FSP after the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). In 1998, Massachusetts began operating the Follow-up Outreach and Referral Families Program (F.O.R. Families Program) to ensure that families who leave the Temporary Assistance for Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC, Massachusetts' name for TANF) program, but who are still eligible for food stamps, continue to receive benefits. In particular, clients that fail to recertify for the FSP are contacted by the F.O.R. Families Program, often through a home visit, to ensure they know of their continued eligibility for food stamps. Along with this followup of clients, the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) offices in the Boston area expanded their hours of operation to accommodate working clients. In addition, the State has been working with Project Bread, a nonprofit agency located in Boston, to conduct outreach for the Food Stamp Program. Project Bread manages social marketing campaigns, operates a hotline that directs low-income individuals to emergency food sources, and trains volunteers to assist FSP applicants with the certification process.

This case study report summarizes findings from interviews that were conducted in Boston from August 21 to August 23, 2000. State staff from DTA who oversee the FSP and State staff from the Department of Public Health (DPH) who administer the F.O.R. Families Program were interviewed. In addition, the regional coordinator and information specialist at the F.O.R. Families regional office in Boston were interviewed, along with supervisors and caseworkers in two local DTA offices, New Market and Roslindale. Because of time limitations, the F.O.R. Families Program home visitors were interviewed by telephone the following week.

Food Stamp Program Context

The Massachusetts Food Stamp Program

The Federal FSP is a State-administered program in Massachusetts. After welfare reform, Massachusetts also began the State Supplemental Food Stamp Program (SSFSP) to provide State-funded food stamp benefits to noncitizens who are ineligible to participate in the Federal FSP. SSFSP benefits are provided to noncitizens who have resided in Massachusetts for 60 continuous days or more before application. Eligibility and case management services for both programs are administered by DTA.

There are 4 DTA regions with 37 local offices that provide services to FSP clients. DTA has an interagency service agreement with the Department of Public Health (DPH) to provide outreach services for potential food stamp clients. DPH either provides the services directly through its F.O.R. Families offices or contracts out the services to Project Bread. Overviews of the F.O.R. Families Program and Project Bread are provided below.

The F.O.R. Families Program

The F.O.R. Families Program was created by DTA and DPH after community advocates expressed concern over the well-being of former welfare recipients. The advocates argued that it was unwise to assume that clients would become self-sufficient once they left TAFDC. Many clients lacked the basic skills to get a job and faced significant barriers that needed to be addressed if they were to lead stable lives. The barriers often included poor access to affordable housing, substance abuse problems, domestic violence, and transportation problems.

In order to address these concerns, DTA set out to create an outreach program to help former TAFDC clients transition off welfare. They envisioned an outreach and referral service that could make clients aware of a broad array of community and government services. Through the program, clients would learn how to access the services and receive assistance if they had any problems. Officials believed that in order to be

effective, the program would have to be staffed by workers that were trusted by former TAFDC clients. Since many clients distanced themselves from DTA and the other services they provide after leaving the TAFDC program, a decision was made not to use DTA staff to conduct the outreach efforts.

DTA approached DPH to determine if it would be willing to administer the outreach program to former TAFDC clients. It was believed that the program would be a natural extension of outreach services the department provided. DPH was already well versed in providing early intervention for a variety of health and nutrition programs, including the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). DPH nurses and social workers were located throughout the State, and the department's field staff had experience working with community-based organizations. As a result, DPH staff were well received by the former TAFDC clients. DPH agreed to provide the services, and both departments worked together to design the program. In 1998, the F.O.R. Families program was established.

Project Bread

Project Bread is an organization begun in 1969 that conducts a wide range of activities to prevent and alleviate hunger. The organization's main objective is to raise money through various fundraising events to support soup kitchens and food pantries across Massachusetts. Its banner fundraising event is the Walk for Hunger, which raises about $3 million each year. Project Bread also lobbies the legislature to promote antihunger policies and conducts outreach to promote participation in various nutrition programs, including the FSP.

Under a contract with DPH, Project Bread staff have developed and distributed food stamp outreach materials to increase awareness of the FSP and other nutrition programs. Project Bread also operates the FoodSource Hotline, which provides callers with information about FSP eligibility rules, the application process, and emergency food resources. The hotline staff also distributes FSP applications when they are requested. In addition, Project Bread collaborates with local contract agencies to provide direct outreach in communities. They train community groups to make presentations about the FSP, screen potential clients, and assist clients with the application process. Project Bread has worked with community groups to target the elderly and immigrants. Volunteers have been recruited from local networks working with the elderly to assist seniors with completing food stamp applications. Volunteers have also been recruited from immigrant-focused networks.

Findings from State-Level Interviews

At the State food stamp office in Boston, interviews were conducted with the Assistant DTA Commissioner and the DTA director of the Boston region. The Assistant DTA Commissioner is responsible for overseeing policy and program management for TAFDC, FSP, SSFSP, Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children (EAEDC) and Emergency Assistance (EA). The director of the Boston region oversees nine local DTA offices in Boston and the surrounding areas. In addition to DTA officials, interviews were also conducted with the DPH Assistant Commissioner, who is responsible for policy and program management, and the director of the F.O.R. Families Program, who oversees the regional F.O.R. Families offices. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain the State-level perspective on the outreach efforts conducted by Project Bread and the F.O.R. Families Program.

Program Administration and the F.O.R. Families Project

As was noted earlier, the majority of the direct outreach services provided by DTA and DPH are conducted through the F.O.R. Families Program. This program provides outreach and referral services to clients in five areas of need: housing and environment, family health, food and nutrition, economics, and social supports. There are six regional F.O.R. Families offices across the State. Each office is staffed with a regional coordinator, a resource specialist, and home visitors. Regional coordinators are responsible for managing the office and assigning cases to home visitors, reviewing cases as necessary, and facilitating contact with local DTA offices. Home visitors are either nurses or social workers with experience in public health, and are responsible for initiating contact with clients referred to the program by DTA. The home visitors complete their assessments over the telephone, or in person when clients cannot be reached by telephone, to determine whether a comprehensive home visit is needed. Once clients have been assessed, assistance is provided to help them access the services they need.

Resource specialists are responsible for managing the toll-free F.O.R. Families hotline. They assess clients over the phone and pass client information on to their

regional coordinator if clients need a home visit. They also refer clients to community and government services and assist them in accessing services when necessary. The resource specialists also support the home visitors by keeping them abreast of what community resources are available.

DTA caseworkers are in charge of referring clients to the F.O.R. Families Program. Caseworkers refer clients to the program if there are signs that clients will have trouble transitioning off welfare. Such signs can include an inability to access food, find work, pay rent, combat domestic violence, and/or overcome substance abuse problems. Caseworkers refer clients before they reach their 2-year TAFDC time limit so F.O.R. Families Program staff can contact clients soon after they stop receiving cash assistance. The referrals they complete include contact information and a description of the barriers the clients face. The referrals are then faxed to the F.O.R. Families Program administrators at the State office, who route them to regional F.O.R. Families offices.

Clients are also identified for the F.O.R. Families Program if they fail to recertify for their food stamp benefits after leaving TAFDC. While many clients remain eligible for food stamps after they reach their time limit, they must recertify within 30 days after leaving TAFDC in order to continue receiving benefits. Each month the names of clients that fail to recertify for food stamps are compiled on a computer-generated list and forwarded to the F.O.R. Families State staff by DTA State staff. The list is then distributed among the six regional F.O.R. Families offices. When the referral mechanisms were put into place, it was assumed that 90 percent of the referrals would come from the computer-generated list and 10 percent would come from local DTA offices identifying at-risk clients. In actuality, the majority of referrals are made by local caseworkers.

The regional offices are responsible for tracking the number of home visits that are conducted, the number of phone contacts that are made, and the numbers and type of referrals that are made to outside services. In order to compile the information, the resource coordinator obtains weekly summaries from the F.O.R. Families staff. The information is provided to F.O.R. Families staff at the State office.

Program Administration and Project Bread

Project Bread began conducting food stamp outreach in 1986 when it started operating a toll-free hotline. When clients called, the hotline staff referred them to emergency food services and conducted a basic screening to determine whether they could be eligible to receive food stamps. In 1990, Project Bread began conducting food stamp outreach for DTA after it was awarded a portion of the $75,000 the legislature earmarked for food stamp outreach. Project Bread used the money to help fund the hotline activities and also searched for low-cost advertising venues to promote the hotline. In 1993, funding for food stamp outreach rose to $350,000. In addition, DPH began managing food stamp outreach on behalf of DTA. DPH entered into a contract with Project Bread to implement a number of statewide social marketing campaigns to promote the FSP. As a result, Project Bread began promoting the FSP through such media as radio, television, newspapers, billboards, and transit posters. DPH also decided to involve five other organizations to train local groups and agencies to screen clients for the FSP and to make presentations to potential FSP applicants and those that serve them. Project Bread was asked to train and manage the five contractors.

In 1998, DPH awarded Project Bread a multiyear contract to continue conducting food stamp outreach services. Under the contract, Project Bread provides hotline callers with information on FSP eligibility rules, the application process, and emergency food resources. The hotline staff also prescreen applicants over the phone and distribute applications to callers deemed eligible for the program. If clients encounter administrative barriers when they apply for food stamps, Project Bread staff contact DTA to determine how the barriers can be overcome. In order to accommodate non-English speakers, Project Bread hired bilingual staff for the hotline and opened an account with AT&T's language line that provides translation services in 145 languages.

In addition, Project Bread continues to help local groups develop community-based outreach. Staff from Project Bread recruit local service providers to distribute food stamp outreach literature and train them to make presentations to prospective applicants, prescreen applicants, and assist them in completing food stamp applications. While these efforts are targeted to

the broad food stamp-eligible population, special efforts are made by Project Bread to target the elderly and immigrants.

Other State-Level Efforts To Improve Program Access

In order to accommodate the needs of working clients, DTA expanded office hours in four local DTA offices. The offices were chosen because officials believed that they had the resources to handle the extended hours. In May 2000, the Pittsfield office, located in Western Massachusetts, the Lawrence office, which serves a large urban area with a large public assistance program, and the Davis Square office in Summerville began operating from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. In addition, the Pittsfield and Davis Square offices stay open until 7 p.m. once a week. In July 2000, a fourth office, the Roslindale office in Boston, also started operating from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. Unlike the other offices, the Roslindale office serves clients from all three DTA offices in Boston. Since it has limited access to information housed at the other three offices, the Rosindale office cannot offer full-scale eligibility services. However, staff members do accept applications and verification documents from clients that are later forwarded to the appropriate office. A number of clients have taken advantage of these extended hours.

Challenges Identified by State Officials

The interviewees all felt that the outreach services offered through the F.O.R. Families Program and by Project Bread were effective. When asked about challenges they had encountered while promoting access to the FSP, they pointed to broader systematic issues.

- Massachusetts works with many nonprofit community-based organizations to improve access to the FSP. They are used to helping clients complete applications and to make presentations promoting the FSP. Respondents felt they could increase the number of FSP clients by using these organizations to enroll applicants, but noted that the role of these organizations is currently limited in order to assure that eligibility decisions are made by DTA employees.

- States have been told to keep their error rate down while increasing access to the FSP. Respondents noted that, at times, it has been difficult to achieve both goals. This is because States that undertake efforts to improve access to the FSP may end up with higher error rates. In addition, officials felt that under-issuance should not count toward the error rate.

- Many clients do not realize that they remain eligible to receive food stamps even though they are no longer eligible for cash assistance under TAFDC. Respondents noted that efforts need to be made to differentiate eligibility rules in both programs.

Findings From Interviews With Direct Service Providers

This section includes information obtained from interviews with staff that operate the various outreach efforts at the local level. There are two different food stamp outreach efforts in Massachusetts, one operating through the F.O.R. Families Program and one conducted by Project Bread. Findings from interviews conducted with staff from each of these programs and local DTA staff are included in this section.

The F.O.R. Families Program

The majority of F.O.R. Families staff in the Boston region are employed by the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) and work out of the BPHC offices. However, the Regional Resource Specialist is employed by DPH and works out of a separate office. All communication between the resource specialist and the home visitors occurs by phone or fax. The F.O.R. Families program conducts a number of outreach activities designed to help individuals maintain their FSP eligibility. These efforts are discussed below.

Serving Clients Through the Hotline. As noted earlier, the F.O.R. Families program maintains toll-free hotlines in order to provide potential FSP applicants with easy access to information about enrolling in the FSP. The F.O.R. Families hotline operated in the Boston region is different from hotlines in other parts of the State because it is part of a general health services hotline. The Boston region hotline operates from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, but clients also may leave messages for staff if they call when the office is closed. The Resource Specialist is responsible for staffing the hotline. DTA caseworkers are responsible for informing clients about the hotline before they lose their TAFDC. The hotline number is also included in a notice clients receive from DTA regarding the termination of their benefits.

When a call comes in, the Resource Specialist begins the conversation by gathering contact information

using a standard assessment form. Information collected includes citizenship status, employment status, family size, education level, race, marital status, and primary language. Over the course of the conversation, the Resource Specialist documents whether the caller has questions concerning housing, health, food, income or employment, and social services or family relations. He/she also documents whether the caller questioned why TAFDC benefits were not extended. If the caller is currently in a crisis situation, information regarding the circumstances is recorded, and clients are asked whether they are concerned about safety, domestic violence, housing, food, health care, emotional stress, depression, or financial stress. This information is provided to the Regional Coordinator, who then assigns the caller a home visitor.

Respondents noted that, in many cases, clients are in a desperate state by the time they contact the office. Many callers report not having enough food to eat, having trouble paying the rent, or being unable to cover the cost of utilities. If callers are not receiving food stamps, they are encouraged to apply and often are referred to Project Bread to receive assistance with the application. The Regional Resource Specialist in Boston often advocates on behalf of the callers. For example, if a client's landlord is threatening eviction, she will attempt to intervene by contacting the landlord herself.

If a non-English-speaking individual contacts the hotline, the Resource Specialist first determines if the caller's language is Spanish; if so, he/she enlists the help of another public health employee in the building who can translate for Spanish-speaking clients. If the caller speaks a language other than English or Spanish, the Resource Specialist refers the person to the Boston Public Health Commission, where staff has access to translation services.

Following Up on Referrals. Each month the Boston F.O.R. Families office receives a list of clients that have failed to recertify for food stamps, along with their contact information. The Resource Specialist contacts the clients on the list to determine why they did not complete the recertification process. Resource Specialists must make three attempts to reach each client, and through the use of an assessment form each call is documented. Over the course of the conversations, it is determined whether the clients are receiving food stamps, and if not, whether they need food stamps and any reasons for their not continuing participation in the FSP. If Resource Specialists determine that a home visit is needed, they gather the demographic information noted earlier and document responses on the assessment form. Any referrals made over the telephone, such as to emergency food providers, are also noted. A week later, the Resource Specialist calls the client to determine if he/she was able to access the FSP. However, respondents report that in many cases, the client has not followed through with the application process. If this is the case, the client is referred to Project Bread in order to receive assistance with completing the application process. The Resource Specialist also passes the client's name and contact information over to the Regional Coordinator, who assigns the case to a home visitor.

Respondents felt that, for the most part, clients react positively to calls from the Resource Specialist. Many clients feel overwhelmed by their problems and need someone to simply listen to what they are going through. The Resource Specialists are empathetic, and clients are often willing to trust them.

Home Visits. Once clients are selected for home visits, their names and contact information are forwarded to home visiting staff. Home visitors initially contact their clients by mail. After the letters are sent, the home visitors make telephone calls to the client to try and arrange a visit. If a home visitor is unable to reach a client after three phone attempts or if the client does not have a phone, the visitor usually goes to the client's home. If the client is not at home when the home visitor first attempts to make contact, the visitor leaves a F.O.R. Families brochure and a note saying that he/she stopped by. If not successful in making contact with the client, the home visitor must attempt to reach the client two additional times. If still unable to contact the client, by phone or through visits, the home visitor often calls the DTA caseworker to verify contact information.

After successfully contacting the client by phone, the home visitor attempts to set up an initial home visit. Respondents noted that most clients agree to the visits, though some are initially reluctant to deal with staff from another State agency or to allow someone they do not know to come into their home.

During the initial meeting, home visitors use an assessment tool to help determine the barriers faced by the clients. The assessment tool covers questions in five categories: housing and environment, family health, family food and nutrition, economics, and social supports. Each area includes a checklist that

must be reviewed with the client. Each item on the checklist is rated with an intensity level, which ranges from 0 to 4. The higher the intensity level, the less stable the client is in that area. For example, to assess housing and environment, the home visitor must determine if the client: (1) owes back rent, (2) is facing eviction, (3) has trouble paying for fuel or utilities, (4) has safety concerns, or (5) has received emergency assistance in the past. The intensity levels are summed for each category to get an overall rating for clients' well-being in each area.

Once the assessment is complete, the information is used to determine which course of action the home visitor will recommend in order to assist the client. These recommendations are customized to the specific needs of the client. For example, clients who are unable to pay their gas bill will be linked to different services than clients who have been issued an eviction notice. The course of action and recommendations are then discussed with the client and documented on the assessment form.

In order to assess client needs in the food and nutrition area, home visitors ask clients whether they (1) are receiving food stamps, (2) have access to a food pantry, (3) are enrolled in WIC (when appropriate), and (4) have children enrolled in the School Food Service or Summer Meals Programs. In addition, they try to assess the client's overall food security status through asking a series of open-ended questions.

Home visitors are required to maintain contact and to follow up on their clients for a period of 1 year. The amount of contact during that time varies, based on client needs. During the year, the home visitors are required to contact their clients a minimum of five times after the initial home visit. Depending on the need, however, the home visitor may make contact several times a week for short periods or make a single contact each month to determine the client's status and whether further assistance is needed.

Client Contact. Home visitors reported that most of their contact with clients has been very positive. In many cases, clients are reluctant to open up during the initial home visits, but are quick to see the value of utilizing the home visitor's skills and access to resources. Home visitors noted that making clients feel comfortable is often the key to a successful visit. If clients feel that they can trust the home visitor, they are not only willing to allow the home visitor to conduct the assessment, but are also more likely to follow up on the recommendations or referrals made during the visit.

Respondents noted that some clients are angry over the fact that they are no longer eligible to receive cash assistance. However, since the home visit usually takes place soon after clients leave TAFDC, the majority of clients are not yet facing a financial crisis, as many of their expenses are still being covered by their last TAFDC check. Providing clients with information to help them prepare for the subsequent months, when they will not have their TAFDC check to help cover expenses, is an important role for the home visitor. Respondents noted that paying rent becomes a particularly stressful issue when the household share of Section 8 housing costs increase because they are working.

All of the home visitors have encountered non-English-speaking clients. To accommodate their needs, the home visitors use translators that are either located within their office or provided by the State. While some non-English-speaking clients have relatives that are willing to translate for them, this practice is not encouraged as clients may be unwilling to raise certain issues in the presence of a family member.

All of the home visitors said they refer their clients to a wide range of services, most commonly to area food banks and the FSP. Other services to which clients are referred include MassHealth, in order to obtain free health insurance for up to a year, DTA for childcare vouchers, the Department of Revenue for child support services, and Legal Services to address issues related to housing. In addition, home visitors noted that they sometimes make referrals to such services as domestic violence intervention, substance abuse and housing services, and GED classes.

Project Bread

This section includes information from a group interview that was conducted with Project Bread staff responsible for food stamp outreach. The respondents included the food stamp outreach manager, a FoodSource Hotline worker, an outreach worker, and a legislative advocate.

Piloting Food Stamp Outreach at Health Centers. Project Bread received a grant from the Department of Health and Human Services in August 2000 to implement a pilot program to provide food stamp outreach in health centers. This outreach effort was developed

on the premise that hunger and access to food assistance is a health-related concern, and should be addressed through a comprehensive health care setting.

The program has been operating in three cities: Fall River, Lawrence, and Boston. Outreach workers prescreen clients to determine whether they are eligible to receive food stamps. They help clients to complete applications, determine which verifications are required, and assist with making copies of required documents. The outreach workers send completed applications to DTA and contact caseworkers to make sure applications are not missing any required documents. If caseworkers need additional verification, they immediately send clients a list of the missing documents.

A number of resources are available to better serve clients who do not speak English. Project Bread hires bilingual staff, the health centers have translators available, and the outreach workers have access to a language line, when needed. Having access to these resources has made the application process less confusing for non-English-speaking clients. Staff believe that the outreach services offered through the pilot program have helped to eliminate language barriers that have kept people from applying for food stamps.

DTA staff have been very supportive of the food stamp outreach pilot project. They have trained Project Bread's food stamp administrator, who went on to train outreach workers at the health centers. DTA also has designated one worker in each local office in the pilot cities to address eligibility questions outreach workers might have. The pilot was targeted to end in October 2000, but one of the health centers will continue to offer food stamp outreach once a week, using graduate students.

Reporting Requirements. Project Bread is required to provide DPH with monthly summaries of its outreach activities. Each month staff prepare reports containing the number of calls received through the hotline, the number of callers that requested general information, the number of callers that requested food stamp information, and the number of followup calls made. The report also includes the number of orders taken for pamphlets and the number of agencies that contacted the hotline for technical assistance. Data are also reported on the number of non-English-speaking individuals calling the hotline, as well as information on the age of the callers. Finally, staff also report on the number of clients that were prescreened and the number who were deemed eligible and were sent applications. For callers deemed ineligible, the project documents the reasons for the determination.

Evaluations. In FY 1998, Project Bread conducted a survey at the request of DPH to determine whether callers were satisfied with the services they received through the FoodSource Hotline. Project Bread developed the survey and administered it to 150 callers. Ninety-nine percent of those surveyed felt that the hotline was a valuable service. Ninety-three percent said they received information that was useful to their situation. All of the respondents reported being treated with respect. The respondents also found the hotline accessible. Fifty-nine percent said they received immediate assistance when they called the hotline. Ten percent reported that they had experienced a wait time of 5 minutes.

Since 1997, Project Bread has conducted two evaluations with DTA and DPH to determine whether clients who are deemed eligible for the FSP actually do apply for and receive FSP benefits. The last evaluation took place from July 1997 to June 1998. During that time, Project Bread collected the names and social security numbers of callers who were thought to be eligible for food stamps and who requested food stamp applications over the phone. Each month, the names and social security numbers of approximately 75 of those clients were randomly selected and forwarded to DTA 90 days after the clients had called the hotline. The 3-month gap was used to ensure that there was enough time for applications to be submitted and processed. DTA then cross-referenced the names and social security numbers of the callers with its computer records to determine how many clients applied for benefits and were receiving benefits. It was assumed that callers whose social security numbers were absent from DTA records did not apply for food stamps.

During the last evaluation period, Project Bread forwarded 902 names and social security numbers to DTA. When social security numbers were cross-referenced with DTA records, 65 percent of the callers (588) did not appear in DTA's computer records, and thus had not applied for the FSP. Among the callers that did apply, 86 percent received food stamps and 14 percent were deemed ineligible.

Local DTA Staff

Of interest to this study was how local DTA staff worked with the two outreach efforts. This section

includes information from interviews with staff in two local DTA offices in Boston, the New Market office and the Roslindale office. The New Market office is the second largest office in Boston. It was created when the State consolidated three other area offices. The Roslindale office is the smallest office that serves clients in the Boston area. One supervisor and two caseworkers were interviewed in each office.

Overview of Local Operations. In addition to providing basic TAFDC, FSP, and Medicaid eligibility services, DTA also provides transitional services and postemployment services to TAFDC clients and former TAFDC clients through the Employment Services Program (ESP). Since Massachusetts currently uses a generic worker model to provide TAFDC services, individual TAFDC workers are responsible for providing all services related to eligibility, case management, and employment. The employment services responsibilities include developing employment plans, linking clients to employment resources, and encouraging clients to participate in employment and training services. The local offices also have food stamp-only workers. Staff at both offices said the caseloads carried by food stamp-only workers increased significantly after welfare reform.

Roles and Responsibilities. Roles and responsibilities at the New Market and Roslindale offices follow:

- ***New Market Office.*** During the site visit to the New Market office, it was noted that the office has experienced difficulty keeping food stamp-only caseworkers employed because their caseloads are so high. Just prior to the site visit, the office had lost 1 food stamp-only worker who was carrying a caseload of 220 to 250 clients. In contrast, the caseload for TAFDC workers ranges from 100 to 110. It was noted that with welfare reform, the characteristics of the food stamp caseload changed. The program now attracts more elderly people, immigrants, SSI recipients, and people who are employed.

  The TAFDC caseworkers are responsible for providing eligibility and case management services to TAFDC clients. They also are responsible for food stamp certifications for TAFDC clients. The majority of TAFDC clients also receive food stamps through either the Federal or State-run program. When clients reach their 2-year time limit, caseworkers are required to inform them of their possible continuing eligibility for food stamps. If they believe that clients will not follow up on continued FSP participation once they have reached their time limit, the client is to be referred to the F.O.R. Families program.

  After a client loses the TAFDC benefit, caseworkers continue to carry that case for a month, and then pass it along to a food stamp-only caseworker. The caseworkers are also responsible for completing food stamp recertifications in the first month. Respondents noted that determining benefits for households with some members that qualify for State food stamps and others that qualify for Federal food stamps can be extremely confusing.

  One of the primary responsibilities of the caseworker is to help TAFDC clients find work and obtain training. When clients enter their second year on TAFDC, caseworkers review their client status every month to make sure that they are progressing towards self-sufficiency.

- ***Roslindale Office***. Staff in the Roslindale office have duties similar to those in the New Market Office. The Roslindale office has 900 food stamp-only cases in the office, which are divided among 9 workers. The office staff reported receiving a number of food stamp referrals from Project Bread, Catholic Charities, refugee resettlement organizations, and elderly outreach programs.

  Caseworkers noted that in some instances, workload has increased since welfare reform even though caseloads have fallen. This is because the scope of their jobs has increased. In addition to normal TAFDC eligibility determination activities, caseworkers are also now responsible for employment services as well as for referring clients to the F.O.R. Families Program. In addition, caseworkers may continue to carry a client's case as a "food stamp only" case for 1 year after TAFDC eligibility ends.

Food Stamp Recertification. After clients lose their TAFDC benefits, they have 30 days to be recertified for food stamps. The staff at the local offices noted that clients are informed of the recertification deadline during their exit interview, along with being provided with information about other services available. In most cases, clients do not want to take time to go through the food stamp recertification process, but some are willing return to the office in order to apply for transitional childcare services. When clients return to the office to request childcare services, their caseworker reminds them that they are still eligible to receive food stamps.

DTA is trying to make the food stamp application process easier to complete. Clients are now allowed to request an application through the mail. They can also return their application through the mail instead of dropping it off at an office. In order to promote participation in FSP, food stamp outreach workers have also been stationed at the Social Security office, health centers, and housing facilities for the elderly. Before their application is approved, potential clients have to attend a face-to-face interview, although this can be waived for elderly and disabled clients.

Referrals to F.O.R. Families. The TAFDC workers noted that they often refer clients to the F.O.R. Families Program before they lose their TAFDC benefit. Clients are referred to the program if they do not have a plan for how they will transition off welfare or if their extension request for continued TAFDC benefits is denied. The referrals are faxed to the F.O.R. Families regional office, and staff from the F.O.R. Families Program follow up with the caseworker. Neither of the two local offices is tracking the number of former TAFDC participants who later reapply for the FSP through a referral from the F.O.R. Families Program.

Project Bread. All of the local DTA staff interviewed have a high regard for the outreach services provided through Project Bread. Respondents noted that Project Bread is responsible for referring a significant number of applicants to their office. Project Bread also helps clients gather verifications that are necessary for completion of the application process. If information is missing, caseworkers send clients a checklist indicating which documents they need to provide along with a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Staff at the New Market office said Project Bread played an instrumental role in establishing the Saturday office hours and gathered input for the health center pilot program from their office. In addition, Project Bread staff met with the supervisor at the Rosindale office to develop a checklist for food stamp applications. The interviewees said that Project Bread became more visible after welfare reform due, in part, to its social marketing campaigns. Staff at both offices make referrals to Project Bread, particularly in cases where clients are ineligible for food stamps, so they can benefit from area food pantries and food banks.

Challenges Identified by Staff in Local Outreach Offices

The F.O.R. Families staff interviewed believe that the program is a success because it is not invasive and links clients with resources that help them obtain self-sufficiency. Staff said the program has increased awareness of and participation in the FSP. Without the F.O.R. Families Program, many clients would not know that they were eligible for food stamps. The staff also pointed out some barriers that still need to be addressed:

- Respondents noted that some clients report negative experiences when applying for and receiving public assistance benefits. As a result, some clients may be distrustful of the social service delivery system. When staff from the F.O.R. Families Program contact these clients, they are reluctant to accept help because they have had negative experiences with DTA in the past and are now distrustful of agencies associated with the welfare system.

- DTA caseworkers are supposed to inform clients that they may remain eligible for food stamps when their TAFDC benefits are discontinued. According to some respondents, clients report that that they were not told they would still be eligible for FSP benefits. Additionally, clients have reported that they have not received food stamp recertification forms in the mail as they were supposed to; in some cases, by the time they do receive them there is not enough time to reapply in order to prevent a break in service.

- Home visitors carry a large caseload, ranging from 90 to 140 cases. Managing so many cases can be overwhelming, especially if a large portion of the clients have significant problems, as these cases tend to be very labor intensive. Home visitors suggested that if the resource specialists could be responsible for parts of low-intensity cases, such as making calls on behalf of clients, their workload would ease up. That would allow home visitors to work more closely with clients with multiple barriers.

- As mentioned earlier, the F.O.R. Families hotline for the Boston region is unique because it takes calls for several programs, including MassHealth, Healthy Start, and FirstLink, in addition to calls from F.O.R. Families clients. As a result, the Resources Specialist

has to be knowledgeable about a wide array of programs and services. At times, it can be overwhelming to be responsible for so much information.

Project Bread staff believes there is much to be done in the aftermath of welfare reform to ensure people are not going hungry. A major concern is the dramatic fall in food stamp participation in Massachusetts. The staff brought up the following problems when asked about issues that have yet to be addressed:

- The rules governing the SSFSP and the Federal FSP are complicated and can be confusing. The confusion often increases when caseworkers have to certify members of the same family for both programs. This occurs when some members are eligible for or receiving State food stamps while others are eligible for or receiving Federal food stamps. DTA workers often try to solve the problem by requiring all family members to bring in the same verifications, even if they are not required to do so under the rules of both programs. This approach causes confusion and can put an undue burden on the client.

- Administrators in Massachusetts pay considerable attention to fraud prevention. One byproduct of this is that the FSP pays a large amount of attention to preventing fraud during the initial client orientation. According to some respondents, this focus on fraud prevention may deter clients from completing the application process. Respondents noted that clients have informed them that because of this focus, they feel like they are treated with suspicion during the application process.

The staff at the local DTA offices felt as though the food stamp outreach services provided by the F.O.R. Families Program and Project Bread were successful. They said that Project Bread was particularly effective at increasing the number of applications coming into their office. They raised the following policy-related issues that they felt needed to be addressed in order to improve access to the FSP:

- Face-to-face recertification interviews can be problematic for clients who are working or who have children. Respondents suggested that elimination of the face-to-face interview requirement would increase FSP participation.

- Some respondents felt that outreach services to the elderly should be increased. The elderly are less likely to seek out the FSP, and outreach efforts directed to them, while often needing to be more intensive in nature, may help to bring them in for certification.

- Respondents also believe that the State should make more of an effort to help the elderly meet their food needs. Staff believe this could be done if there were a way to increase or supplement the minimum food stamp benefit from the current level of $10 per month.

Texas

Overview of Re-engineering Effort

Texas was selected as one of the six case study States because it established a centralized system for food stamp and other social service program clients to report changes in their eligibility status. These "change centers" are located in the Arlington, Beaumont, Houston, and San Antonio regions and are designed to allow participants to telephone in changes that may affect their eligibility status within programs. The change centers provide clients with access to State program staff, known as "change agents," who make every attempt to verify and document the reported changes while the client is on the telephone. Change agents have the same job description and basic training as regular eligibility workers in local field offices, but receive additional training in change center procedures and customer service. The centers serve TANF recipients, food stamp clients, and children and pregnant women receiving Medicaid. The centers operate from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. In addition, the centers have telephone message systems that clients may use after hours. As a result, clients can report changes 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

This case study report summarizes findings from interviews that were conducted from September 11 to September 13, 2000. An interview was conducted with a Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS) staff person who spearheaded the development of the change center in San Antonio. TIERS, which includes the change center pilots, is a large automation and re-engineering program directed by the central headquarters of the Texas Department of Human Services (TDHS). At the regional level, the TDHS regional director, the assistant to the regional director, two case analysts, and the change center program manager were interviewed. Additionally, two supervisors and two advisors working at the change center were interviewed. To complete the process, supervisors, advisors, and case

readers located in two local TDHS offices served by the change center were interviewed. The San Antonio change center was chosen for closer examination because it was the first change center established in Texas. The local offices in Brighton and Sutton were chosen for site visits because they serve clients living in urban areas.

Food Stamp Program Administration

The FSP in Texas is a State-administered program. Overall program administration is conducted through the TDHS, with local services being provided by TDHS staff working in field offices throughout the State. Ten regional offices oversee the local offices. TDHS eligibility workers, known as advisors, are responsible for determining eligibility and conducting recertifications for food stamp, TANF, and Medicaid clients. Food stamp benefits are issued on a debit card called a Lone Star Card. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) oversees employment and training activities for the FSP. Rather than operate local field offices, the TWC funds services provided by local workforce development boards and one-stop career centers.

Findings From State and Regional Interviews

This section includes information gathered from the TIERS change center leader, who was the regional director when the change center was implemented in San Antonio. Also interviewed were the current TDHS regional director, the assistant to the regional director, two case analysts at the regional office, and the change center program manager.

Overview

The first change center was established in San Antonio, and was fully implemented in February 1997. It currently serves 38 local offices in 28 counties. The San Antonio region covers a diverse range of counties, including several on the Texas-Mexico border. In FY 2000, there were 48,982 food stamp households in the region. In addition to the San Antonio center, change centers have been opened in Beaumont, serving 15 counties in southeast Texas, and in the Houston region. The Houston change center serves only the city of Houston, although the region includes suburbs and several rural counties. Recently, a change center was opened in the Arlington region, which includes Dallas. The Arlington center currently serves 70 percent of the region.

History of San Antonio Change Center

The change center in San Antonio was born out of a move to integrate and streamline eligibility services for 15 health and human services programs through the Texas Integrated Enrollment Systems (TIES) initiative. In order to promote efficiency and customer service, the State opened bidding for eligibility services to private companies. TDHS entered into a partnership with two private organizations, EDS and UNISYS, and proposed the establishment of call centers[1] as part of its bid for the TIES contract. In 1997, the Clinton Administration ruled that private employees could not determine food stamp eligibility. In response to the ruling, the Texas legislature scaled back the TIES initiative so it included only the automation of the eligibility system. Because of the modifications to the TIES initiative, eligibility determination remained a function of TDHS. Re-engineering and automation efforts, including the change centers, continue under TIERS, the successor to the TIES initiative.

The bidding process for the TIES initiative made it clear that State jobs could be endangered in the future if TDHS did not become more competitive. As a result, TDHS began looking for ways to make their programs more efficient, provide better customer service to clients, and improve quality control. In 1997, the regional director of the TDHS office in San Antonio sought approval to implement a change center that clients could access to report changes. Local TDHS offices had a history of either failing to document changes reported by clients or noting them long after they were reported. Their inaction often adversely affected clients, who were forced to repay benefits that were incorrectly issued. It also increased the State's food stamp error rate. Inaction on the part of caseworkers led to "failure to act" and "failure to act timely" errors.

Reported changes were often ignored because documenting them was not the highest priority in local offices and because the reporting process was cumbersome. The unwritten rule that governed eligibility services was that client certifications and recertifications should take priority over change reporting. As a result,

[1]The proposed call center would have allowed clients to be certified and recertified over the telephone. USDA determined that, under FSP rules, applications and reviews must be done face-to-face, except in cases where recipients are eligible for SSI. Texas requested a waiver that would allow most of the interviews to be conducted over the telephone, with the "closing" interview to be done at local offices. Its waiver request was denied.

eligibility workers who were often overworked put off their change-reporting responsibilities. The procedures local offices used to document changes were also complicated. Clients could not report changes directly to their eligibility worker. Instead, they had to report changes by mail, telephone, or in person to a clerk at their local TDHS office. The clerk entered the changes into the computer system, and forwarded paperwork noting the change to the advisor handling the case. If verification documents were not provided when the change was reported, advisors would have to "pend" the case and send the client a letter requesting additional documentation. The reported change would then get filed until the client contacted the advisor or clerk with the proper documentation. When the client forwarded the documentation, the change would be noted.

The change center in San Antonio was designed to simplify the change reporting process for local TDHS staff and for clients. In 1997, program managers in the Brighton and Sutton TDHS offices in San Antonio, the two largest local offices in the region, began creating change-processing units with six to eight advisors each, under the direction of the regional office. The advisors in the new units, who became known as change agents, were responsible for documenting all changes clients reported to the local office. Other advisors in local TDHS offices remained in charge of completing certifications, but were no longer responsible for tracking client changes. The new division of labor allowed advisors to become experts in completing certifications and recertifications, while agents became experts in change reporting. It also created a staff whose top priority was documenting changes.

Staff in the local TDHS offices directed clients to report their changes to the change units by fax, mail, or over the telephone. When clients reported their changes by telephone, they were directly linked to a change agent. The agent documented their changes and attempted to verify them through a three-way call with a collateral contact. In the majority of cases, the changes were verified during the initial telephone call. When contacts could not be reached, the agents had the option of using client statements as the "best available information" or they could ask clients to send verification documents through the mail. Because so many verifications were done over the phone, the number of paper verifications that were required dropped sharply.

The change processing units were eventually consolidated and housed in the basement of the Sutton office building. The consolidation took roughly a year. The regional office then began drawing advisors from other urban and rural TDHS offices in the San Antonio region to work at the change center. The change center is currently staffed with over 50 change agents.

Sharing Case Files and Verification Documents

A virtual file sharing system is used to enable TDHS staff and change center staff to access and update client information stored in SAVERR, the Statewide computer system. Client information is first entered into SAVERR by local TDHS staff as part of the eligibility certification process. An online application form, known as the Generic Worksheet (GWS), is used to enter the information. Once the information is saved, it is automatically stored in SAVERR. At that point, case files are accessible to change center staff and local DHS staff.

In order to ensure that case files are not duplicated, the system requires that the case files be checked out to one worker at a time. If change center agents need to access a record that has been checked out to a TDHS worker at a local field office, they notify their customer service representative, who contacts the local office to find out why the record is being used and who is using it. If TDHS advisors need to access a record checked out to the change center, they contact a liaison (usually a supervisor) in the field office. The liaison then contacts the customer service representative at the change center to try to get the record released. This process often takes place when change center agents have to pend cases because they were unable to reach a collateral contact. It also takes place when clients are served a notice of adverse action because a change they reported affects their benefit level. When the latter occurs, agents must hold the case for a 13-day appeal period.

Since change center agents try to verify reported changes over the telephone, the number of paper documents clients have to provide has been significantly reduced. When change agents ask clients to provide verification documents, the documents are mailed or faxed to the change center. Once the documents are reviewed, they are forwarded to local offices, where they are filed. At this point, the only change center that maintains copies of verification documents is the

Beaumont change center. In Beaumont, the documents are scanned and filed on compact discs. Scanning technologies have been purchased for the other offices through the TIERS initiative and will be implemented in the near future.

Quality Control Initiatives

Several quality control initiatives were implemented in the San Antonio Region to reduce the food stamp error rate. A food stamp case reading project began in November 1998 to prevent certification errors. Local offices are required to read 100 percent of food stamp applications before processing and 50 percent of all recertification applications. The review of recertification applications includes high-risk cases, as defined by the program manager at each local field office. Under the project, each program manager must provide a monthly case-reading report to the regional office. In August 2000, the regional office added a validation process involving regional case analysts who review the results of food stamp case-reading procedures at the local office.

In September 1999, the regional office redefined food stamp certification periods. Local offices were provided with the new guidelines. One-month to 2-month certification periods were set for households facing unpredictable circumstances. This category includes households with an ABAWD who is reaching the 3-month time limit, households with a member whose alien eligibility status is about to change, and households with a member who applied for Unemployment Insurance Benefits but has not begun to receive them. A 3-month certification period was set for households with an employable adult who is unemployed or employed less than full time and does not meet the criteria defined for households facing the 1-month to 2-month certification period. Certification periods of 6 to 12 months were set for households with more stable conditions.

In March 1999, a recall project was implemented to reduce the number of changes that go unreported in the San Antonio Region. Through State error rate tracking, it was determined that the majority of unreported changes in the region occur during the first month after certification. To ensure that changes are acted upon in the first month, the region established a recall center at the change center with staff who are responsible for contacting food stamp clients in the four urban offices with the highest error rates a month after they are certified. The advisors take action on any changes that clients report in the first month. In order for the case to be tracked, clients must be receiving between $100 and $499 in monthly food stamp benefits.

Evaluation

In 1999, TDHS requested funding to expand the change centers statewide. The Texas legislature responded to the request by mandating that an evaluation of the change centers take place before granting funds. TDHS has been charged with overseeing an evaluation of existing centers. At the time of the interview, the department was in the planning phase of the evaluation and hoped to have it completed by the beginning of the next legislative session, February 2001. The evaluation will be based on data from all four of the change centers and cover a range of issues including customer satisfaction, accuracy, and timeliness.

Challenges Noted by State Officials

The State officials and the officials in the regional office all felt that the change center in San Antonio had improved eligibility services. It has made the reporting process more efficient by allowing clients to deal with one worker and has improved customer service by putting clients directly in touch with change agents. Roughly 70 percent of the clients are able to report their change with one telephone call. In addition, supervisors monitor calls to ensure clients are being treated with respect. Also, because agents and advisors have been allowed to specialize, fewer changes go unreported. Nonetheless, there were still some problems and challenges the officials would like to see addressed.

- The interviewees would like to see the wait time that clients experience when they call the center reduced. When the change center first opened, clients were kept on hold for 30 to 45 minutes before their call was transferred to a change agent. The wait time was reduced to 1 minute and 15 seconds, but it has been steadily increasing because of job vacancies. Officials indicated that they need to address this issue to ensure that clients keep calling the center.

- Some policies were written with the assumption that change reporting would take place at the field office where clients and workers meet face-to-face. For example, if reported changes affect benefit levels or cause clients to become ineligible for food stamps, they receive a “notice of adverse action” and are told

that they have 13 days to appeal. Under existing rules, clients may waive their right to appeal during the 13-day period if they are in their worker's presence. Because all interactions at the change center take place over the telephone, the policy had to be interpreted by field staff. The interpretation used by the change center allowed clients to waive the action over the telephone and, as a result, have the change processed immediately. But during a State review, it was determined that under the existing policy, clients could only waive their right to appeal in the presence of a worker. The interpretation has increased the workload for change center staff, who can no longer process the change through one telephone call. The change center has submitted a waiver request to the State office requesting that the requirement be waived in San Antonio.

- When the change centers were first established, some local offices resisted relinquishing change reporting responsibilities. Once the functions were removed, the staff saw their local offices and the change centers as completely separate entities. But both offices must work in tandem for eligibility services to be seamless. Most caseworkers are willing to work with the change center now because it has made their lives easier, but some still need to be reminded that good customer service requires cooperation.

- Change center agents were pulled from the pool of TDHS advisors, but the skills that make a good advisor are not the same skills that make a good agent. The State needs to create a new job description for the change agents so the distinctions are better understood. The same holds true for supervisors who work in local offices and supervisors at the change center. The change center uses a "matrix management" style and requires supervisors to manage workers as a team, unlike local TDHS offices, which assign supervisors their own unit.

- There are major differences in the way the four change centers operate because they were established in different regions under different management. For example, the Beaumont change center still uses clerks to answer telephones rather than transmitting calls directly to change agents. State officials want to see things standardized so services are consistent when the centers are eventually expanded statewide.

Findings From the San Antonio Change Center

This section includes information gathered from the program manager who oversees the San Antonio change center. Two change center supervisors who oversee the change reporting process and two change center agents who respond to incoming calls from clients reporting changes were also interviewed.

Overview

The change center in San Antonio is located in the basement of the Sutton office building. It was modeled after the call center of the QVC Shopping Channel, which is one of many corporate call centers that were established in San Antonio after Southwestern Bell installed fiber optics across the city in the early 1990s. When TDHS first consolidated the change units from the Brighton and Sutton offices to form the change center, many of the agents were employed part-time at the QVC call center. Because the call center was a popular place to work, senior staff at the change center contacted management at QVC Shopping Channel to learn more about their business practices. TDHS staff developed a rapport with the management at QVC. QVC staff worked with TDHS staff to set up the change center and to train change center agents.

Organization

The change center is responsible for documenting client-generated changes and agency-generated changes that affect food stamp, TANF, or Medicaid benefits. Two call arenas and five specialized centers were established to carry out those duties. The call arenas house all of the change agents. Each arena is equipped with a running board that charts the number of callers on hold, the number of callers that requested services in English or in Spanish, and the average wait time. One arena contains a "super cube" that is equipped with a computer that tracks the status of all incoming calls. The supervisor on floor duty occupies the super cube. The other arena contains a cube that houses the customer service representative. The customer service representative functions as the liaison between the change center and the local offices. All of the change agents sit in cubes that are equipped with telephones and computers. Because of the proximity of the super cube, they can easily access a supervisor

when they have questions. During the core hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., there are 30 to 45 agents in the call arenas. Roughly 40 percent of the agents speak Spanish.

The technical center was developed to process agency-generated changes that result from database matches or reports, including SSI and social security match reports from other States, and reports on incarcerated household members. The technical center staff are also in charge of documenting new-hire reports. Over 6,000 new-hire reports are generated each month. Before they are documented, the reports are forwarded to clerical units in the Eagle Pass and Del Rio offices so they can be screened. New-hire reports that need to be documented for change reporting are referred back to the technical center in San Antonio. The technical center also processes TANF sanctions for the State, as well as cases that have been put on hold due to unclaimed or returned mail. Staff are also responsible for processing cases with clients transferring off TANF who are eligible for transitional Medicaid. The technical center is staffed with an assistant supervisor and seven technicians.

The clerical center monitors pending cases to ensure that actions are taken before their due dates. The center receives all agency-generated reports and is responsible for distributing them to change agents, the technical center, or units in the Eagle Pass or Del Rio offices. The center also maintains paper logs on all cases and uses them to track down information when there are inquiries about a case or disputes surrounding a case. The clerical center is also responsible for preparing and distributing written notices that are sent to clients to confirm that reported changes were made or to request that additional documents be provided. The clerical center is staffed with a supervisor, an assistant supervisor, and eight clerks.

The recall center is responsible for implementing a regional initiative to track error-prone cases 1 month after recertification. Staff at the recall center contact error-prone clients and take action on any changes that they report in the first month. Clients must receive between $100 and $499 in monthly food stamp benefits for their case to be tracked by the recall center. The recall center is staffed with a supervisor, assistant supervisor, and four advisors who handle between 400 and 700 cases each month.

The completion center was established in response to a review of practices used by the change center. Before the review, the change center was allowing clients to waive their right to appeal an adverse action over the telephone. But, as was noted above, the State determined that the practice violated existing policy. The change center was directed to place the case in a pending file for the 13-day period. As a result, the center began pending all adverse action cases. The new policy interpretation significantly increased the change center workload because clients facing an adverse action could no longer be served through one telephone call. The completion center now processes all pending cases.

The policy support center is responsible for staying up-to-date on policy changes and interpreting policy for staff at the change center. They train staff, track data for the change center, and conduct case reviews.

Roles

The roles of supervisors, agents, and customer service representatives are as follows:

Supervisors. The change center has five supervisors who are responsible for managing the call arenas. They are part of a matrix management team that oversees all of the change agents, unlike supervisors in local TDHS offices that oversee their own units. At the time of the visit, each supervisor had floor duty for 3 hours a day. During that time, the supervisor oversaw all incoming calls, responded to questions from agents, and silently monitored select calls to ensure that agents were providing strong customer service. The supervisors are also responsible for conducting yearly evaluations, quarterly reviews, and case readings. They also have other individual management responsibilities at some of the centers. One supervisor manages the clerical center, another the technical center, and a third the local computer system, while a fourth oversees the recall center.

Agents. At the time of the interviews, there were 53 change agents responding to client calls. The change agents do not carry a caseload like advisors in local offices. Instead, each day a certain number of calls are routed to them based on their availability. During peak time, agents may not be able to respond to clients immediately. As a result, clients encounter a wait time of up to 15 minutes. Informational messages about the change centers and welfare reform are played during the wait time.

Agents follow specific steps when responding to clients' calls. They begin each call by greeting the

client and requesting the client's name and social security number. They enter the social security number into SAVERR so they can access the electronic file. They ask the caller what changes he/she wants to report and enter the changes into the case file. Then agents attempt to verify the change through a three-way call with a collateral contact. In 75 percent of the cases, they are able to verify the change while they have their client on the telephone. If change agents are unable to reach the collateral contact, they may either use the client's statement as the best available information and process the change or request that verification documents be sent to the change center. If further documentation is requested, agents send clients a "notice of delay in eligibility" form with a return envelope. The client has 10 days to respond. The agents then "pend" the case. At the end of the day, all of the pended cases are moved to supervisors' open cases. When call volumes and wait times are high, agents document reported changes on paper to avoid spending time bringing up electronic files and initiate calls to collateral contacts without having clients wait on the telephone.

Customer Service Representatives. The change center has one customer service representative who serves as a liaison between the center and local TDHS offices. All contact between local TDHS offices and the change center are routed between the local office liaisons, typically supervisors, and the customer service representative. The customer service representative interacts with local field office liaisons when change agents and local office advisors must share virtual case records. The representative also handles customer service questions and complaints. Agents may transfer calls to the customer service representative or provide the caller with the customer service representative's number and e-mail address.

Quality Control

The change center reviews food stamp cases through floor reviews and case readings. All reported changes that affect food stamp benefits are reviewed before they are processed through floor reviews. Floor reviews take place after change agents document and verify reported changes. To indicate that a case is ready for review, agents stand up in their cubes. While clients are still on the telephone, case reviewers or case readers look over the computer screens that include information on household composition, income, and deductions. These items are reviewed because they have historically caused the most errors. The reviewers also check the management screen that lists household income and expenses side-by-side. If cases are free of errors, change agents process them. If errors are found, the agent corrects them and notifies the client of the changes.

Each month approximately 650 cases are reviewed after they are processed through case readings. The case readings are much more comprehensive than the floor reviews because the cases are read in their entirety. Each month, case readers review a sample of 250 cases drawn from the pool of cases that were processed. In addition, supervisors review three cases from the pool of cases change agents processed that month. The cases are then further reviewed by case analysts at the regional office. The case analysts read five cases that were read by each supervisor and five cases reviewed by each case reader.

Findings From Local Department of Human Services Offices

Researchers visited two local TDHS offices in San Antonio to learn how they process food stamp applications and inform clients of the change center. At each office, they interviewed supervisors, eligibility workers (called "advisors"), technicians, and case readers. This section summarizes findings from the interviews.

Overview

The Sutton office and the Brighton offices are both located in San Antonio. The Sutton office is located on the east side of the city, close to downtown. It serves clients living in the east and northeast sections of San Antonio and clients living downtown. Its caseload is currently 4,710 food stamp households. The Brighton office is located on the south side of the city and serves clients living in the same area. Its caseload is currently 6,332 food stamp households. The staff in the local offices are responsible for carrying out initial certifications and recertifications for TANF clients, food stamp clients, and children and pregnant women receiving Medicaid. There is some variation in the way the local offices are organized and in the way they administer eligibility services, described below.

- ***Brighton Office.*** There are five ongoing units at the Brighton office responsible for overseeing food stamp certifications and recertifications. Each unit is staffed with a supervisor, an assistant supervisor, approximately 10 advisors, and a certification technician. The office also has an administrative unit with a supervisor, seven front desk clerks, two case

analysts, four case readers and a risk assessment unit with two eligibility examiners, and two verification technicians.

When clients walk into the Brighton office to apply for food stamps, they receive an application from a front desk clerk. While they are in the lobby, they may view a bilingual video about DHS services that provides an overview of the change center. After they complete the application, the clerk screens it to determine whether they are eligible for expedited food stamps. If they do not qualify for them, the clerk schedules an appointment with an advisor. Before the appointment, risk assessment unit staff use a data brokering system to verify the information clients provide on their application. They can assess information on property ownership, vehicle ownership, and marital status and access credit reports, which advisors use as case clues during the initial interview. At the initial meeting, the advisor informs clients about their rights and responsibilities, issues their Lone Star card, and notifies them about the change center. Clients receive a bilingual card with the telephone number and mailing address of the change center. They are also told that they can use the workstation to report changes. The workstation has a telephone, a fax machine, and a copier. All food stamp applications are forwarded to the administrative unit to be read before they are processed.

Clients who recertify for food stamps at the Brighton office are required to attend a group orientation meeting that is led by one of the advisors with the help of the administrative assistant. During the orientation, advisors review work rules and sanctions and remind clients to contact staff at the change center to report changes. After the orientation, advisors meet with clients one-on-one to guide them through the certification process. After gathering verification documents and entering their information into SAVERR, advisors forward food stamp cases to the administrative unit to be reviewed. After the review, the cases are processed.

- ***Sutton Office.*** The Sutton office has four ongoing units. Each unit has a supervisor, from two to three assistant supervisors, from six to eight advisors, and a certification technician. There is also an administrative unit with a supervisor, two case analysts, three case readers, and three clerks. In addition, the Sutton office has a specialized unit with risk assessment staff (which includes one eligibility examiner and one verification technician) and support staff, including front desk clerks.

  Clients begin the certification process by submitting a completed application to a clerk who screens it to determine whether the case should be expedited. Clients then receive an appointment to talk with an advisor. Before they meet with their advisors, TANF and food stamp clients are required to attend an orientation session where they are provided with general information about work requirements, sanctions, and change reporting requirements and procedures. They receive a card with contact information for the center and a stamped envelope addressed to the change center that they can use to report changes. They are also told that they can use the workstation to report changes. After the orientation, clients meet with their advisor, who gathers verification documents, reviews specific information about their case, including when they will begin receiving benefits and how much they will receive, and answers client questions. Before the case is processed, a case reader in the specialized unit reviews it for accuracy.

  During the recertification process, clients meet with a certification technician who gathers and reviews their verification documents and recertification form. After the review, the technician forwards all of the paperwork to the advisor in charge of the case. The advisor enters the information into the client's case file in SAVERR. The advisor then forwards the case to the specialized unit where a case reader reviews it. After it is deemed to be error free, the case is returned to the advisor, who processes it.

Both local offices noted that they began using shorter recertification periods for food stamp clients in the fall of 1999. The shorter recertification periods, which were set by the regional office, are intended to reduce the number of unreported changes. Before that time, most food stamp clients were recertified every 6 months. Now, recertification periods for food stamp clients range from every month to every 12 months. Working clients with a fluctuating income are required to recertify every 3 to 6 months, depending on their expenses. Clients who are unemployed and lack stable housing must recertify every 1 to 2 months. Clients with a stable income and predictable expenses are allowed to recertify every 6 to 12 months. This group usually includes elderly recipients who are receiving SSI and are in good health. Most food stamp-only recipients are required to recertify every 3 months.

Quality Control

Each local office is required to review all certification applications before they are processed and 50 percent of the recertification applications. Depending on the local office, case readers or assistant supervisors conduct the reviews. The Sutton office has five case reader positions. Four of the positions are filled by assistant supervisors who rotate out of their units for 4-month periods to review cases. The fifth position is a full-time case reader who reviews cases year-round. At the present time, only three of the positions are filled because of staffing shortages. All completed food stamp cases are forwarded to the supervisor overseeing the case readers. The supervisor selects cases that need to be read and assigns them to the case readers. Case readers in the Sutton office try to read 25 cases per day. The Brighton office has two case analysts and four case readers. Between 225 and 250 cases are reviewed in the Sutton office each month.

A selected number of cases go through a second review after they are processed to ensure that advisors and supervisors catch errors. Each month supervisors in both local offices review five processed cases from each advisor's caseload to ensure that they were completed accurately. Five cases are pulled from each case reader's caseload and reviewed by the supervisor to ensure they are being reviewed accurately. The most common certification and recertification errors relate to three aspects of client eligibility: determination of household composition, calculation of household income, and determining the shelter deduction.

Client and Staff Response

Staff at both local offices said that clients were initially leery about using the change center. Since clients cannot go to the change center, they believed that the center was staffed with a bunch of operators rather than employees trained to take changes. In addition, they had established relationships with their advisors and staff at the local offices. The center, on the other hand, is set up so clients rarely interact with the same person. They did not see a need to involve another person in the change reporting process. Now most clients seem to enjoy using the change center because, unlike in the past, their changes are being documented. Each time they report a change, they receive a confirmation number and a letter in the mail. In addition, they no longer have to go into the local office to report a change. All they have to do is pick up their telephone. That is particularly important for clients who face transportation barriers.

TDHS staff reacted to the change center in different ways. Some staff embraced the change center because they felt it would reduce their workload. Other staff felt as though their cases were being given away. They wanted to see them through rather than hand them over to someone else. When the local offices began to lose staff to the change center, staff had mixed feelings. On the one hand, the change center was reducing their workload by taking on change reporting responsibilities. On the other hand, it was leading to staff reductions at the local offices and increasing their caseloads as a result.

The staff interviewed felt as though the change center made their jobs easier overall. They indicated that not having to track changes helped to offset the increased client monitoring they are required to do under PRWORA. It also eliminated the need to stay abreast of policy changes that are related to change reporting. The staff also said that advisors face fewer interruptions in their workday since they have been allowed to specialize.

Challenges Identified by Local Staff

The staff at the change center raised some of the same challenges that the State interviewees and regional staff pointed to when asked to list barriers they face. They noted that some policies were written for traditional caseworker-client interactions that occur in field offices rather than for services that are provided over the telephone, and they pointed to the confusion over the right to appeal an adverse action. They also said that staff in some local offices do not see the change center as part of TDHS and that this view disconnects the services offered at local field offices from those provided by the change center. They pointed to the following challenges:

- It is difficult to control workflow because of the variability in the number of calls that may come in on a given day. Because peaks are unpredictable, it is difficult for supervisors to assess staffing needs. If there are not enough agents in the call arena to handle the volume of calls, they document reported changes on paper and verify them later, rather than initiating a three-way call to verify changes on the spot and enter them into SAVERR. That approach can be frustrating because the underlying goal is to serve clients through one call.

- The change center generates a lot of paperwork because every change or request for information has to be documented in writing. The center purchased a bursting machine that is used to fold the notices. Use of this machine, however, requires clerks to spend a good deal of time inserting notices into envelopes. For a little more money, the center could have bought a machine that automatically prints the notices, folds them, and puts them into envelopes directly from the computer.

- The computers at the change center operate off of three local area networks (LANs). When one LAN crashes, it impacts the entire center. In August 2000, the computers were down off and on for 3 or 4 days. During that time, agents took changes manually and called clients back to complete the change reporting process.

The staff interviewed at the local offices felt the change center was successful. However, they cited two challenges that have arisen since its implementation:

- Staff in both offices said their workload had increased because they had lost workers to the change center. As mentioned earlier, the first units of the change center were composed of staff from the Brighton and Sutton offices. The staff from the units eventually moved to the change center settled in the Sutton building. Because they were never replaced, both offices have had to spread their work over a smaller pool of people.

- Staff indicated that accessing case files that have been checked out by change agents can be frustrating. Advisors cannot contact the change center directly. They have to go through their local office liaison with a request that the file be released. The liaison then contacts the customer service representative at the change center, who determines why the case is unavailable. In some instances, it takes a day or two to get a case from the change center.

Georgia

Overview of Re-engineering Category

With the advent of welfare reform in Georgia, State officials became concerned about the high level of certification errors in county-run social service programs. An investigation into the source of these errors found that most could be attributed to county-level caseworkers processing changes in client eligibility status outside of the approved processing timelines. In looking for solutions to this problem, Georgia officials decided to pilot a project that established a State-run change center to assume responsibility for helping the counties process and complete changes in client enrollment status.

This project was modeled after a similar project that is taking place in Texas. However, one key difference between the Georgia pilot and the Texas program is that Georgia administers its social service programs through local county government offices, while Texas administers its programs using State employees. Up until the development of the change center, Georgia State employees were not involved in the day-to-day operations of the Food Stamp Program (FSP). With the advent of the change center, the responsibility for ensuring that changes are correctly reported in the pilot counties became a State-level responsibility. The initial pilot county for the project, which began in 1999, was Fulton County, encompassing parts of Atlanta. During the first year, the pilot was expanded to seven more urban counties in the greater Atlanta area. Finally, in the year 2000, a rural county (Baldwin County) was added.

The purpose of this case study is twofold. First, the study is designed to provide information on the development and implementation of the change center and how the project affected county-administered programs. Second, the study was interested in whether or not the change center was effectively serving the needs of the pilot rural county. To gather information for this case study, interviews were conducted with the State FSP manager, the director of the change center, the administrator of the Baldwin County Economic Support program, and program supervisors and caseworkers in Baldwin County.

Food Stamp Program Administration

As noted above, Georgia administers its social service programs through county governments. State officials provide counties with policy direction for the FSP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Medicaid program, and operational responsibility for these programs rests with the counties. State officials noted that there is little difference between counties in the way the FSP is administered.

State staff responsible for overseeing these programs are located in a series of regional offices, which are called field areas. Georgia has divided its counties into

14 field areas, with a Field Area Administrator responsible for communicating and implementing program policy in each area. In addition, each field area has a number of program consultants who are responsible for helping county staff with policy questions, providing training on changes in policy, and monitoring program compliance with State regulations.

In 1999, counties in the Atlanta area were given the option of participating in the change center project. To fund the project, the State used funds that normally would have been returned to the U. S. Department of Agriculture as a result of the high error rate. Additionally, counties choosing to participate were required to transfer county-funded positions to the State for staffing purposes. Counties were initially requested to provide one position for every 5000 cases they managed. In turn, the change centers assumed all responsibility for recording and processing client status changes, including any error rates associated with the processing of those changes. The State plans to expand the pilot program in 2001, adding an additional change center to serve 70-80 smaller counties in southwest Georgia.

The organizational location of the change center is somewhat unique within Georgia's social service delivery system. The change center is not part of any particular field area, but exists as a separate entity. The change center is physically located in Atlanta, and uses State employees to staff the project. Clients who wish to report changes in their eligibility status are encouraged by the county caseworkers to telephone the change center. In addition, the center staff uses computer matching to identify potential client changes. When client records from the FSP are matched with data from other programs and potential changes in the client's eligibility status are identified, the change center staff take a proactive approach by contacting the clients to verify whether the change actually occurred. For example, staff use the Medicaid birth records database to match new births with FSP and TANF client records to determine if any infants should be added to the family record.

Findings From State Administrators

Background on Change Center Operations

As noted above, the change center started out serving clients residing in Fulton County, and then expanded to seven other urban counties in 1999. Baldwin County was added at the end of 1999 and was the first rural county in Georgia to be added. As previously noted, county programs were required to provide positions to staff the center. Each county was asked to identify appropriate positions within their organization at a civil service classification that could be used by the State for staffing the center. Because many of the civil service classifications used by the counties were consistent with those needed by the State, the position transfer process worked smoothly. However, it is important to note that individuals who may have occupied the positions at the county level were not transferred along with their positions. This fact was important to State officials, as the skills needed to work in the call center are different than those needed by local caseworkers.

The primary purpose of the change center is to record and document changes in eligibility status submitted by clients. Changes can be reported by a telephone call from a client or through a fax from a county caseworker. When a change is reported, it is the responsibility of the "change agents" to verify the change, collect documentation when needed, and process and record the change. In addition, a separate unit is responsible for recording and adding newborn infants to family records. Change agents are also responsible for matching client records with other social service databases, including Medicaid birth records and data from a "new-hires" database.

In January 1999, the change center began processing Fulton County changes, which involved 26,500 cases. In April, when the 7 additional counties were added, the center processed 63,500 cases. In September, when all of the counties were up and running, the total number of cases expanded to 119,500. This caseload continued to grow, and in March of 2000 the total number of cases processed by the center was 152,600.

The amount of time needed to respond to the calls averages about 4 to 5 minutes each. Most of the calls (55 percent) are related to the Medicaid program, with about 35 percent of the calls involving FSP changes and the remaining 10 percent being associated with TANF program issues. While the center is designed to be used by clients only for reporting changes, the change center supervisor reported that at least one-third of all calls are general inquiries about the FSP. When general calls are received, staff refer these clients to their local county programs.

Change Center Staffing

The change centers are primarily staffed with change agents. At the time of these case study interviews, there were a total of 30 change agents working in the center. A recent assessment of the staffing needs for the center indicated that current volume would support a total of 55 agents. In addition to the change agents, there are three supervisors and three program consultants representing each of the three social service programs and one quality control supervisor. The program consultants provide assistance to the supervisors and change agents with regard to policy questions, while the quality control supervisor reviews a limited number of client records each day to ensure that they were properly handled.

The change center director requested and received approval for adjusting the job specifications for the civil service classification used by the center. The original classifications transferred by the counties, while at the same salary range, often were tied to job specifications that related to employment services. The new job specifications focused more on the ability to manage cases over the telephone. However, many of the staff hired into the positions had not worked with a system that used telephone calls for reporting client information along with a computer system for processing and documenting changes.

On-the-job training is provided to staff by the supervisors. New staff are first assigned to a mentor, someone who has worked there for a while and is familiar with the system. The change center supervisor noted that the first 2 weeks are very hard for new employees, as they are often not prepared for the constant telephone calls. In addition, agents are required to finish up their cases on the same day the report comes in, so there is pressure to complete all of their cases, but at the same time not to let clients remain on hold for long periods of time.

Processing Client Changes

When a client first calls the change center, an automated answering system asks if they prefer to communicate in English or Spanish. The center maintains two Spanish-speaking agents to handle clients who wish to report in Spanish. Once the language of preference is established, the clients are asked if they wish to add a newborn infant to an existing family record or simply report another type of change. Clients are then transferred to the first available change agent, who will process and record the changes. Once the changes are recorded, the change agent will send the county caseworker handling the case an e-mail or fax notifying them of the change. Each county has a contact person responsible for working with staff at the change center to resolve any outstanding problems or issues.

Clients may report changes any time the center is open, which is from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays. The average time for each call runs 4 to 7 minutes. The center is equipped to handle up to 60 calls at a time, but current staffing is such that only 30 calls can be processed at a time. The computerized telephone system used by the agents includes a feature that tracks how long clients have been on hold waiting for an agent, which clients hang-up, and how long clients waited before they hung up. In addition, the system can tell supervisors how many clients are waiting at any given time. Through this system, supervisors can monitor the flow of work and pull more agents into telephone service when calls are heavy. While no formal client satisfaction system is in place, agents report that clients seem to like the system and have not had problems with long waits. Most of the clients who hang up do so without waiting.

Challenges Identified by State Staff

Both the State FSP manager and the Change Center director reported that the counties are happy with the services provided by the change center. However, they did note the following challenges:

- Training and retention of staff is often difficult, as there are not many State employees with the type of experience necessary to handle this unique job. Many people who apply for jobs at the change center have not worked with a computerized telephone system before. New employees report a great deal of stress in conducting their day-to-day business, simply because of the high volume of calls they are expected to handle. The requirement that all cases be completed on the day they are processed adds additional stress. State officials believe that the addition of more staff would reduce the amount of stress and lead to a more productive work environment. However, counties are not likely to transfer any more positions than they must to the change center, so the likelihood of obtaining increases in the number of staff is low.

- Even if new staff became available, a second problem identified by State officials is the limited amount

of space available at the current location. The change center site, which is in the basement of leased space in Atlanta, is currently very crowded and will not hold more desks or cubicles. In order to expand staffing, the change center would require additional space, at a significant cost (for moving telephone and computer lines). Currently, no funds are available to expand the center's physical layout.

- It is very difficult to consistently provide telephone coverage if a person is absent due to illness or vacation. The leave policy of the change center requires that only a limited number of change agents can be out at one time. This has created some resentment among staff who would like to take vacation time around holidays, but are denied because of staffing limitations. In addition, if a person is sick, the change center can not bring in a trained replacement. This means that staff who are there must pick up the workload of the person who is absent.

- The pay levels for change agents have created a problem with retention. The starting salary for a change agent is $22,000 per year, which is low for the Atlanta area. In addition, while the skills needed for the change center are somewhat unique in State government, they are not unique on the open market, particularly in the areas of Internet customer support and telemarketing. Sometimes agents find that they can make more money with the same skills by leaving State government and working for private companies.

- State staff acknowledged that there were initial issues with county staff's resentment over the fact that they would not be handling the entire case file of their clients and that caseworker positions were being transferred to the State. While State officials feel that these issues have been resolved, they understand that in some counties the loss of even one position may have put a burden on the remaining staff. Officials are hopeful that if the pilot projects are extended and the program made permanent, the positions will be established in the State budget, and the ones transferred from the counties could be returned.

Findings From Baldwin County

Overview

Baldwin County is a rural county located in the center of Georgia. Much of the county's economic base is related to small manufacturing facilities, a local university, service industries, and agriculture. While the county has a high employment rate, staff in Baldwin County believe that many of the jobs available to the low-income population they serve are minimum wage. There are some manufacturing facilities in the county, but they tend to limit their hiring to skilled workers. The Baldwin County Department of Children and Family Services is located in the county seat of Milledgeville, and the Economic Support Division is staffed with eight Family Independence case managers and two supervisors. Family Independence case managers generally serve a caseload of around 400-450 clients. The caseworkers handle enrollment for the FSP, Medicaid, and TANF programs. About 150 cases of each caseworker's load are food stamp recipients.

After welfare reform, TANF cases declined in the county, FSP cases stayed the same, and Medicaid cases increased. The county began having problems with their error rates in 1997, and had an error rate as high as 48 percent in 1998. At that time, the county was processing an average of 150 changes a month, and officials discovered that these changes were often not processed in a timely manner. In order to bring the error rates down, Baldwin County officials requested to be included in the change center pilot project. This choice was a difficult decision, as officials knew that they would lose one of their staff positions if they were accepted into the pilot, and this loss might create staffing problems in the future. However, county officials came to the conclusion that it was worth losing a position in order to reduce the error rates. Since their inclusion in the change center, the error rate for Baldwin County has dropped to less than 1 percent.

County Program Administration

Baldwin County accepts applications for Medicaid, TANF, and the FSP 5 days a week, but schedules eligibility interview appointments only 2 days a week. This system was established to allow staff time to inform clients of the documentation they will need to bring to the interview and to allow staff the time to process the applications once the interview is complete. When a client submits an application, he/she is assigned a caseworker who helps with completing the application process. During the interview process, clients are informed about other social service programs for which they may be eligible.

When the application process is complete, and a client is found to be eligible for services, he/she is given an information packet describing the types of changes in economic and family situation that must be reported

and is provided a card with the change center telephone number. Clients are instructed to contact the change center whenever they have a reportable change. However, even with the change center information, some clients may still try to drop off change information and documentation at the county office. This practice is discouraged, as the county staff are then required to fax the client's changes to the change center for processing. Instead, if a person shows up at the office to report changes, the county has made available a telephone "hotline" for the client to use to call the change center.

At the time of the site visit, the office was short-staffed, with three of eight eligibility workers being new. It is often difficult to bring on new staff and have them begin serving clients right away. The State provides training to all new caseworkers through training sites located around the State. Once a new caseworker is hired, he/she must spend 5 weeks away from the County at the training site to complete all of the required training. This means that new employees can not begin serving clients until 6 weeks after they are hired.

Challenges Identified by County Officials

In general, County officials are pleased with the use of the change center. There were some initial problems identified by county staff with changes getting recorded properly and in a timely manner. After the county was accepted into the pilot, caseworkers monitored the change center processing very closely to be sure the materials that were sent to the center were handled properly. During the first 3 months, caseworkers and county officials identified a number of problems with the way the change center was processing the information from Baldwin County, and supervisory staff spent a great deal of time calling these problems to the attention of change center staff. As a result of Baldwin County's followup, the change center made a number of adjustments to their procedures for recording changes, and all are now satisfied that the process is meeting the needs of Baldwin County officials.

Other implementation issues identified by county staff are described below:

- The major issue for Baldwin County officials was the loss of one staff person to the change center, representing a little over 10 percent of the total program staffing. While TANF cases have been declining, FSP caseloads have remained about the same, and Medicaid cases have been increasing. The result of the staff reduction has been to put additional burdens on the remaining staff. Officials are hoping that in the future the State will assume responsibility for the change center staffing and the position will be returned to Baldwin County.

- Some workers miss not having complete control of a client's case. In the past, the caseworker was in charge of all aspects of the client's enrollment and participation in the programs. Now, the caseworkers find that they are unaware of changes in their clients' status until they are processed at the change center and the change is reported to the caseworker. While the reporting of changes to the caseworker is most often done in a timely manner (within 30 days), some caseworkers expressed a desire to have total control of the cases.

Kansas

Overview of Re-engineering Changes

Prior to the implementation of welfare reform in 1997, the Kansas Food Stamp Program (FSP) operated under separate program rules from other public assistance programs. With the passage of welfare reform, Kansas officials decided to avail themselves of the opportunity to consolidate and conform these various programs. To do so, they decided to make three major changes in how they operated their public assistance programs. First, through the efforts of the State legislature and the governor's office, they moved the programs toward emphasizing employment and self-sufficiency as a goal for all clients. Second, Kansas program administrators decided to combine operations for public assistance and employment programs, functions that were previously performed by separate organizational units. Finally, Kansas officials attempted to simplify program rules for the TANF, Food Stamp, and Medicaid programs in order to provide consistency in program policy whenever possible.

While Kansas officials were successful in accomplishing the first two of these objectives, the third objective, a consistent policy across programs, became more difficult. Originally, Kansas officials hoped to be able to consolidate a number of program rules and procedures to make the process of obtaining program benefits easier for workers and clearer for clients. However, they were able to report only limited success. While

they were able to combine the operations manuals for the three programs and were successful in conforming some of the rules and procedures, a number of factors—such as inability to obtain necessary waivers, conflicting program goals, inability to combine two diverse data collection systems, and resistance from some local offices—kept them from accomplishing their goal completely.

However, among the changes Kansas officials were able to accomplish, the largest single undertaking was changing the roles and functions of local caseworkers. The purpose of this case study is to describe how the role of the caseworker was changed in Kansas and to provide information on how these changes affected a rural program in Atchison, Kansas. To accomplish this purpose, interviews were conducted at the State headquarters office with the Director of Economic and Employment Support, the Food Stamp Program Manager, the Manager of the Economic and Employment Support training programs, and the Manager of Research and Planning. In the Atchison office, interviews were conducted with the Area Chief of Economic and Employment Support, two Economic Employment Support Supervisors, and three caseworkers.

Food Stamp Program Administration

The Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services is responsible for administering public assistance programs through State offices located in 11 management areas across the State. These management areas cover 105 counties, with at least one office located in each county. Total FSP caseload in Kansas averages around 117,000 clients per month in 53,000 households. After the implementation of welfare reform, FSP caseload dropped 30 percent over the period 1997-99. However, in 1999, FSP participation began to increase by about 4.5 percent. Kansas officials are unsure why FSP participation increased, as they had not enacted any type of outreach program to potentially eligible clients.

Program management in each of the 11 areas is provided by program directors, who, in turn, report to an area director. The programs administered in these 11 management areas include Economic and Employment Support (FSP, TANF, and Medicaid), vocational rehabilitation programs, and child support programs.

Program policy is developed at the headquarters office in Topeka, with input from regional staff. Each of the major programs in the Economic and Employment Support Division has a program head, who is responsible for identifying program policy changes that may be required by Federal or State law. However, with the advent of welfare reform, Kansas officials decided to combine all of their Economic and Employment Services policies into a single manual. Kansas has created a Policy Development Team, composed of four central office staff and four representatives from the management areas. It is the responsibility of the Policy Development Team to review and approve any proposed policy changes the individual programs may wish to implement. In addition, the Policy Development Team identifies areas where program requirements can be conformed in order to avoid confusion about different program rules and regulations at the local level.

The growing number of Spanish-speaking clients has increased the need for bilingual staff and the production of Spanish language materials. Currently, there are very few bilingual staff, and many of the materials, including the applications and notices, are not translated into Spanish. Clients often have to rely on family members or friends to help them complete the application process. In addition, a growing number of Russian immigrants have moved to Kansas. A few areas have also seen a significant increase in clients who speak only Southeast Asian languages.

Findings From Interviews With State Headquarters Officials

Changes in the Role of the Caseworker

Prior to welfare reform, caseworkers worked with differing program regulations and multiple policy manuals for the three major public assistance programs. One of the major goals of Kansas officials in implementing welfare reform was to promote as much consistency between programs as possible. While local areas have flexibility in how they implement their programs, consistency in policy was pushed by headquarters staff as a means to better serve clients and eliminate confusion about different program requirements in similar areas. While consistency in policy development was the overall goal, Kansas officials realized that having multiple individuals responsible for implementing policies across programs might defeat the purpose. To prevent fragmentation of policy application at the local level, a decision was made to combine the job functions of staff responsible for program eligibility with those of staff responsible for employment programs.

In doing so, Kansas created a new civil service classification called Economic and Employment Support Specialist. The purpose of the new job classification was to combine activities related to determining program eligibility with those related to helping clients find employment and gain self-sufficiency. Caseworkers were expected to become case managers, with an individual caseworker becoming responsible for all program activities related to an individual client. In combining these activities, State officials envisioned that clients facing the challenges of welfare reform would be more likely to respond positively to a single worker handling their case than to having to deal with multiple caseworkers.

The development of the Economic and Employment Support Specialist classification was a two-phased process. First, State officials had to create the classification and identify the existing positions that would be transferred to the new classification. With the cooperation of the State civil service board, specifications for the class were developed, and new requirements for qualification for the class were examined. To the extent possible, the job requirements mirrored those of the old classifications. However, the scope of responsibility for the new classification was much broader than that of the old classifications.

The formal work on development of the new job classification was rather easy compared to that for the second phase, which was to convince local program staffs that the change in job classification was appropriate and necessary. Initially there was much resistance from local caseworkers. This resistance was based upon a lack of familiarity with the duties being performed by each of the two groups of caseworkers and by concern as to how combining functions would affect individual jobs. For example, caseworkers responsible for program eligibility were not familiar with the activities of their counterparts in employment services, nor were those working in employment services familiar with program eligibility. While some areas accepted the change, others resisted cooperating. Finally, the secretary of the agency issued a letter to all Area Directors requiring them to cooperate with the job classification change. Some areas accepted this and moved ahead quickly to implement it, while other areas were not as cooperative. But by the end of 1998, the change was to be fully implemented.

Staff Training

One of the major tasks faced by Kansas officials was retraining staff for their new positions. Employees needed training in three areas. First, because two different computer systems were being used to support employment services and eligibility services, staff needed to be cross-trained on at least one of the systems. Second, staff who had previously worked only in employment services had to be trained on eligibility determination, while eligibility caseworkers had to be trained on employment services. Finally, because a number of policies had been changed to promote consistency and a new, combined manual created to reflect these changes, all staff needed training on the new policies.

Once staff had been trained, local programs began reassigning cases to individuals. In order to provide support to staff who were working in an unfamiliar program area, teams were developed so individuals had a resource to provide support and answer questions they might have about a particular policy.

Challenges Identified by State Officials

Kansas officials identified a number of challenges to implementing welfare reform and changing the role of the caseworker. A discussion of these challenges follows.

- More involvement of local caseworkers in the process of creating the new job classifications might have helped smooth implementation. Most of the work on the new job classification was done by headquarters staff working with local program directors. Caseworkers themselves were not involved in the process. As a result, caseworkers were probably more resistant to the changes than they might have been had they been directly involved.

- At the same time the job reclassification was taking place, Kansas made a number of changes in how it implemented employment programs. Kansas had traditionally emphasized client participation in education and employment training programs, which often had little impact on an individual's ability to find employment. However, over the years strong relationships had been developed between Kansas educational institutions, such as the University of Kansas, and State employment programs. Through

contracts with the State, these institutions provided education and training at various locations throughout the State. When the emphasis changed from longer-term training to job readiness and actual placement of clients into jobs, the educational institutions complained bitterly that they were being left out of the process, and that caseworkers without adequate training in employment issues would be responsible for implementing this important component of the program.

- Many of the staff who had worked in employment programs prior to welfare reform also had difficulty with making the adjustment to the Kansas "work first" philosophy. Local program staff had always viewed their work as helping clients to find long-term solutions to self-sufficiency and to identify potential long-term career paths. When caseworkers were required to shift this philosophy to one of finding clients employment as quickly as possible, it was a difficult transition. Caseworkers have expressed concern that the short-term employment opportunities usually found for clients will disappear if the economy takes a turn for the worse, and then clients will not have the training or skills necessary to find jobs requiring more skills.

- While combining functions has worked well in many areas, the sometimes conflicting service philosophies faced by caseworkers handling clients participating in multiple programs can be problematic. Caseworkers are often put in the position of pushing clients towards employment and self-sufficiency in order to help them leave the TANF rolls, while at the same time promoting participation in the FSP and Medicaid programs. This is often confusing to the clients, who when pushed to leave the TANF rolls believe they should be leaving the FSP or Medicaid programs as well.

- The antiquated nature of the Kansas computer systems is also a major problem that has not been resolved. One of the selling points for the combined jobs and policy manuals was a promise that the two separate computer systems used by caseworkers (one for eligibility, one for employment services) would be discarded and a new combined system would be developed. This, however, has not materialized. As a result, caseworkers must work with two different computer systems when serving their clients. State officials still hope to eliminate this problem, but currently, no funds are available for data system development and computer purchases.

- Within the next 5 years, a large number of caseworkers will be retiring. This will result in a need for new caseworker recruitment. Many of the caseworkers that are retiring are located in rural areas, where it is often difficult to recruit. In particular, the rural areas of Western Kansas are facing a severe recruitment problem in the near future.

Findings From Interviews in the Atchison Office

Overview of Service Delivery

The Atchison office is located in the northeast corner of Kansas, and is included in a service area with six other, mostly rural counties. Approximately 3,400 households are being served in the area, with around 500 in the Atchison office. Overall responsibility for the administration of Economic and Employment Support programs within the area belongs to the Program Chief, who in turn relies on program supervisors within each office. Each office has at least one program supervisor, who is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the office. The recently created Economic and Employment Support Specialists report to the supervisors and are responsible for enrollment of clients and providing case management services. The office has very little turnover, as the positions with the State are some of the best paying in this rural area.

In their role as case managers, staff in the Atchison office have developed strong ties to community organizations serving the same population. These strong ties allow the case managers to assist the client with issues that can not normally be resolved by the public assistance programs. For example, caseworkers noted strong ties to the local community action agency, which helps clients obtain energy assistance funds. Among the various other agencies with which the caseworkers coordinate are the local WIC program, the Salvation Army, the local independent living center, the county hunger task force, and local food banks. Program representatives from these agencies meet on a periodic basis to discuss community needs and to plan for future services.

Changing the Role of the Caseworker

In general, the caseworkers in the Atchison office are pleased with the change in their roles since the passage of welfare reform. All three of the caseworkers interviewed said that they enjoyed being able to provide true case management services by handing all of the

client's issues and that they were able to devote more time to case management than when they were responsible for only a portion of the case. The caseworkers also noted that under the old system clients would be passed back and forth between caseworkers, which created some frustration for the clients.

The Atchison office had a relatively easy time with the transition to the new job classification. Atchison was somewhat fortunate during the transition, in that one of the employment caseworkers had worked as an eligibility worker prior to coming to the county program and was knowledgeable about both programs. With her knowledge, other caseworkers had someone to whom they could go to for answers to questions or to receive help in working the computer systems. However, even with this assistance, the caseworkers all had to be cross-trained on systems with which they were not familiar. The program chief credits the enthusiasm of the staff with making the entire transition process move smoothly.

The single biggest change in the day-to-day activities of the caseworkers is working with clients under the increased emphasis on employment services. Prior to implementation of welfare reform, 70 percent of the AFDC participants who were required to participate in employment and training activities were attending the University of Kansas. However, only 14 percent of the clients completed the program. Of the group that completed the program, only 10 percent went on to complete a college degree program. Local officials believed that they were paying for a program that was not producing results.

The new emphasis of the caseworkers is on employment readiness and preparation for job seeking. Caseworkers have worked hard to build relationships with employers in the area, who are mostly in service-related industries. Local employers have provided the caseworkers with information about the kinds of issues they have faced with hiring public assistance clients. In turn, the caseworkers have begun working with clients to help build their practical skills, including such basics as showing up for work on time and notifying their supervisor when they will not be coming into work.

The major sources for employment for public assistance clients who live in this rural area are low-end manufacturing plants, tribal casinos, telemarketing companies, and food service providers. Over the past year, the economy in the area has been strong and there have been labor shortages in many of the service-related areas. As a result, clients who seek employment often can find a job in the service industry. However, caseworkers noted that the major agricultural industries, such as the grain elevators, would not hire public assistance clients.

Another function assumed by the caseworkers has been increased effort to conduct outreach to FSP and Medicaid clients. Two of the priorities for the office are the enrollment of children in the State Child Health Insurance Program and working to end hunger within the region. As a result, the public assistance agency has teamed up with local private agencies to form what they call a "dream team" to address community outreach needs. This group meets to assess community needs and designs potential outreach efforts. Representatives from the Atchison office participate both on the steering committee for the dream team and on special committees that are created to work on specific problems.

Another benefit of their changing role cited by the caseworkers was the increased flexibility they have in working with clients. Because they are now responsible for all aspects of the client's case, they can work with the clients to develop individual plans for dealing with self-sufficiency issues. The caseworkers also believe that clients like the new system better, as they only have to deal with one caseworker, and clients can feel comfortable that the caseworker is familiar with their situation.

Challenges Faced by the Local Office

While noting that the staff in the Atchison office were very pleased with the changes in the role of the caseworker, there were some challenges the local office faced in making the transition, as discussed below.

- When welfare reform was first implemented, clients who could be easily placed into employment situations were the first off the rolls. Clients currently being served through TANF are very hard to serve, and require much more time than other clients. As a result, case management of clients is taking more time, and the problems identified as barriers to employment are much more difficult to resolve. Caseworkers noted that many of the clients they are currently serving have problems such as mental health issues, substance abuse problems, and chronic health conditions.

- Finding employment in a rural area is difficult, and can be frustrating for clients and caseworkers alike. While the Atchison office has had success in finding employment opportunities for clients who want to work, they have run into resistance with firms that pay higher wages. It is difficult to convince local employers that TANF and FSP clients will make good long-term employees. Many will not even interview clients if they find out they are on TANF.

- A large number of elderly individuals in the county live at or near the poverty level. One of the key outreach goals of the office has been to encourage elderly individuals to apply for food stamps. Caseworkers are concerned about the growing number of elderly who are at risk of food insecurity. However, caseworkers have found it very difficult to convince elderly individuals that it is worth their effort to apply for what end up being very limited program benefits.

- Using the dual computer system is frustrating and takes more time than it might if the two systems were integrated. While the caseworkers noted that they are now used to the two systems, it is still very time consuming for them to work with both. The caseworkers and the supervisors both noted that with a more efficient system, they could spend more time working on case management issues.

- While the caseworkers are pleased with their increased case management role, they worry that their FSP error rates are on the rise. Supervisors believe that this increase can be attributed to both the difficulty of the cases now being carried and the complexity of the rule changes that were implemented during welfare reform. Supervisors are encouraging caseworkers to spend more time on quality control, even if it means spending less time with the client.

Arizona

Overview of Re-engineering Effort

In 1997, the Arizona legislature passed a welfare reform measure designed to begin a process of privatization of the welfare system. Influenced by Wisconsin's attempts to involve private enterprise in managing the welfare caseload, the Arizona legislature established a nine-member procurement board and charged them with developing plans for contracting with a private agency to help move public assistance clients into employment and off the welfare rolls. Problems in the legislation and the inability to obtain waivers for privatization of Medicaid and the FSP limited privatization efforts to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. The procurement board issued a Request For Proposals in 1998 to pilot a project in Maricopa County (greater Phoenix area) to allow private companies to manage the TANF program.

Two companies bid for the project, with the award being given to Maximus, a company located in Virginia. The contract calls for a 4-year pilot program, with a rural county to be added after year 2. The contract is incentive-based, with a requirement that Maximus must show overall 10 percent savings in total program costs. The basic contract provides for funding of services provided to a specific caseload level (currently over 4,000), but does not include the cost of data systems and facilities, both of which are provided by the State. Incentives for additional revenue are built into the contract based upon meeting performance standards. The State named this project "Arizona Works."

The purpose of this case study is to examine how this privatization effort has affected the Food Stamp Program and how local State-run FSPs work with the contractor to coordinate services. Interviewed for this case study were the State's project director for the Arizona Works project, the coordinator for the Maricopa County JOBS program, which competes with the Maximus project in Maricopa County, two local JOBS caseworkers, and an FSP supervisor. In addition, the Maximus project director for Arizona Works was interviewed, along with a project supervisor. Finally, two FSP caseworkers at the Salt River Reservation were interviewed.

Food Stamp Program Administration

The FSP in Arizona is administered by the State, with regional and local offices located throughout the State. State employees handle eligibility determination in most areas of the State for the three major public assistance programs, FSP, Medicaid, and TANF. Clients apply at local offices, where their applications are processed and eligibility is determined. Once determined to be eligible, clients who must meet work requirements are placed in a special JOBS program, where they are provided assistance in finding employment and building job-seeking skills. State officials report a strong job market, particularly in Maricopa County, and placing clients in jobs has been relatively easy.

There are two exceptions to the above description of program services. In Maricopa County, the Arizona Works program provides TANF and employment services to eligible clients, while a separate State-run office located next door to Arizona Works provides FSP and Medicaid services. The second exception to the above relates to a number of Native American Tribal programs that provide TANF services to clients on reservations. In this circumstance, the State provides caseworkers that work at the Tribal public assistance offices to certify clients for FSP and Medicaid services. In both cases, coordination between the State employees and the Maximus and Tribal caseworkers is important.

Findings From Interviews With Headquarters Staff

Overview of the State Program in Maricopa County

Maricopa County is unique in that it has three separate agencies operating TANF programs within the county. The State-run TANF program covers the western part of the county, the Arizona Works program covers much of the eastern portion, and Tribal programs exist on reservation land located within the county. Each of the three programs works independently of the others. However, the State stations FSP and Medicaid eligibility workers at the Tribal public assistance office so that clients applying for TANF can also apply for these other services. In addition, caseworkers located at the Tribal offices process FSP and Medicaid-only applications for Tribal members.

The primary focus of the Arizona public assistance programs is to assist clients with finding employment and reaching a point of self-sufficiency. Major efforts are undertaken to help clients find employment, including motivational programs, resume development, job readiness training, and job placement services. Clients who are in a mandatory employment category (TANF and FSP Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents) are required to attend these different sessions, but all FSP participants are encouraged to attend.

Employment opportunities seem plentiful in Maricopa County. The State JOBS Program supervisor reports that a number of employers, including large trucking companies, State governmental agencies, small manufacturing plants, and temporary agencies, hire public assistance clients. The average wage for a public assistance client is $7.40 per hour. Caseworkers are encouraged to make followup contacts with clients to be sure that they are successful in maintaining their employment.

During interviews with caseworkers and the JOBS supervisor it was noted that the initial placement of clients was very successful after welfare reform, but the current group of TANF clients is much harder to place. Caseworkers cite mental health and substance abuse issues as problems with the population they currently serve. In addition, the lack of job skills has hampered successful retention of employment. Caseworkers note that many of the hard-to-serve clients will not show up for work if they have a minor problem at home and will not call their employers to let them know they will be absent. Many of these clients end up coming back into the system, and the State-run program has limited funds to provide support services to help returning clients succeed.

State Services in Eastern Maricopa County

In eastern Maricopa County, State employees are responsible for providing Medicaid and FSP services, while Maximus provides the TANF and employment services. The State office is located next door to the Maximus office, and they share a common entry area. When clients come into the State office to receive services, they are first asked if they are applying for TANF or for food stamps or Medicaid. If they are applying for FSP or Medicaid services only, their applications are taken at the State office. If they are also applying for TANF, they must complete a separate application in the Arizona Works office. The same is true if someone applies for TANF at the Arizona Works office and also desires food stamps or Medicaid. Therefore, clients applying for TANF and FSP/Medicaid services must go through two interview processes.

The State office in eastern Maricopa County is staffed with 31 workers who handle the FSP and Medicaid caseloads. While the State-run program and the Arizona Works programs operate as separate entities, they have worked out a memorandum of understanding by which each of the programs will coordinate operations on a limited basis. For example, caseworkers from both programs are required to coordinate with each other when making changes to client records. However, State-level caseworkers reported that they sometimes have difficulty obtaining the information from Arizona Works caseworkers, which often is the basis for eligibility errors and for clients having to return overpayments of their benefits.

Services Provided by Arizona Works

The Arizona Works program began in 1999, with 4,000 TANF cases transferred from the State-run program in eastern Maricopa County to the new program. The primary purpose of the Arizona Works project is to assist TANF clients with finding employment. The program is responsible for taking and approving applications for TANF, providing support services to TANF clients related to job placement, and finding jobs for the clients.

The Arizona Works program manager reports to the State procurement board. The State Department of Economic Security has appointed a project manager to work with the Arizona Works program as a liaison between Maximus and the Department and to serve as a policy expert when policy interpretations are required. It is the responsibility of the State Project Director to coordinate and resolve issues that may come up between the Arizona Works program and the State-run program. For example, the program manager was recently involved in negotiating additional space for the Arizona Works program at the State's leased facility shared by the State-run program.

When Maximus assumed the responsibility for the TANF program, they were allowed to hire their own staff. This meant that a number of State employees who were previously serving these clients needed to find new jobs. Because Maximus had a short amount of time to implement this program after the contract was signed, they offered the State employees the opportunity to join the project team at Maximus and continue their work. Approximately 60 percent of Arizona Works employees are former State employees who chose to move over and accept employment with Maximus, usually at a higher salary but with fewer benefits. The remaining State employees were offered transfer opportunities to other State programs. State officials note that no State employee lost his/her job through this transfer of function.

The contract between Maximus and the State is a performance-based contract, with strong incentives for placing clients in jobs. To carry out its mission, the Arizona Works program has developed a number of unique programs to support clients in obtaining employment. Because the Maximus program can provide more support services than the State-run program, caseworkers are able to conduct an assessment of client barriers to employment and then provide financial and programmatic support to help the clients overcome these barriers. Specific support services included assistance with paying rent and utilities to give the client a month to earn money; providing clients with transportation assistance to help them find and maintain a job; and providing specialized training in job retention or other employment-related skills. To provide clients with training and assistance in finding long-term employment, Maximus has established a training program in partnership with a local community college to help clients develop skills needed for employment. The programs available to clients range from specific job-related skills, such as computer use or basic trade skills, to employment readiness skills. Clients even receive college credit for some of the classes. In addition to the contract with the college, Maximus has developed a network of vendors that is used to provide support services. These vendors are local businesses that contract with Maximus to help with transportation, utility and rent payments, childcare, and other support services.

In order to meet the performance standards in the contract, the Arizona Works project operates in direct competition with the State-run program in western Maricopa County. Statistics from both sites will be compared to determine the extent to which Arizona Works has reduced caseloads as compared to the State-run program. Some of the State officials feel that this comparison is unfair, as they believe the western portion of the county contains a higher percentage of hard-to-place clients. In addition to this comparison, the Arizona Works project is being evaluated by Abt Associates, who will produce a final report in 2003. The procurement board will use this report to determine if the project will be expanded statewide, modified in any way, or discontinued.

Officials at Maximus point out a number of advantages their program has over the State-run program. In their initial year of operation, the Arizona Works program was able to reduce caseloads in their service area by 24 percent. In addition, Arizona Works officials point to the high level of case management and support services provided by the caseworkers as an indication of the extent to which they will help clients succeed in becoming self-sufficient. Officials also believe that clients are happy with the services provided through Arizona Works.

Maximus will open a second office in a rural Arizona county in 2001. Maximus officials see this new office as an important challenge, as employment opportunities in rural Arizona are not as plentiful as in the met-

ropolitan centers. In addition, transportation issues will be a challenge in the rural county. As with the urban center, the Arizona Works program in the rural county will be compared with another rural county where a State-run program exists. Planning for the new office was underway at the time of the case study interviews.

State Services on the Salt River Reservation

Two State employees assigned to the eastern Maricopa County office are stationed at the Salt River Indian Reservation. The purpose of the two out-stationed workers is to provide FSP and Medicaid eligibility services to Tribal members. As was noted earlier, the Tribe provides all TANF services to its members.

Clients applying for public assistance are met at a counter in the Tribal office, where they are given an application. If they are applying for both TANF and for food stamps/Medicaid, the Tribal caseworker involves the State caseworker to determine joint eligibility. Because the Tribal program uses the State's computer system, the data on eligibility is readily shared between the two programs.

As is true with the Arizona Works program, the Tribal program operates on a different set of standards and rules from the State TANF program. For example, more efforts are made with the Tribal program to provide support services to clients. The Tribal program also uses different income standards and payment schedules. The main focus of the Tribal program is self-sufficiency, but unlike most of Maricopa County, employment opportunities on the reservation are very limited. Often the cases handled by the Tribal caseworkers are very difficult to serve, with caseworkers noting a high incidence of physical disabilities, health problems, mental health issues, and substance abuse problems as barriers to self-sufficiency. In addition, transportation is cited as a problem with both obtaining employment and attending scheduled appointments for certification interviews. The reservation covers a very large area, and many Tribal members do not have adequate transportation. As a result, the State caseworkers report a high no-show rate for clients who are applying for food stamps.

In contrast to the State employees at the Arizona Works site, the caseworkers located on the reservation feel the working relationship between the two programs is well managed. Information sharing is common, and the State workers feel that they have access to all of the information they need to manage their cases in coordination with the Tribal caseworkers. Because of the informal atmosphere, as well as the fact that the caseworkers do not feel as though they are in competition, services seem to be provided in a well-coordinated manner.

Challenges Reported

A number of challenges are reported by both State-level staff providing services in Maricopa County and by the Maximus staff. The greatest challenge appears to be the competition between the Arizona Works program and the State-run program. There is an acknowledgment by both State and Maximus officials that the Arizona Works program is in direct competition with the State-run program, and, as a result, the two programs have some difficulties cooperating with each other on issues of mutual interest. One State official notes that it may be hard for State employees to help Maximus succeed when their own jobs may be in jeopardy as a result. Another official comments that State-level caseworkers feel resentment towards the Arizona Works program because it can offer clients more in the way of support services than the State-run program. Many individuals feel that this fact alone makes the comparisons between the two programs invalid.

Other specific problems and challenges include the following.

- The short startup time for the Arizona Works project created a high level of stress for both Maximus officials and State employees. Many State employees were forced to make a choice about whether to remain as State employees and work in other departments or join the private sector and lose their seniority in government. This level of stress caused some State employees to be fearful of an expansion of the Arizona Works program.

- State officials express some concern about the working relationship between caseworkers in the Maximus office and those working in the State-administered program. In order to keep error rates to a minimum and to avoid confusing clients, cooperation is necessary between caseworkers in the two programs. For example, if a client served by both systems finds employment, the information about

his/her new earnings must be passed on in a timely manner to the caseworker in charge of the FSP portion of the case; otherwise the client may be required to pay back benefits to the State. However, as one State official noted, it is difficult for State employees to cooperate and trust an entity that may, in the future, cost them their jobs.

Respondents express concern that requiring clients to undergo two separate eligibility processes may discourage them from participating in the FSP. In addition, officials are concerned that clients are becoming confused as to whom they should report changes in their status. As a result, officials are worried that clients who may still be eligible for FSP and Medicaid benefits after they leave the TANF program may not know they are eligible. At this time, Maximus does not track whether clients who leave the TANF program remain in the FSP or Medicaid programs.

- Maximus officials comment that under the current system they are required to utilize the State's data system to process TANF enrollments. This creates a situation that discourages the development of innovative approaches to computerizing enrollments and makes the project dependent on State technical support, which at times can be slow in responding to the project's requests for assistance.

- A number of small issues have also contributed to the lack of cooperation between the two programs. For example, a recent expansion of Arizona Works staff into space previously occupied by State caseworkers resulted in the State's caseworkers being moved into another building within the same complex. This move created resentment on the part of the State-level staff, as now the workers must travel between buildings to meet with clients. Workers questioned the need for Arizona Works to expand into the space, and felt that they were not given a say in the matter. Other issues include delays in providing information to caseworkers needed for determining eligibility (both entities noted this complaint), inconsistency in following agreed-upon office procedures, and delays in reporting client status changes.

- Expansion of the Arizona Works program into a rural county will create a new set of challenges for Maximus staff. First, Maximus plans to offer the current State employees the opportunity to leave State service and come to work for Arizona Works. However, if State employees wish to remain with the State, it is unlikely that they will be able to find another State job in the county. This will mean that these employees will either need to relocate to an area where more State jobs are available or accept a position with Maximus, which they may feel forced to do to remain in the area.

- A second challenge for Maximus will be to find employment opportunities for clients located in this rural area. State officials point out that there are nowhere near the employment opportunities in the rural areas of the State that there are in more urban areas. In addition, training and vendor resources are limited in rural areas, which may limit the amount and type of support services the Arizona Works program can provide.

Connecticut

Overview of the Re-engineering Effort

Prior to 1995, the State of Connecticut administered its public assistance programs through a centralized organization. State headquarters staff were responsible for overall program operations, and programs were implemented by State staff placed in local offices throughout the State. These local offices were supervised by a district manager, who, in turn, reported to a Director of Field Operations in Hartford.

Connecticut began implementing welfare reform in 1996. One of the key elements to their welfare reform effort was the decentralization of program administration and operations. The State created five "human services regions" around the State, and it assigned responsibility for the implementation of public assistance programs within each region to a Regional Administrator. The Regional Administrators report directly to the Agency Commissioner, and program directors (e.g., of FSP, TANF, and Medicaid) have no line authority over Regional Administrators.

With the passage of Federal welfare reform and increased efforts on the part of Connecticut to move clients towards self-sufficiency, the regional offices were given broad authority to customize program operations within their areas (although the regions are bound by State civil service regulations). While overall policy is still developed at the State level, Regional Administrators play a strong role in deciding how policy will be implemented in their particular regions.

The purpose of this case study is to examine how welfare reform efforts were implemented in Connecticut using a regional approach. Site visit interviews were conducted with State headquarters staff in Hartford and with staff located in the regional office in Norwich. The Director of Family Services and the Adult Services Manager responsible for the FSP were interviewed in the State headquarters office. In the regional office, the Regional Administrator, a Field Manager, two program supervisors, and two caseworkers were interviewed.

Social Service Program Administration

Responsibility for administering the FSP in Connecticut is shared between Policy Managers located in the State headquarters office and Regional Administrators located within the five regional offices throughout the State. Policy units are responsible for assuring that proper policies and regulations are developed and communicated to the regions, and the Regional Administrators are responsible for day-to-day operations of the program. The Regional Administrators have a great deal of discretion in how public assistance programs are implemented.

The Adult Services Division, located within the Department of Social Services, is responsible for the development of FSP program policies. These policies are communicated to the regional offices through a policy manual. Staff within the Division of Adult Services are responsible for communicating changes in policy to the regions and answering any policy questions from regional staff. In addition, the headquarters office is responsible for providing training to regional office staff on new policies, reviewing program data reports produced by the Department's management information system, and maintaining contracts with programs providing support to the regions, such as a contract with the University of Connecticut to provide training to staff.

Prior to welfare reform, the major emphasis of public assistance programs was to provide clients with program benefits. With the passage of welfare reform in Connecticut, the primary goal was revised to identifying potential employment opportunities for clients and assisting them in becoming self-sufficient. Connecticut's "Jobs First" program provides TANF, employment services, and safety net services to low-income families.

The State provides a very generous benefit package to its clients to assist them in making the transition from welfare to work. In determining benefits, the State disregards all earnings when total household income is below the poverty level. In addition to receiving a cash benefit, most clients also receive food stamps, Medicaid, and comprehensive support services to help them find employment. While employment-related services were transferred to the Department of Labor in 1998, staff continue to work with clients on providing support services to facilitate obtaining employment. However, clients subject to work requirements are only allowed to receive cash assistance for a total of 21 months. They may continue to receive cash benefits and services beyond this 21-month period only if they have been looking for work in good faith, if they are working but not earning enough to make them ineligible, or if they encountered circumstances beyond their control that prevent them from working.

Findings From Interviews of State Headquarters Officials

Overview of State Headquarters Operations

In 1995, the FSP caseload in Connecticut was averaging 110,000 clients a month. The current FSP caseload is 80,000 clients per month. State officials believe that clients' confusion about their eligibility for food stamps once TANF benefits have been terminated is responsible for the drop in caseload. It is the policy of the State program to encourage clients who have continuing eligibility for Medicaid and FSP to continue in these programs, even if their TANF eligibility has ended. Regional staff are asked to conduct "exit interviews" with clients leaving the TANF program to assess whether they are eligible to continue with Medicaid and the FSP. However, officials believe that inconsistent application of the exit interviews between regions may be partially responsible for eligible clients leaving the FSP.

Another issue identified as a barrier to ongoing participation in the FSP is that clients who remain in the FSP after their TANF eligibility has ended must then begin monthly reporting of potential eligibility changes. Headquarters staff believe that this monthly reporting "hassle" may be enough to discourage ongoing participation in the FSP. Officials also noted that once clients decide to leave the FSP, they tend not to return. The drop-off in caseload was also evident in the State-run Food Stamp Program for noncitizens. Prior to welfare reform, there were around 4,000 noncitizens participat-

ing in the FSP. With the changes brought about by welfare reform, only 2,000 of the noncitizens reenrolled in the State-funded FSP.

Headquarters staff were generally supportive of the regional structure used to administer the FSP and other public assistance programs. The staff felt that the centralized administrative structure had been too inflexible and often created situations that hurt program operations. By allowing the regions to adapt their programs to local needs, officials believe that the programs are in a better position to serve clients. In addition, headquarters officials noted that the flexibility afforded in the regional structure allows regional staff to develop strong working relationships with private service agencies within their region, and therefore allows for better coordination of services at the local level. In addition, regional offices have the capacity to write local contracts for support services, which allows the region to customize its support service network to meet the unique needs of the region.

On the other hand, headquarters staff found that the regional structure presented difficulties for the State-level Program Directors, since they have no line authority over the Regional Administrators. These individuals are responsible for programs that have Federal rules about eligibility determination and redetermination, definition of "good cause" for noncompliance, and other aspects of program operations. Yet, the Program Directors are limited in their ability to influence the decisions of the Regional Administrators with regard to program operations. Regional Administrators attend monthly meetings with the Department Commissioner, but Program Directors only attend these meetings if invited.

Headquarters staff were asked if they believe there are major differences between how public assistance programs are administered among the regions. The main differences they noted were between urban and rural areas. For example, officials noted that most offices in rural areas operate on a very strict appointment schedule, while offices in urban areas operate more on a walk-in basis. In addition, staff in rural areas tend to function more as case managers, while staff in urban areas tend to specialize as eligibility workers or workers reporting client changes, which means that in urban areas clients are more likely to work with more than one caseworker.

While headquarters staff believe that policy is implemented in a consistent manner, they believe that there are a number of operational differences in how strict regions are with client documentation. For example, officials believe that some regions do a much better job in keeping clients on the FSP by allowing more flexibility in how and when clients produce documentation for reporting purposes. Another example provided by headquarters staff is the difference in the level of effort made by caseworkers to conduct exit interviews. In some regions, caseworkers are very aggressive in scheduling exit interviews and recertifying clients for FSP benefits. In other regions, caseworkers do not make the same strong efforts, and as a result, many clients do not come back to be recertified for the FSP.

Challenges Identified by State Headquarters Staff

As noted above, headquarters staff were generally supportive of the regional structure from the perspective of local operations. However, they did note a few challenges, as follows:

- In some cases, headquarters staff feel that they are responsible for an activity, but have little control over how the activity is managed. For example, error rates are calculated based on statewide (not regional) data and are handled through the headquarters office. However, the headquarters staff feel they have little say in directing the regional offices to undertake activities related to improving the error rates.

- State officials expressed concern as to how the TANF limitations and variable efforts on the part of caseworkers to continue clients on the FSP will be viewed if there is a downturn in the economy. If headquarters officials are correct in their view that operational flexibility at the local level is a contributing factor in the decline in FSP participation, then there is concern about an increase in food insecurity among low-income populations in the State.

- The waivers under which the FSP and TANF programs operate (including the 21-month time limits and earnings disregard) will end in September of 2001. At that time officials believe it will be necessary to make major changes to program operations. For example, when the waiver expires, earned income will be counted for TANF recipients when calculating their FSP benefits. There was some concern expressed that additional major changes in the way the programs operate will create more confusion at the local level, and may result in more

inconsistencies in program operations that could ultimately have a negative impact on clients.

Findings From Interviews With Regional Office Staff

Overview of the Regional Office

The Norwich regional office covers a mostly rural section of Connecticut in the northeast section of the State. Currently there is an office in Norwich and a satellite office open part-time in the Killington area northeast of Norwich. Staff from the Norwich office travel to the satellite office 4 days a week.

The regional office is organized into three divisions, one addressing the needs of families, one addressing adult services, and one responsible for working with the elderly and persons with disabilities. Much of the FSP and TANF caseload is located within the Family Services Division. Workers in this division are responsible for enrolling clients into the programs, providing case management services, processing EBT cards for clients, and processing changes in client eligibility status. Prior to welfare reform, caseworkers were far more specialized, with some of them processing applications and others processing reported changes. With the flexibility afforded with the regionalization of services, caseworkers were provided the opportunity to act more like case managers and handle all of a client's needs. Local staff felt that this holistic approach to serving clients was more successful than the old approach.

Under the organizational structure of the regional office, three division directors, known as Field Managers, have responsibility for program operations within their division. Each of the Field Managers reports to the Regional Administrator. Reporting to the Field Managers are office supervisors, who in turn direct the activities of the Family Independence Representatives (FI Reps). Family Independence Representatives handle varying caseloads, based upon the programs in which the clients participate. An FI Rep who works with TANF clients, or clients participating in multiple programs, is more likely to have a smaller caseload than those working with FSP- or Medicaid-only clients. FI Reps handling TANF cases tend to have caseloads averaging around 100 clients, while FI Reps who handle FSP- and Medicaid-only cases tend to manage around 400 cases.

In addition to the three division directors, the regional office has two regional planners and one regional trainer. The regional planners are responsible for helping to design the service delivery system within the region, and for identifying any future activities that may be necessary to implement new policy. The regional trainer provides training to staff within the region on both program and policy issues, as well as general training on useful skill-building and management issues.

Regional Service Delivery

Because of the large geographic area and limited public transportation, the Norwich region offices work on a strict appointment system. Clients must come to the office to enroll, but may report changes through telephone calls or faxes. Clients enrolled in the TANF program are connected with a caseworker in the Department of Labor who can assist them with finding employment. Caseworkers in the regional office keep in close communication with the Department of Labor staff to track the extent to which clients are finding employment and to assist in providing support services to help the clients reach self-sufficiency. While much of the communication between regional office staff and Department of Labor staff is by telephone and fax, there are plans to install an electronic file-sharing system between the two departments to allow caseworkers to share files.

Employment options for clients living within the region are somewhat limited. The majority of clients who find work do so in the food service or hospitality industries. The FI Reps noted that there are two very large Native American casinos in the region, both of which pay well and will hire public assistance clients. However, experience has shown that it is very difficult for clients with children to maintain employment at the casinos, as employees are often asked to work different shifts and be available for overtime. Because childcare within the region is so limited, most clients with families can not be flexible enough to meet the demands of working at the casinos.

FI Reps work closely with other community agencies to provide coordinated services and referrals to clients. Staff within the regional office actively work with programs such as WIC, childcare providers, and housing agencies to assist clients in overcoming barriers. One of the FI Reps noted that their role is to identify the barriers clients may face in becoming self-sufficient

and assist them with accessing resources within the community to help them overcome these barriers.

The regional office staff also work with community organizations to promote the FSP and Medicaid programs administered in their regions. Supervisors participate in a regional speakers' bureau and travel to meetings around the region to provide information about the FSP and Medicaid programs to other programs that may be serving the same clients. In addition, caseworkers participate in outreach efforts for the Connecticut Child Health Insurance Program. Staff believe that most low-income families in their region are aware of the services provided by their office. Finally, regional office staff participate in monthly regional advisory council meetings, which include representatives from the community who can provide guidance to the region on how to improve program coordination.

Regional office staff have limited contact with headquarters staff. Most of the contact occurs between the Field Manager and the policy staff in Hartford. Communication revolves mostly around policy questions that require an interpretation. The majority of the questions are related to defining "good cause" for TANF clients attempting to extend their time on the program or interpreting a question regarding the definition of a "household". In addition, Field Managers are given the opportunity to participate in statewide workgroups. For example, recently a Field Manager from the Norwich office participated in a workgroup examining how to strengthen the help desk that assists with EBT issues.

Regional Administration

The Regional Administrator who was interviewed believes the flexibility permitted by the regional approach allows administrators to better customize their programs to meet the needs of their clients. However, it was interesting to note that while the Regional Administrator felt he had flexibility with regard to operational issues, he expressed the belief that the program continues to be much more centralized than it would appear. For example, budgets for the regional office are still controlled by headquarters, and the Regional Administrator has very little flexibility in making changes to the budget. A second example provided by the Regional Administrator involves the ability to reclassify positions within the region. The regional offices do not have the flexibility to change the job classifications of vacant positions in order to meet what they view to be a local need. All changes in job classifications must be approved by headquarters staff. In addition, with a hiring freeze currently in effect, the regions must compete with one another to be able to fill the vacant positions within their regions. In some cases, positions are moved from one region to another based upon a strong justification for increasing staffing within a region.

The Regional Administrator also said that it is his belief that Regional Administrators have done a good job in customizing their programs to meet local needs. He did, however, acknowledge that there are differences in how some of the regions approach dealing with clients. He cited as an example the emphasis his region puts on followup with clients to be sure they are reporting changes to their eligibility status in a timely manner and providing proper documentation. He noted that his caseworkers often make three or four attempts to help a client in danger of being dropped from the FSP, while in other regions clients are dropped after only limited efforts to help or to understand why the required report was not submitted on time.

Challenges Identified by Regional Staff

The overall goal of regional administration of public assistance programs was to allow more flexibility in the day-to-day administration of program activities. With the implementation of welfare reform, the regional offices faced a number of challenges, described below.

- While the regional offices were responsible for implementing a number of changes as a result of welfare reform, they were not given any additional funds or staff with which to implement the changes. As a result, staff were very stressed during the transition phase. Because priority within the Norwich region was placed on ensuring smooth continuation of client services, the error rate within the region increased. Now that much of the implementation has been complete, the region will focus more on quality control and reducing errors.

- Lack of control over the regional budget and personnel system has created problems for the Regional Administrator in implementing innovative ideas. The Administrator noted that over the course of implementing welfare reform, staff have been able to identify uses for funds and staffing that will better serve clients. However, the Regional Administrator did not have the authority to make the necessary adjustments

to accommodate staff wishes. As a result, the Regional Administrator believes that the regional programs would be better served if they were given more control of budgets and personnel.

- Staff noted that the large geographic area covered by the region makes it difficult for clients to come into the offices for services. Staff are hopeful that additional field offices can be established in order to better serve clients living in the most rural parts of the region.

- The Regional Administrator would like to develop more internal quality control mechanisms. Currently program supervisors are responsible for overseeing the quality of the work of the FI Reps. The Regional Administrator would like to develop an independent quality control system in order to identify problems that may span the region. This independent quality control system would then be used as the basis for changing program operations to improve program accountability.

- Overall, Connecticut's change in organizational structure to a regional organization resulted in a limited degree of decentralization. While it provides the advantage of some flexibility for Regional Administrators to develop relationships with local providers in order to tailor services, Regional Administrators have little control over budget allocation and personnel decisions.

There is an inherent conflict between administering programs that have federally mandated rules and encouraging local control. The State must continue to improve communication between headquarters and the regions, including providing data to the regions for program improvement. It was noted that there has been some movement back towards centralization, especially with respect to the FSP, in order to reduce certification error rates.

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Appendix Tables

Appendix table 1—Method of data collection by State

State	Phone survey only	Phone survey and State documents received in the mail
Alabama		✔
Alaska	✔	
Arizona		✔
Arkansas		✔
California		✔
Colorado	✔	
Connecticut	✔	
District of Columbia	✔	
Florida		✔
Georgia		✔
Hawaii		✔
Idaho	✔	
Illinois		✔
Indiana		✔
Iowa	✔	
Kansas		✔
Kentucky	✔	
Louisiana	✔	
Maine	✔	
Maryland		✔
Massachusetts		✔
Michigan	✔	
Minnesota		✔
Mississippi	✔	
Missouri		✔
Montana		✔
Nebraska		✔

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Appendix table 1—Method of data collection by State—Continued

State	Phone survey only	Phone survey and State documents received in the mail
Nevada		✔
New Hampshire		✔
New Jersey	✔	
New Mexico		✔
New York	✔	
North Carolina	✔	
North Dakota	✔	
Ohio	✔	
Oklahoma	✔	
Oregon		✔
Pennsylvania		✔
Rhode Island	✔	
South Carolina	✔	
South Dakota	✔	
Tennessee	✔	
Texas		✔
Utah	✔	
Vermont	✔	
Virginia	✔	
Washington	✔	
West Virginia	✔	
Wisconsin		✔
Wyoming		✔

Appendix table 2—State re-engineering efforts that occurred as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by category of change

State	Changes in organizational structures	Changes in the role of the case worker	Program accessibility and changes in certification systems	Changes in client tracking and accountability systems	Conforming the State food stamp program and TANF program	Increased program monitoring and evaluation
Alabama			✔	✔	✔	
Alaska		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Arizona		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Arkansas			✔		✔	
California	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔
Colorado	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔
Connecticut	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
District of Columbia			✔	✔	✔	
Florida			✔	✔	✔	✔
Georgia			✔	✔	✔	
Hawaii		✔		✔		
Idaho	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Illinois				✔	✔	
Indiana			✔	✔		
Iowa			✔	✔	✔	✔
Kansas		✔	✔		✔	✔
Kentucky			✔		✔	
Louisiana		✔		✔	✔	
Maine			✔	✔	✔	✔
Maryland	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔
Massachusetts			✔			✔
Michigan		✔			✔	
Minnesota			✔		✔	
Mississippi		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Missouri			✔	✔		✔
Montana			✔	✔	✔	
Nebraska			✔	✔	✔	
Nevada			✔	✔	✔	
New Hampshire			✔	✔	✔	
New Jersey			✔	✔	✔	✔
New Mexico	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔

—Continued

Appendix table 2—State re-engineering efforts that occurred as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by category of change—Continued

State	Changes in organizational structures	Changes in the role of the case worker	Program accessibility and changes in certification systems	Changes in client tracking and accountability systems	Conforming the State food stamp program and TANF program	Increased program monitoring and evaluation
New York				✔	✔	✔
North Carolina			✔		✔	✔
North Dakota			✔	✔		
Ohio	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔
Oklahoma				✔	✔	
Oregon			✔	✔		✔
Pennsylvania			✔	✔		✔
Rhode Island				✔		
South Carolina		✔	✔		✔	
South Dakota		✔	✔	✔	✔	
Tennessee		✔		✔		
Texas			✔	✔	✔	✔
Utah			✔	✔		✔
Vermont				✔		
Virginia	✔	✔			✔	
Washington	✔					✔
West Virginia		✔		✔	✔	
Wisconsin	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔
Wyoming			✔	✔		✔

Appendix table 3—State re-engineering efforts that occurred during FY 2000 by category of change

State	Changes in organizational structures	Changes in the role of the case worker	Program accessibility and changes in certification systems	Changes in client tracking and accountability systems	Conforming the State food stamp program and TANF program	Increased program monitoring and evaluation
Alabama						
Alaska		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Arizona			✔			✔
Arkansas	✔		✔			
California				✔		✔
Colorado						
Connecticut				✔		
District of Columbia			✔			
Florida				✔		
Georgia		✔	✔	✔		
Hawaii						
Idaho			✔			✔
Illinois			✔	✔		
Indiana			✔			✔
Iowa						✔
Kansas						
Kentucky				✔		
Louisiana			✔	✔		
Maine			✔		✔	
Maryland			✔			
Massachusetts			✔			
Michigan						
Minnesota			✔			
Mississippi						
Missouri			✔			✔
Montana			✔	✔		✔
Nebraska						
Nevada			✔			
New Hampshire						✔
New Jersey			✔			✔
New Mexico					✔	

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Appendix table 3—State re-engineering efforts that occurred during FY 2000 by category of change—Continued

State	Changes in organizational structures	Changes in the role of the case worker	Program accessibility and changes in certification systems	Changes in client tracking and accountability systems	Conforming the State food stamp program and TANF program	Increased program monitoring and evaluation
New York			✔	✔		✔
North Carolina				✔		
North Dakota		✔	✔			
Ohio			✔		✔	✔
Oklahoma			✔	✔		
Oregon			✔	✔		✔
Pennsylvania			✔	✔		
Rhode Island			✔		✔	
South Carolina		✔	✔		✔	
South Dakota				✔	✔	
Tennessee			✔			
Texas			✔			
Utah			✔	✔		
Vermont				✔		
Virginia				✔		✔
Washington						
West Virginia						
Wisconsin						✔
Wyoming						

Appendix table 4—States by size of food stamp caseload

State	Size of food stamp caseload		
	Small	Medium	Large
Alabama		✔	
Alaska	✔		
Arizona		✔	
Arkansas		✔	
California			✔
Colorado		✔	
Connecticut		✔	
District of Columbia	✔		
Florida			✔
Georgia			✔
Hawaii		✔	
Idaho	✔		
Illinois			✔
Indiana		✔	
Iowa		✔	
Kansas		✔	
Kentucky		✔	
Louisiana			✔
Maine		✔	
Maryland		✔	
Massachusetts		✔	
Michigan			✔
Minnesota		✔	
Mississippi		✔	
Missouri		✔	
Montana	✔		
Nebraska	✔		
Nevada	✔		
New Hampshire	✔		
New Jersey		✔	
New Mexico		✔	
New York			✔
North Carolina			✔

—Continued

Appendix table 4—States by size of food stamp caseload—Continued

State	Size of food stamp caseload		
	Small	Medium	Large
North Dakota	✔		
Ohio			✔
Oklahoma		✔	
Oregon		✔	
Pennsylvania			✔
Rhode Island	✔		
South Carolina		✔	
South Dakota	✔		
Tennessee			✔
Texas			✔
Utah	✔		
Vermont	✔		
Virginia		✔	
Washington		✔	
West Virginia		✔	
Wisconsin		✔	
Wyoming	✔		

Appendix table 5—States making changes to the role of the caseworker as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by goal

State	Goal of re-engineering change				
	Increase coordination between FSP and TANF program	Reduce fragmentation in the provision of services	Increase efficiency in the operation of FSP	Increase coordination between FSP and programs other than TANF	Other
Alaska		✔			
Arizona	✔		✔	✔	
Connecticut					✔
Hawaii		✔	✔		
Idaho	✔		✔		
Kansas		✔			
Louisiana					✔
Maryland	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Michigan	✔	✔			✔
Mississippi	✔			✔	✔
New Mexico	✔				
New York	✔				
South Carolina	✔	✔		✔	
South Dakota					✔
Tennessee					✔
Virginia	✔	✔	✔		✔
West Virginia	✔	✔			✔
Wisconsin	✔	✔	✔		

Appendix table 6—States making changes to the role of the caseworker as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by required level of approval

State	Level of approval				
	Civil Service Board or State personnel agency	Governor's office	State legislature	Labor unions or State employee agency	Other
Alaska					✔
Arizona	✔				
Connecticut	✔				
Idaho					✔
Kansas					
Louisiana	✔				
Maryland	✔	✔	✔		
Michigan	✔	✔	✔	✔	
Mississippi	✔				
New Mexico	✔				
New York	✔			✔	
South Carolina	✔	✔			
South Dakota		✔			
Virginia	✔			✔	
West Virginia	✔		✔		
Wisconsin		✔	✔		

Appendix table 7—States increasing access to their Food Stamp Program as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by type of change

State	Type of change		
	Certification process	Local office practices	Increasing outreach
Alabama	✔		
Alaska	✔		
Arizona	✔	✔	✔
Arkansas		✔	✔
California	✔	✔	✔
Colorado	✔	✔	✔
Connecticut	✔	✔	✔
District of Columbia	✔	✔	✔
Florida			✔
Georgia	✔	✔	✔
Idaho	✔	✔	✔
Indiana	✔	✔	✔
Iowa			✔
Kansas		✔	✔
Kentucky	✔		
Maine	✔		
Maryland	✔	✔	✔
Massachusetts		✔	✔
Minnesota		✔	✔
Mississippi			✔
Missouri		✔	
Montana	✔	✔	
Nebraska	✔		
Nevada	✔	✔	✔
New Hampshire		✔	
New Jersey		✔	✔
New Mexico			✔

—Continued

Appendix table 7—States increasing access to their Food Stamp Program as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by type of change—Continued

State	Type of change		
	Certification process	Local office practices	Increasing outreach
New York	✔		
North Carolina		✔	
North Dakota	✔		
Ohio		✔	✔
Oregon	✔	✔	✔
Pennsylvania		✔	
South Carolina		✔	
South Dakota		✔	✔
Texas		✔	
Utah	✔	✔	✔
Wisconsin		✔	✔
Wyoming	✔	✔	

Appendix table 8—States changing local office practices as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by type of change

State	Type of change						
	Provide child care at FS offices	Improve transportation to FS offices	Establish satellite offices to take FS applications and provide re-certifications	Establish satellite offices to only take FS applications	Outstation workers at other agencies	Provide weekend and/or evening hours	Use "private partners" to assist clients applying for FS
Arizona		✔			✔	✔	✔
Arkansas			✔		✔	✔	✔
California						✔	✔
Colorado		✔				✔	
Connecticut	✔		✔				✔
District of Columbia					✔		✔
Georgia						✔	
Idaho		✔		✔	✔	✔	
Indiana			✔				
Kansas						✔	
Maryland		✔				✔	
Massachusetts							✔
Minnesota				✔	✔		
Missouri			✔		✔		✔
Montana			✔		✔	✔	

—*Continued*

Appendix table 8—States changing local office practices as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by type of change—Continued

State	Type of change						
	Provide child care at FS offices	Improve transportation to FS offices	Establish satellite offices to take FS applications and provide re-certifications	Establish satellite offices to only take FS applications	Outstation workers at other agencies	Provide weekend and/or evening hours	Use "private partners" to assist clients applying for FS
Nevada	✔		✔		✔	✔	
New Hampshire						✔	✔
New Jersey						✔	
North Carolina						✔	
Ohio	✔		✔		✔	✔	
Oregon			✔		✔	✔	
Pennsylvania						✔	
South Carolina						✔	
South Dakota						✔	
Texas					✔		
Utah	✔					✔	
Wisconsin	✔	✔			✔		✔
Wyoming						✔	

Appendix table 9—States planning to change local office practices during FY 2000 by type of a change

State	Type of change						
	Provide child care at FS offices	Improve transportation to FS offices	Establish satellite offices to take FS applications and provide re-certifications	Establish satellite offices to only take FS applications	Outstation workers at other agencies	Provide weekend and/or evening hours	Use "private partners" to assist clients applying for FS
Arizona						✔	
Arkansas					✔	✔	✔
Indiana						✔	
Maryland		✔				✔	
Massachusetts						✔	
Montana	✔		✔		✔		
Nevada		✔					
New York		✔	✔			✔	✔
Ohio		✔	✔		✔		✔
South Carolina		✔					
Texas						✔	✔

Appendix table 10—States making changes to improve outreach as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by method of outreach

State	Method of outreach				
	Distribute printed materials	PSAs or notices on TV or radio	Referrals from other social service programs	Distribute food stamp applications	Other
Arizona	✔				
Arkansas	✔				
California	✔				
Colorado		✔	✔		
Connecticut					✔
District of Columbia	✔	✔			
Florida					✔
Georgia					✔
Idaho		✔	✔	✔	
Indiana				✔	
Iowa					✔
Kansas	✔				
Maryland					✔
Massachusetts	✔				
Minnesota					✔
Mississippi	✔				
Nevada	✔			✔	
New Jersey	✔		✔		
New Mexico	✔				
Ohio		✔	✔		
Oregon	✔				
South Dakota	✔				
Utah	✔		✔		
Wisconsin		✔			

Appendix table 11—States increasing their use of databases for client record matching as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by type of database

State	Type of Database		
	New hire	Criminal records	Social Security Administration
Alabama	✔		
Arizona	✔	✔	
Colorado	✔	✔	✔
Connecticut	✔		
Georgia	✔	✔	
Illinois	✔		
Indiana	✔	✔	
Louisiana		✔	
Maryland	✔		
Mississippi			✔
Montana	✔		✔
New Hampshire	✔	✔	✔
New Jersey	✔	✔	
New Mexico	✔	✔	✔
North Dakota		✔	✔
Ohio		✔	
Oklahoma	✔		
Pennsylvania		✔	✔
Tennessee		✔	✔
Texas		✔	
Utah	✔		
Vermont	✔		
Wisconsin	✔		
Wyoming	✔		

Re-engineering the Welfare System—A Study of Administrative Changes to the Food Stamp Program: Final Report. Prepared by Health Systems Research, Inc., and The Urban Institute for the Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Report No. 17.

Abstract

All States in a recent study undertook at least one "re-engineering" activity in their Food Stamp Programs (FSPs) as a result of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). In addition, 35 States implemented changes in 3 or more re-engineering categories, while 24 States planned changes for fiscal year (FY) 2000 in 2 or more categories. PRWORA dramatically changed the systems that provide cash assistance and food stamps to low-income Americans. Along with mandatory changes in food stamp eligibility, States were given greater flexibility to administer their programs to meet their unique needs. While States had begun changing the way program services were delivered before passage of welfare reform legislation, PRWORA provided additional opportunities for them to "re-engineer" FSPs. The purpose of the study was to examine State-level administrative changes to FSPs as a result of PRWORA, both those made before FY 2000 and those planned for FY 2000. This report provides the study results. For the State data collection instrument, see *Re-engineering the Welfare System—A Study of Administrative Changes to the Food Stamp Program: State Data Collection Instrument* at http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan01009.

Keywords: PRWORA, service delivery, structure, casework, accessibility, client tracking, monitoring, conforming

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Executive Summary

All States in a recent study undertook at least one "re-engineering" activity in their Food Stamp Programs (FSPs) as a result of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). In addition, 35 States implemented changes in 3 or more re-engineering categories, while 24 States planned changes for FY 2000 in 2 or more categories. PRWORA dramatically changed the systems that provide cash assistance and food stamps to low-income Americans. Along with mandatory changes in food stamp eligibility, States were given greater flexibility to administer their programs to meet their unique needs. While States had begun changing the way program services were delivered before passage of welfare reform legislation, PRWORA provided additional opportunities for them to "re-engineer" FSPs. The purpose of the study was to examine State-level administrative changes to FSPs as a result of PRWORA, both those made before fiscal year (FY) 2000 and those planned for FY 2000.

To facilitate analysis of the broad array of State FSP re-engineering changes, the information gathered for this study was categorized into six subject areas, as follows:

1. Changes in State organizational structure;
2. Changes in the role of the caseworker;
3. Efforts to improve program accessibility and client certification;
4. Changes in client tracking and accountability systems;
5. Attempts to conform the FSP and TANF program rules; and
6. Efforts to increase program monitoring and evaluation.

The major research questions driving the study were:

- To what extent have States implemented administrative or operational changes to their FSPs from the passage of PRWORA through FY 1999?

- To what extent were States planning to make changes to their FSP administrative practices or program operations during FY 2000?

- What were the primary motivating factors identified by States for making administrative and operational changes to their FSPs, and to what extent did the re-engineering efforts require the approval of different branches of government?

- How did efforts to re-engineer FSPs vary between States with county-administered programs and those who administer their FSPs at the State level?

Overview of the Study Methodology and Organization of the Final Report

A total of 49 States and the District of Columbia agreed to participate in the study. Data were collected from States by a three-step process. First, States were asked to provide documents that contained descriptions of their re-engineering efforts, such as budget proposals, strategic planning documents, and legislative initiatives. A total of 24 States were able to provide these documents, and data for each of the 6 re-engineering categories were abstracted from them. Second, all States in the study participated in a followup telephone survey, either to clar-

ify data in the descriptive documents or to provide data not available through written sources. Finally, a series of six case studies was conducted to examine local implementation of re-engineering efforts. This report presents the findings from the data abstraction process and the followup survey.

The report is organized into two sections. Section I is divided into four chapters. Chapter I provides an overview of the study and discusses the methodology used for data collection and analysis. Findings from the study are organized into chapters II and III, with chapter II providing "the big picture" of State re-engineering efforts and chapter III examining findings within each of the six categories of re-engineering change. Chapter IV provides a summary of key findings and implications for future research. Section II presents data from the case study reports. The data collection instrument, *Re-engineering the Welfare System—A Study of Administrative Changes to the Food Stamp Program: State Data Collection Instrument,* can be found at http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan01009.

Summary of Key Findings on State Re-engineering Efforts

All the States included in the study undertook at least one re-engineering activity as a result of PRWORA, with many States implementing and planning re-engineering efforts in more than one category. Thirty-five States implemented changes in 3 or more re-engineering categories, while 24 States planned changes for FY 2000 in 2 or more categories. The figure on page viii displays the number of States planning and implementing re-engineering changes as a result of PRWORA, by categories of the changes. (Some States reported changes in more than one category.)

Because State FSP agencies are likely to have limited resources, activities in multiple re-engineering categories might not be expected. The fact that 35 States (70 percent) implemented activities falling into 3 or more categories shows the importance of FSP re-engineering to State program administrators.

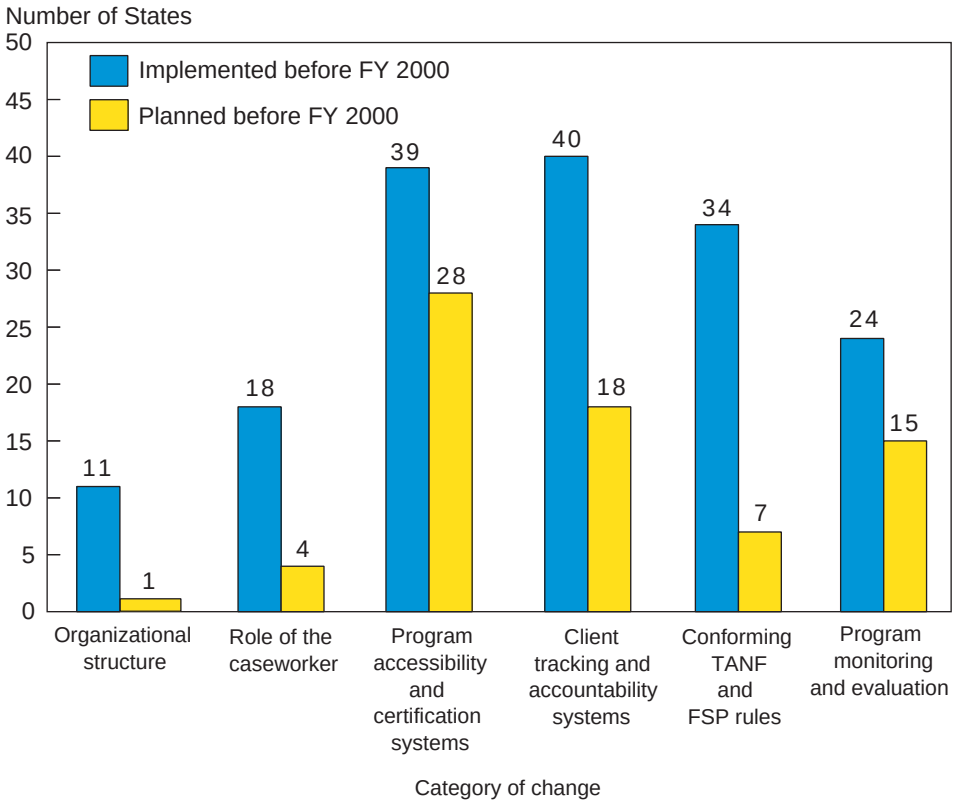
Additional key findings are that:

- A significant effort was focused on improving access to the FSP. Thirty-nine of the 50 States (78 percent) implemented changes to improve program accessibility. In addition, 28 States planned to implement changes in FY 2000. This may be related to the fact that States have become concerned about the decline of FSP caseloads since welfare reform.

- With the opportunity to bring FSPs into conformity with TANF programs, it was expected that States would take steps to consolidate program functions by changing their organizational structures. Thirty-four States (68 percent) took steps to conform TANF and FSP rules, and 11 States reported changing their organizational structures. However, only three cited conforming TANF and FSP as the goal of their organizational changes. It would appear that PRWORA had a modest impact on changing organizational structures of FSP offices.

- Twenty-four States implemented increased program monitoring and evaluation, while 15 States planned to implement some form of monitoring and evaluation in FY 2000. FSP client participation rates were the primary focus of

Number of States planning and implementing re-engineering efforts by category of change



increased monitoring, followed by tracking and evaluating FSP client satisfaction with program services and efforts to improve program accessibility.

- County-administered States (those in which FSP administration has been devolved to the county) were expected to show less re-engineering activity at the State level—the level of this study—than those whose FSPs were State-administered, since it was assumed that re-engineering efforts by the former would be at the county level. In fact, 87 percent of county-administered States undertook changes in three or more re-engineering categories, as compared with 67 percent of the State-administered States. In addition, almost all (92 percent) of the county-administered States undertook changes to improve program accessibility.

Data from this study provide a thorough overview of the administrative and operational changes States have made or were planning to make to their FSPs in response to welfare reform. These data provide baseline information about program changes that can be used for future evaluations of the consequences of re-engineering efforts. In addition, this report can be used by State FSP administrators planning changes in a particular category to help generate ideas about approaches that may work for their State.

Re-engineering the Welfare System—A Study of Administrative Changes to the Food Stamp Program

Final Report

Introduction

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) dramatically changed the system that had provided cash assistance and food stamp benefits to low-income households since the early 1970s. While the primary focus of PRWORA was to replace the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) Federal entitlement program with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant, it also included major reforms to the Food Stamp Program (FSP). Eligibility rules were changed for some categories of low-income clients, benefits were modestly scaled back, and States were given increased flexibility to coordinate the administration of the FSP with their TANF programs. As a result of this increased flexibility and the reduction in TANF participation, States not only changed their FSP policies, but also changed many of the traditional administrative operations of the program at the State and local levels. The extent and nature of these administrative changes are the subject of this report.

Background of the Food Stamp Program

The primary objective of the FSP is to increase the food purchasing power of low-income citizens so that they may obtain a nutritious diet. The FSP provides food assistance in the form of food coupons or electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards that are redeemable at authorized food stores. FSP benefits are available to all persons who meet the national eligibility criteria established in each of three broad areas: income level, value of assets, and willingness to comply with work requirements. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture provides broad policy guidance to the States for implementing the Federal standards for the FSP set by Congress.

Day-to-day administration of the program is carried out by the States and, in some areas, by local governments under State supervision ("county-administered" programs), with the administrative costs shared by Federal, State, and local governments. States have always had a great deal of flexibility in how they administer the FSP, which was further expanded with the removal of certain State mandates and the creation of many new options for program administration in PRWORA. To accomplish the Federal goals for the FSP, States provided food stamp benefits to a monthly average of over 18 million individuals in 7.67 million households in Federal fiscal year (FY) 1999 (Food and Nutrition Service, 2000 (a)).

In 1996, PRWORA brought major changes to the FSP. The legislation includes more than 60 provisions directly affecting the FSP. Some of these changes had significant effects on food stamp eligibility and benefits, while others may have changed how States administer the FSP. The key provisions of PRWORA that affect FSP eligibility and benefits include:

- ***Eligibility Restrictions***
  - ***Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs).*** PRWORA imposed the first time limits on FSP participation. ABAWDs are only allowed to receive food stamps for 3 months in each 36-month period, if they are not working or participating in a workfare or employment and training program that involves more than a job search. This requirement, however, can be and has been waived in some areas within individual States. This new eligibility rule requires States to develop tracking systems to determine when these individuals hit their food stamp time limit and are no longer eligible to receive food stamps.

- ***Immigrants.*** PRWORA also ended food stamp eligibility for many legal immigrants. Noncitizen eligibility now depends on an array of rules involving age, date of U.S. entry, veteran status, work history with social security coverage, dis abilitystatus, and refugee status.

- ***Reductions in Benefit Levels.*** PRWORA also reduced the maximum food stamp benefit level, froze the standard deduction at FY 1996 levels, established lower caps on the excess shelter deduction and froze them at FY 2001 levels, and required households to include State energy assistance and the earnings of children under age 18 as income.

- ***Electronic Benefit Transfer.*** Since the 1980s States have been issuing food stamp benefits through electronic benefit transfer (EBT) systems, where participants are provided food stamp debit cards. Each time a participant shops at a participating retailer, he or she submits the debit card and the system draws down on available funds in the household's food stamp account after the food purchase is made. PRWORA requires all States to set up EBT systems by the year 2002. About 75 percent of food stamp benefits are currently being issued by EBT.

In addition to changing the eligibility and benefit provisions of the FSP, PRWORA also established new requirements and gave States more freedom to coordinate rules in the Food Stamp and TANF programs. Key PRWORA provisions in this area are described below.

- ***Simplified Food Stamp Program.*** Given the significant differences in each State's eligibility determination rules for TANF and the Federal standard rules for food stamps, PRWORA gives States the option to operate an approved Simplified Food Stamp Program under which States can determine food stamp benefits using TANF rules, regular food stamp rules, or a combination of the two, as long as the new rules do not reduce food stamp benefits more than a certain amount or increase Federal food stamp costs.

- ***Prohibition on Increasing Food Stamp Benefits for Sanctioned TANF Households.*** Administrative action by the Clinton Administration, just prior to passage of PRWORA, prohibited an increase in food stamp benefits when a household's income is reduced because of a sanction imposed under TANF for noncompliance with TANF work or with other requirements (such as school attendance or immunization of children). Before this action, food stamp benefits would have increased and partially compensated for the loss of cash assistance when a household's TANF benefits were reduced due to a TANF sanction.

- ***Optional Coordination of TANF and Food Stamp Sanctions.*** PRWORA also gives States the authority to either reduce food stamp benefits or disqualify from food stamps the noncompliant individual in the sanctioned TANF household. These PRWORA provisions also allow all States the ability to sanction the food stamp benefits of a TANF household with children under age 6—a group that had previously been exempt from any food stamp sanctions. According to published survey data on State food stamp choices after PRWORA, 12 States had chosen to disqualify food stamp recipients for failure to comply with TANF and 7 States selected the option to reduce food stamp benefits when a household is sanctioned for noncompliance with a TANF rule (Gabor and Botsko, 1998).

- ***Optional Child Support Sanctions.*** States also have the option of disqualifying a custodial or noncustodial parent from food stamps until they cooperate with child support enforcement offices. Eight States chose this option (Gabor and Botsko, 1998).

- ***Elimination of Joint Application Mandate***. PRWORA eliminated the requirement that States have a joint application form and process for food stamps and cash assistance. While most States have retained the joint application form, a few States conduct the application for food stamps and TANF at separate locations for persons applying for both programs (Gabor and Botsko, 1998).

Most important, the new law provided increased flexibility for States to customize their administration of the FSP to conform to changes being made in TANF, since these two programs are usually administered by the same State agency and at the same local welfare office sites. These changes in program administration could create significant variation among programs across the country. In some cases, these State variations will conform to changes being made for recipients of the TANF block grant program. In other cases, State variations in FSP administration will be specific to FSP recipients.

Study Purpose

The goal of this study is to inform Federal and State officials of the ways States have altered or re-engineered the FSP at the State and local levels after passage of PRWORA. Recognizing that States have been making a wide array of changes to their FSP since implementation of welfare reform, both in policy and administrative practices, and that the timing of State implementation of welfare reform has varied greatly, the scope of this study was specifically defined to include only administrative and operational practices and only changes in those practices that were implemented or planned to be implemented after passage of PRWORA.

The information gathered for this study has two primary uses. First, the data will provide a thorough overview of the administrative and operational changes States have made to their FSPs, or were planning to make, in response to welfare reform. It will enable prediction of changes likely to be seen in the near future. In addition, information about the types of administrative changes States made, and about some of the motivations of the State program administrators in making these changes, provides baseline information for future evaluations of the intentional and unintentional consequences of these changes. Finally, this report will be informative for State program administrators who have not yet implemented administrative and operational changes, who can consider how these changes may apply to their own State FSP agencies and local delivery systems.

Research Plan and Methodology

Categories of State Administrative Changes

To describe and facilitate analysis of the broad array of State FSP re-engineering efforts, the information gathered from the States was divided into the following six categories of change.

- ***Changes in Organizational Structures.*** This includes the ways States have restructured program functions and organizational units as a result of PRWORA. In order to be included in the study, the organizational changes must have directly impacted the operation of the FSP.

- ***Changes in the Role of the Caseworker.*** This includes the ways States have altered the role of the caseworkers who are serving food stamp clients at the local level. For the purpose of this study, the term "caseworker" includes any staff members that determine eligibility, conduct ongoing eligibility assessments, or provide case management services to food stamp recipients.

- ***Program Accessibility and Client Certification***. Once a potential client decides he/she is interested in applying for program benefits, a number of factors influence ability to apply for these benefits. First, the ability of a client to present himself or herself at the local FSP office may be an issue. Second, the complexity of the application process may influence whether the client feels it is worth the time and effort to complete the application process.

  This category includes data on two major activities undertaken by States. First, the study examined efforts by States to improve the client's ability to physically access the local FSP office. An example of administrative changes in this category is the development of support services, such as childcare and transportation, that local offices may offer to eligible individuals who want to apply for food stamps. Improving accessibility also covers expanding office hours to better serve working clients, opening additional offices in outlying areas, and sending caseworkers to other health and social service program locations to take applications. In addition, State outreach efforts to increase awareness of the FSP, such as publicizing the program through print and public service announcements, were examined.

  A second activity in this category consisted of changes States have made to their application process and certification systems, both through increased use of computer technology and by improving their certification process and/or food stamp application form. Changes in client certification may have an impact on whether clients find it easy to access the program by completing their applications. For example, if States increased the required documentation, clients might be less likely to complete the application process. In contrast, if the State simplified its application or recertification process, clients might be more likely to enroll and continue in the program.

- ***Changes in Client Tracking and Accountability Systems.*** For this category, the study examined States' use of database matching to support program integrity efforts, their development of computer software to track sanction policies and time limits, and their efforts to reduce error rates.

- ***Conforming FSP and TANF Program Rules.*** This includes information describing the extent to which States decided to align TANF Program rules and FSP rules.

- ***Program Monitoring and Evaluation.*** This category summarizes States' efforts to monitor and evaluate their FSPs. For the purpose of this study, efforts to monitor the FSP include: (1) routine assessment of program operations, (2) attempts to track food stamp clients after they leave the program, and (3) formal evaluations States have undertaken to assess the impact of policy or operational changes.

The data collected and analyzed for this study are based on information gathered from the States in FY 2000 (see the data collection methods section). At the time of the data collection, States were asked to provide information about changes they had implemented since the passage of PRWORA, as well as any changes they were planning to implement during the remainder of the fiscal year. While some States have already made many of their welfare reform-related FSP policy changes, implementation is proceeding in others at varying speeds. Some of the administrative changes discussed in this report have yet to be completed and others are still in the planning stages, as State officials assess how best to rework their administrative systems to support their policy choices. However, it is clear at this point that a number of the changes under PRWORA have important implications for administrative practices and information systems.

Research Questions

Since the overall purpose of the study is to provide a description of the re-engineering efforts made by States since the passage of welfare reform, the research questions were designed both to capture information that describes these initiatives and to examine how the initiatives varied among States. In addition, to the extent possible, the study examines some of the motivation of State FSP administrators for implementing the changes. The major research questions were as follows:

- To what extent have States implemented administrative or operational changes to their FSPs since the passage of PRWORA through FY 1999?

- To what extent were States planning to make changes to their FSP administrative practices or program operations during FY 2000?

- What were the motivating factors identified by States for making administrative and operational changes to their FSPs, and to what extent do the re-engineering efforts require the approval of different branches of government prior to implementation?

- How did States' efforts to re-engineer their FSPs vary between States with county-administered programs and those who administer the FSP at the State level?

Data Collection Methods

A three-part data collection process was developed to gather detailed information on administrative changes States have made or are making to their FSPs as a result of PRWORA. This process included: (1) abstracting data from State documents that describe the program changes, (2) administering a followup telephone survey to State officials to clarify and enhance the data abstraction, and (3) conducting a series of six case studies to examine local-level implementation of different re-engineering categories. The primary focus of each of the individual case studies was on one of the six major re-engineering categories. The studies are presented and discussed in Section II of this report.

Data Abstraction. The first step in the data collection process was gathering existing documents from States that described their re-engineering efforts in the six categories of change. The goal of the data abstraction process was to minimize the data collection burden on State government officials. Allowing officials to send existing documents for the project team to review and cross reference with the survey document meant that less of their time would be needed to obtain the data required for this study. The data abstraction process would also enable the team to ask fewer questions during the survey phase of the data collection process. In addition, because few States were likely to have made changes in all six categories, the review of existing documents meant that the followup telephone survey could focus on pertinent areas of administrative change, reducing the burden on respondents.

States were asked to send documents to the study team describing relevant changes to their programs. The types of documents gathered in this way were those used by States to obtain legislative authorization or project approval through an executive authority before implementing any FSP changes. The research team assumed that a number of documents generated from the States' planning and approval process could be for-

warded for data collection. The specific documents requested were legislative budget change proposals, departmental decision packages, strategic planning documents, advance planning documents, and other implementation plans.

However, because of the broad scope of the re-engineering categories and because the proposed changes may have affected other programs beside the FSP, some States informed the research team that gathering relevant documents would be a very cumbersome process. These State officials noted, for example, that since a number of re-engineering efforts were initiated outside the food stamp division, they would have to retrieve documents from other organizational units. Participants also indicated that relevant changes were not always documented in a way that would be helpful to the research team. In the end, 24 States were able to forward documents, 26 States asked to participate in the telephone survey only, and one State elected not to participate in the study because its food stamp office was significantly understaffed and it had not made any re-engineering changes that qualified under the six categories. A listing of the 24 States that were able to provide documents is found in appendix table 1.

Followup Telephone Survey. The second step in the data collection process consisted of conducting followup telephone surveys with State officials to clarify information from State documents, gathering information that was lacking in the material collected, and undertaking a data collection effort with States that could not provide documents for the data abstraction. The followup survey was useful not only for collecting data, but also for ensuring that the information the project team gleaned from the State documents was correctly interpreted.

The survey played the central role in the overall data collection. The survey instrument was divided into six sections of questions, corresponding to each of the re-engineering categories. Each section began with a screening question to determine whether a re-engineering effort in that specific category had taken place or was being planned for FY 2000. If the screening question received a negative response, that whole section of the survey was skipped.

As noted earlier, 49 States and the District of Columbia participated in the study. Forty-eight respondents participated in the followup telephone survey. One variation in the data collection methods did occur towards the end of the data collection period: at the request of two States, the survey form was modified so it could be completed by mail. These two States provided written responses to the survey questions but did not participate in the followup telephone survey. The combined data collection instrument for the document abstraction and followup survey is presented in the State data collection instrument at http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan01009.

Limitations of the Data

This study was designed to gather descriptive information about State re-engineering efforts in order to present a picture of how States have changed the administrative and operational practices of their FSP as a result of welfare reform. Though the research was able to accomplish this objective, a number of limitations to the data must be considered in reviewing the findings, as explained below.

- Since this study was designed to capture changes that occurred as a result of PRWORA, information on reforms that took place before PRWORA is not included. It is well known that States' welfare reform efforts began before the passage of PRWORA through the use of program waivers. For example, Utah made changes to its organizational structure by consolidating five agencies into a single Department of Workforce Development, but the restructuring was not included in the study because it took place prior to the passage of PRWORA.

- Planned changes may not have been implemented. The findings include information on changes that were planned for FY 2000 but that had not been fully implemented. A "planned" activity was defined as one that had been approved for implementation but had not begun or been completed at the time of the survey. However, this does not mean that the plan will be implemented in FY 2000. Problems such as budgetary or staffing limitations might interfere with full implementation of a State's re-engineering changes.

- Information was not collected to reflect changes made at the county level in county-administered States. Thirteen States pass on the responsibility of running their TANF and FSP to local county jurisdictions. In these States, the local jurisdictions often have the same kind of flexibility States have, and as a result modify their administration of the FSP to meet their own local needs and requirements. While variations between county-administered programs and State-administered programs are examined in the

findings section of this report, it was beyond the scope of this study to examine variations in the administration of the FSP among local areas within county-administered programs.

- Finally, it is important to note that the scope of State re-engineering efforts is both diverse and, in some cases, unique to particular situations within a State. When States were developing their re-engineering plans, they were not thinking about them in the categorical fashion used for this report, but rather were considering how they might modify their overall FSP administrative operations to meet the demands of welfare reform. While this report can provide a broad overview of re-engineering efforts, capturing data about specific State-by-State implementation steps and the level of effort needed to implement changes was beyond the scope of this project. To capture this type of detail would have required an expanded data collection process and created a significantly heavier burden on State program administrators.

The methodology used for this study tried to capture operational changes at a level that would allow comparable data to be examined across States. However, the research team was aware that there was a great deal of interest in examining some of the more innovative approaches used by States to implement their changes. Therefore, these new approaches were included in the six case study reports, which are the subject of Volume II of this report. These case study reports provide a higher level of detail with regard to the implementation and operational aspects of the specific State's re-engineering effort.

Findings from this study are organized into three chapters. Chapter I provides an overview of the extent to which States implemented re-engineering efforts in one or more of the categories described previously. Chapter II provides a detailed description of changes made by States in each of the re-engineering categories. Chapter III presents a discussion of the implications of the findings for future research. Tables presenting more detailed information on key survey responses from individual States are presented in appendix A.

Section A: State Survey

I. Overview of State Re-engineering Efforts

Categories of Administrative Change

Each of the six categories of State FSP administrative change analyzed for this study was chosen for its relevance to the FSP in a post-welfare reform environment. These categories were also chosen, in part, because these areas were of greatest policy interest to program managers at the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and were items for which FNS had no standardized means of collecting information. The policy premise upon which each of the six categories of administrative change was determined is briefly summarized below.

- ***Change in Organizational Structure of the State FSP Agency.*** In the broader context of State efforts to reorganize the State agency administering TANF and to increase the emphasis on moving clients into the workforce, many States have been merging agencies or consolidating functions at the State level. With the increased flexibility in developing program rules for the TANF block grant, some States are also moving from a centralized to a decentralized approach in the administration of their TANF programs. It was the purpose of this study to determine whether and how the administration of the FSP was altered during this same period.

- ***Changes in the Role of the Caseworker.*** As States are changing the orientation of the TANF program to focus on promoting work and self-sufficiency, and on identifying barriers to employment and how to overcome them, the role of the caseworker is pivotal. While States are required to pay more attention to client eligibility restrictions in the FSP, they are also changing the role of caseworkers who see TANF clients into more of a case manager role. As a case manager, the caseworker has added responsibilities, related to helping clients to become more self-sufficient, to find support services such as child care, and to identify opportunities for finding and maintaining a job. In addition, some States began dividing caseworker responsibilities by the type of client being served. For example, some States created classifications for caseworkers who handled clients eligible for multiple social and health services programs (TANF, FSP, and Medicaid), while creating separate classifications for workers who saw FSP participants only. This study sought to determine whether and how States changed the caseworker's role and the division of caseworker roles within local offices, including how caseworkers served both TANF and non-TANF clients.

- ***Changes To Improve Program Accessibility and Modify Client Certification Systems.*** The need to improve access to the FSP became increasingly clear in the mid-1990s, as program statistics indicated not only a dramatic decline in TANF participation nationwide, but also a significant decline in food stamp participation. This study sought to determine whether and how States varied in terms of their efforts not only to bring in eligible clients to apply for food stamps, but also whether and how they were encouraging eligible households to stay in the FSP after they took jobs and lost cash assistance. PRWORA gave States more flexibility in the food stamp application process, and the study also looked at how States modified the initial application and recertification processes in ways that may have affected program efficiency and coordination at the local level.

- ***Client Tracking and Accountability Systems.*** Unlike those in the other categories, the State changes assessed in this category are mostly a consequence of new Federal requirements enacted by PRWORA. Because of these new requirements, States need new methods for collecting and tracking information about applicants and current food stamp recipients in order to determine FSP eligibility and prevent errors in program certification. Examples of the new data States are required to maintain or be able to track through database matching efforts include: information on TANF clients' participation in work programs and their employment status; information on ABAWDs' employment, participation in FSP employment and training activities, and months of participation in the FSP; information on the immigration status and year of entry into the United States of legal aliens; and information from Federal and State records on clients' prior convictions for felonies.

- ***Conforming FSP and TANF Program Rules.*** Because of the new option of the Simplified FSP, along with Federal and State policymakers' interest in reducing program complexity and promoting conformity between TANF and the FSP, an important category of change was the extent of conformity that States initiated between these two programs. The study assessed the number of States that had con-

formed the FSP to their State TANF rules, either through the Simplified FSP option or by shaping TANF rules to existing Federal FSP rules.

- ***Program Monitoring and Evaluation.*** With the significant changes in welfare reform, it became important for public policymakers to know how the changes were affecting client outcomes. In the FSP, it is important to know whether and how States are investing in systems or special studies to monitor and evaluate the success of the FSP, both in terms of employment outcomes and of ensuring that families are receiving the food assistance to which they are entitled.

Number and Type of State Administrative Changes in the FSP After PRWORA

This section discusses the extent to which States made changes in their FSPs that fall into the six categories of re-engineering changes. Two approaches were used to examine these data. First, the total number of activities that fell into each of the six re-engineering categories was examined. These results are presented by displaying the number of States completing or planning an activity that fell into the specific re-engineering category. Second, the total effort made by States is displayed, that is, the number of States that undertook or planned re-engineering activities in one or more categories. Analyses of these data are therefore designed to provide a "big picture" view of the efforts made by States to re-engineer their FSPs. Details on the specific activities themselves within each of the six categories are presented in chapter II.

When viewing these data, it is important to remember that from the State agency's point of view, the changes to its FSP were likely the result of a single effort to change the way the program is administered. It was the purpose of this study to examine the State efforts and place the various activities into the six categories of re-engineering changes. For example, if a State decided to implement a project that redefined the role of the caseworker, and at the same time restructured reporting relationships by creating new organizational units, the State was classified in this study as having made changes in two re-engineering categories.

The data discussed below are divided into two general categories: activities implemented after PRWORA but prior to FY 2000, followed by activities planned for FY 2000.

How Many FSP Administrative Changes Did States Implement After PRWORA?

Every State agency included in the study (49 States and the District of Columbia) reported making administrative changes to their FSP that fell into one or more re-engineering categories. Figure 1 displays the number of States that have made changes, by the number of categories into which those changes fall. As can be seen, 48 (96 percent) of the States made changes that fall into two or more categories, while 19 States (38 percent) made changes falling into four or more re-engineering categories. Figure 2 displays each of the States and the number of re-engineering categories in which they made changes after PRWORA.

What Categories of Administrative Change Were Most Common?

As can be seen below in fig. 3, three categories of change were reported by the majority of respondents (see appendix table 2 for specific States). Forty States reported they had enacted re-engineering efforts in the category of client tracking and accountability systems—not a surprising finding, since this category of change was driven in large part by new requirements in the law. Thirty-nine States reported changes to improve FSP accessibility and client certification systems. Responses in this latter category included States' efforts to improve FSP participation by those eligible, as well as efforts to modify their application and certification systems. While efforts for improving access were consistent with the concern over large declines in FSP participation and the increasing public attention being paid to this, efforts to change the certification system may also have been a result of needing to reduce FSP certification error rates.

Of interest—and an unexpected result—was the third most frequently reported category of change: changes to conform FSP and TANF rules. Though only a small number of States opted to utilize the Simplified FSP option, a total of 34 States reported some efforts to conform the State's TANF and FSP rules.

A large number of States made changes in more than one of these three categories. Specifically, 22 States made changes in all 3 of these categories and 32 States made administrative changes in both their client tracking and accountability systems and in improving pro-

Figure 1

Number of States implementing re-engineering efforts as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by number of category changes

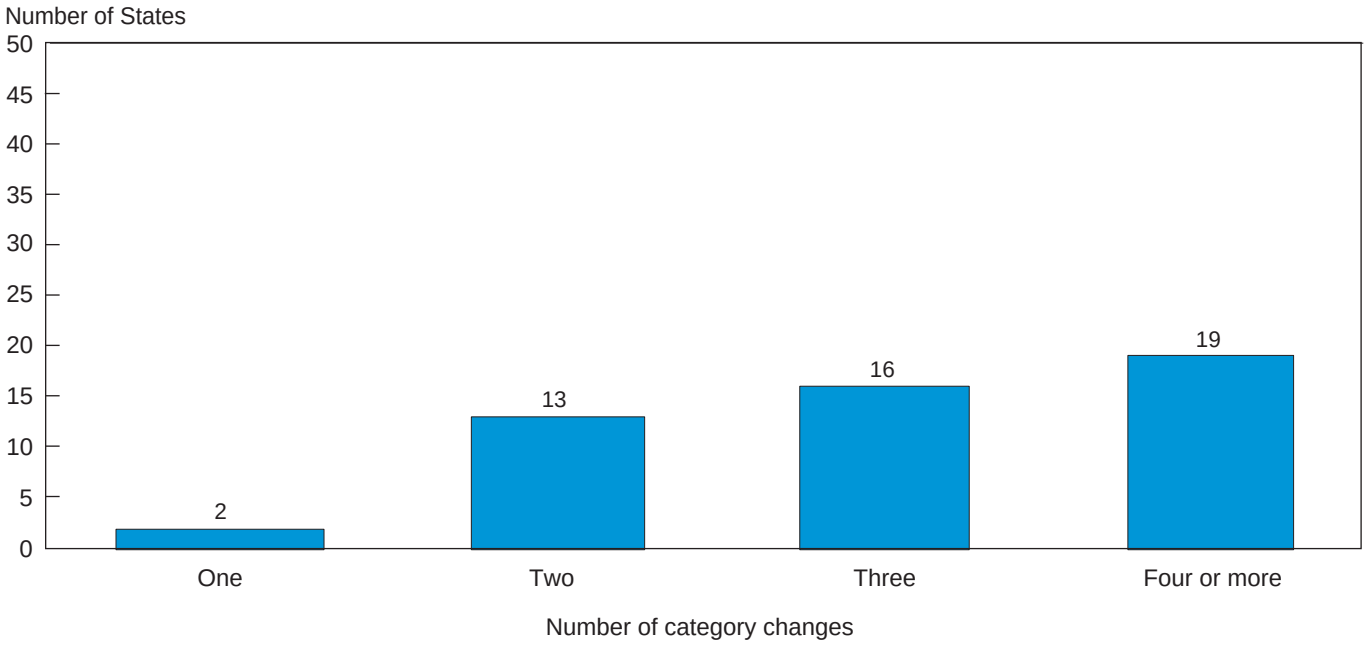
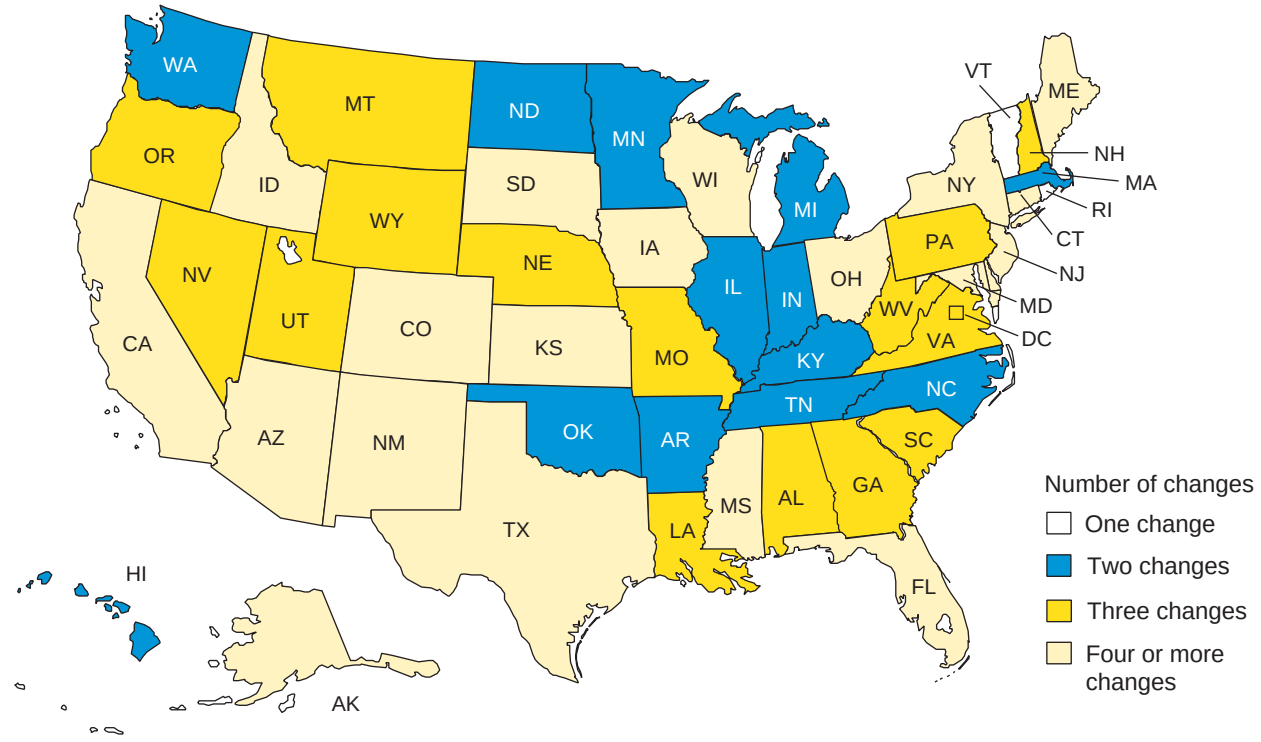


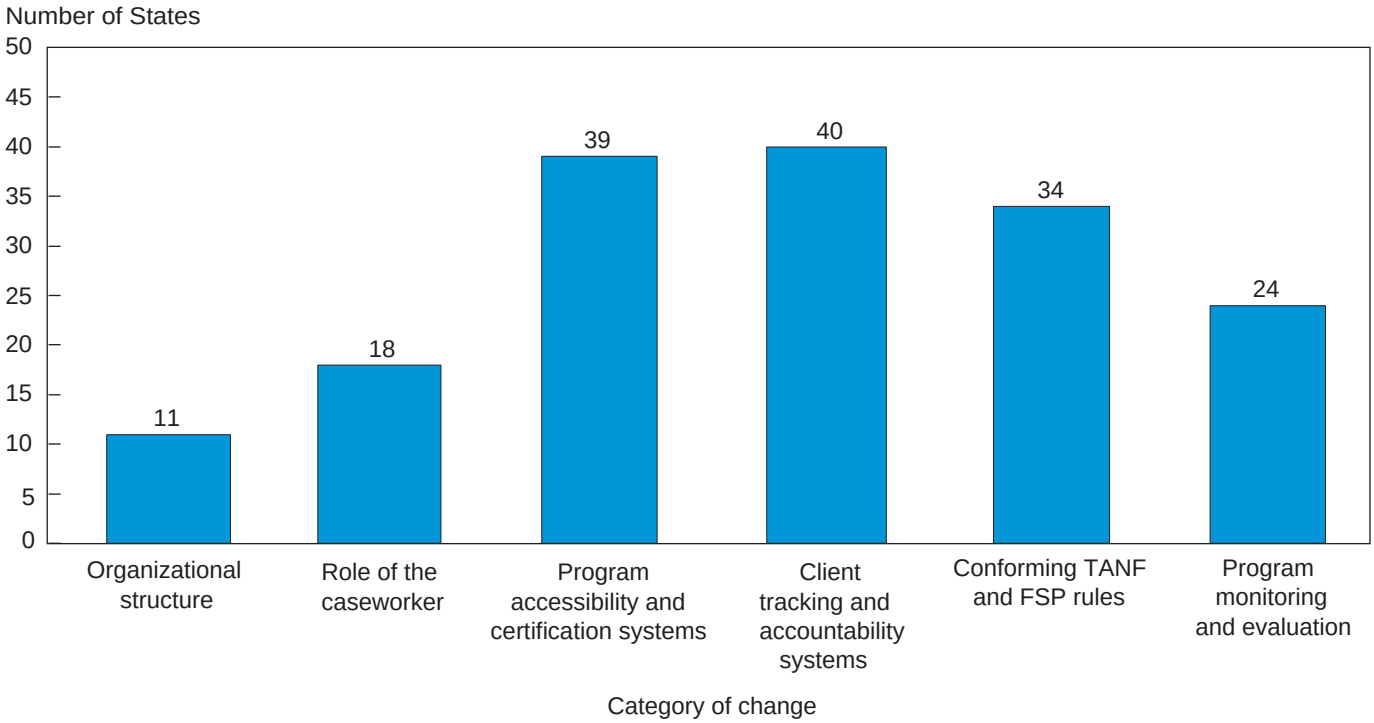
Figure 2

Number of re-engineering efforts by States as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000



Note: Delaware did not participate in the study.

Figure 3
Number of States implementing re-engineering efforts as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by category of change



gram accessibility and/or modifying their FSP certification systems.

What Changes Did States Plan to Implement by the End of FY 2000?

In addition to asking about activities implemented since 1996 as a result of welfare reform, the study also questioned State officials about plans for implementing re-engineering efforts in FY 2000. States that were planning to enact one or more re-engineering changes in FY 2000 are displayed on the map in fig. 4. As can be seen in fig. 5, only 10 States reported no plans to implement any re-engineering efforts. One-third (16) of States reported plans to implement one change, 17 planned to enact 2 categories of change, 6 planned on implementing 3 changes, and one planned on implementing 5 changes by the end of the fiscal year. All 10 of the States not planning to implement any further changes had already implemented 2 or more changes in the prior years.

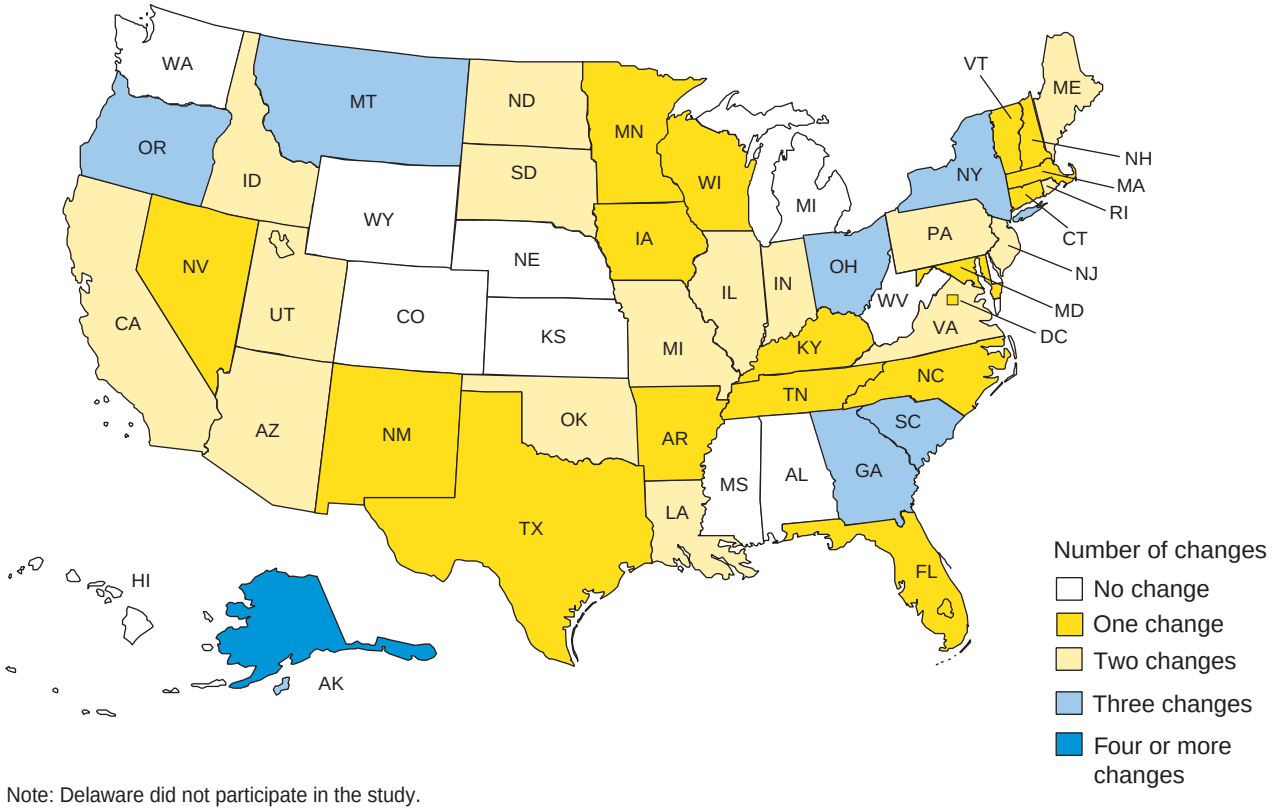
Of the States planning to implement changes in FY 2000 (see appendix table 3 for listing of States), the majority (28 States) planned to implement changes in program accessibility and certification systems (fig. 6). This may be a direct result of the concerns regarding drops in FSP participation rates. It was also interesting to note that nearly one-third of the States (15) planned to increase their program monitoring and evaluation activities in FY 2000. This also may be related to the drop in program participation, as States may be wishing to analyze the impact of welfare reform on client services and caseload. The increased interest in program monitoring and evaluation will be discussed further in chapters III and IV.

Comparison of Changes By State FSP Characteristics

In examining the level of the effort with which States have re-engineered their FSPs, it is important to assess whether the extent of State changes was correlated with the level at which the FSP is administered (county or State) and the size of the FSP caseload, as measured by the average number of monthly FSP participants in each State.

Figure 4

Number of re-engineering efforts planned by States for FY 2000



Note: Delaware did not participate in the study.

Figure 5

Number of States planning re-engineering efforts during FY 2000 by number of category changes

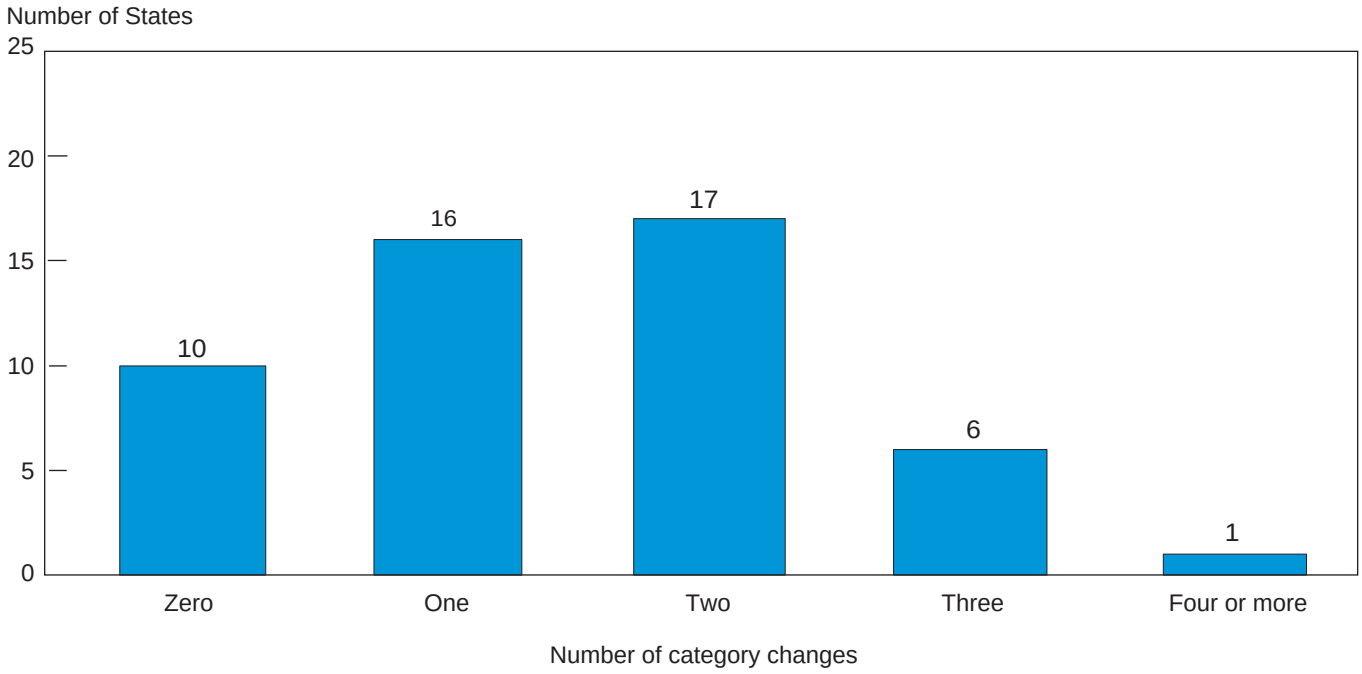
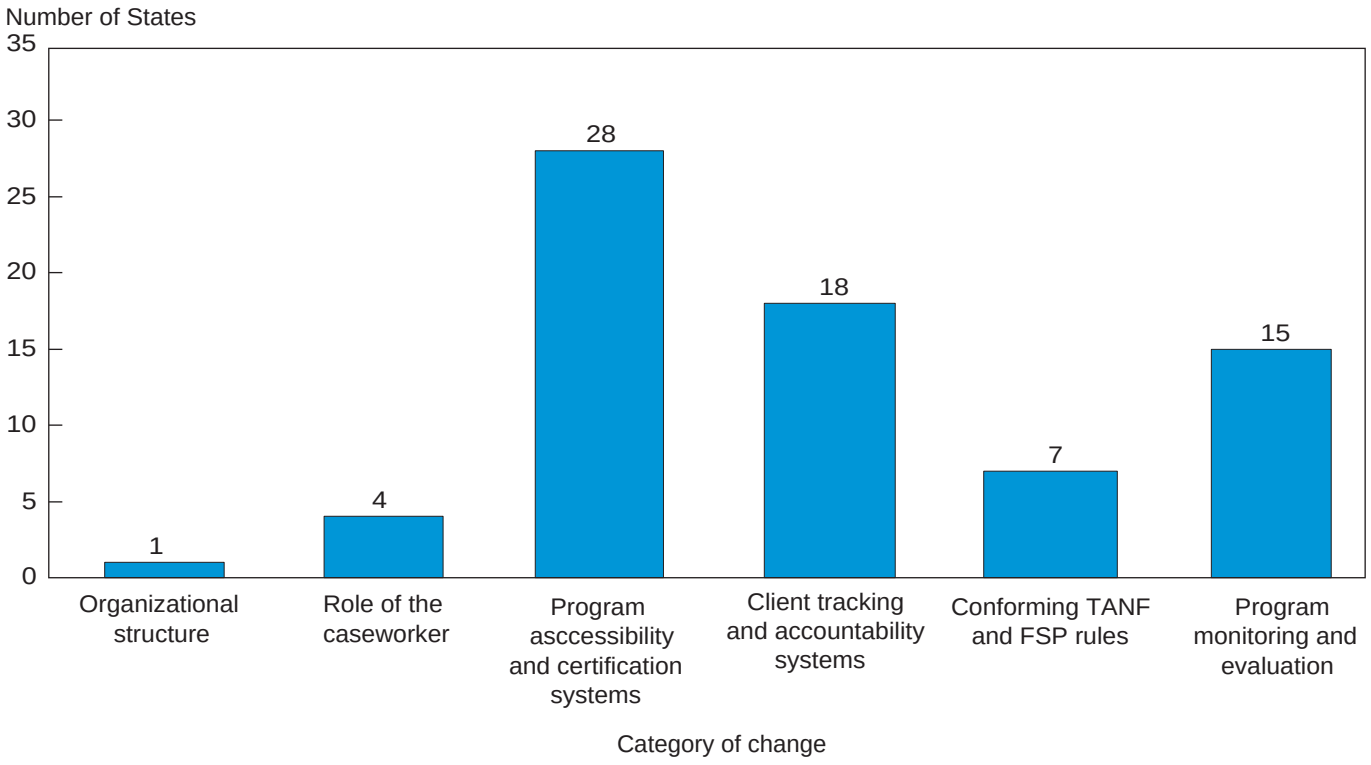


Figure 6
Number of States planning re-engineering efforts during FY 2000 by category of change



Are There Differences Between States With County-Administered and State-Administered Programs?

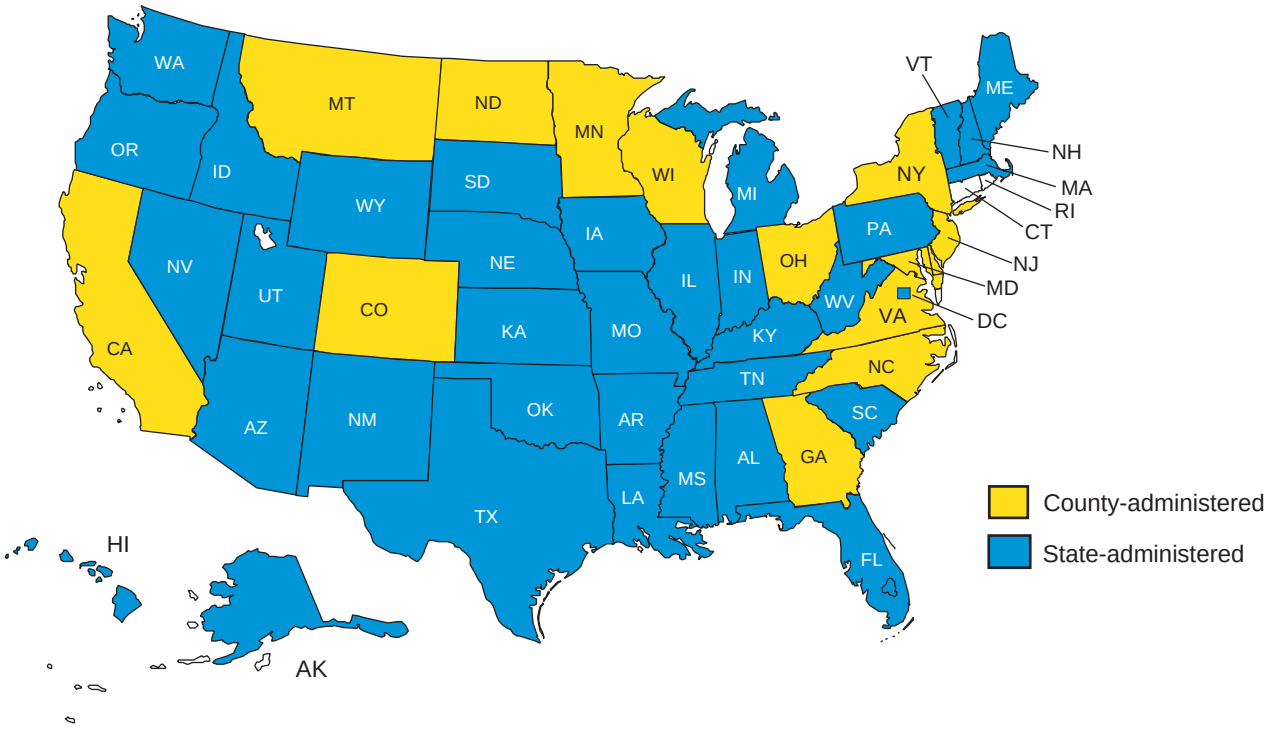
One hypothesis underlying this study was that States that allow counties to administer their FSPs would be more likely to place less emphasis on their re-engineering efforts than States that administer their programs at the State level. A total of 13 States (26 percent of the study States) have county-administered FSPs. The map in fig. 7 shows which States run county-administered FSPs and which run their FSPs from the State level.

Since the FSP rules are determined primarily at the Federal level, the major difference between county- and State-administered FSPs is that, in the former, a number of the decisions about administrative activities related to direct client services are passed down to local jurisdictions, depending on the level of flexibility allowed by the State. It was therefore thought that in county-administered States, the survey of State officials would find a smaller number of reported administrative changes because the re-engineering efforts might occur at the local level, where staff were not being surveyed.

However, when the data were examined, this assumption was not validated. County-administered States were just as active as, and in some categories more active than, their State-administered counterparts. When States with county-administered FSPs were compared with States administering their programs at the State level as to the number of re-engineering efforts enacted since PRWORA, some interesting contrasts were noted. Figure 8 compares the number of reengineering efforts enacted by the county- and State-administered programs. As can be seen, 7 of the States with county-administered programs (54 percent) made 4 or more changes, while 12 States with State-administered programs (32 percent) made 4 or more changes. All of the States with county-administered programs made more than two changes.

When the States reporting different categories of re-engineering efforts were broken down by county-administered and State-administered programs, some variations were found (fig. 9). While the most frequent categories of change in both kinds of States were the same—tracking and accountability systems, program accessibility and certification systems, and conforming the TANF and FSP rules—the most common types of administrative changes among county-administered

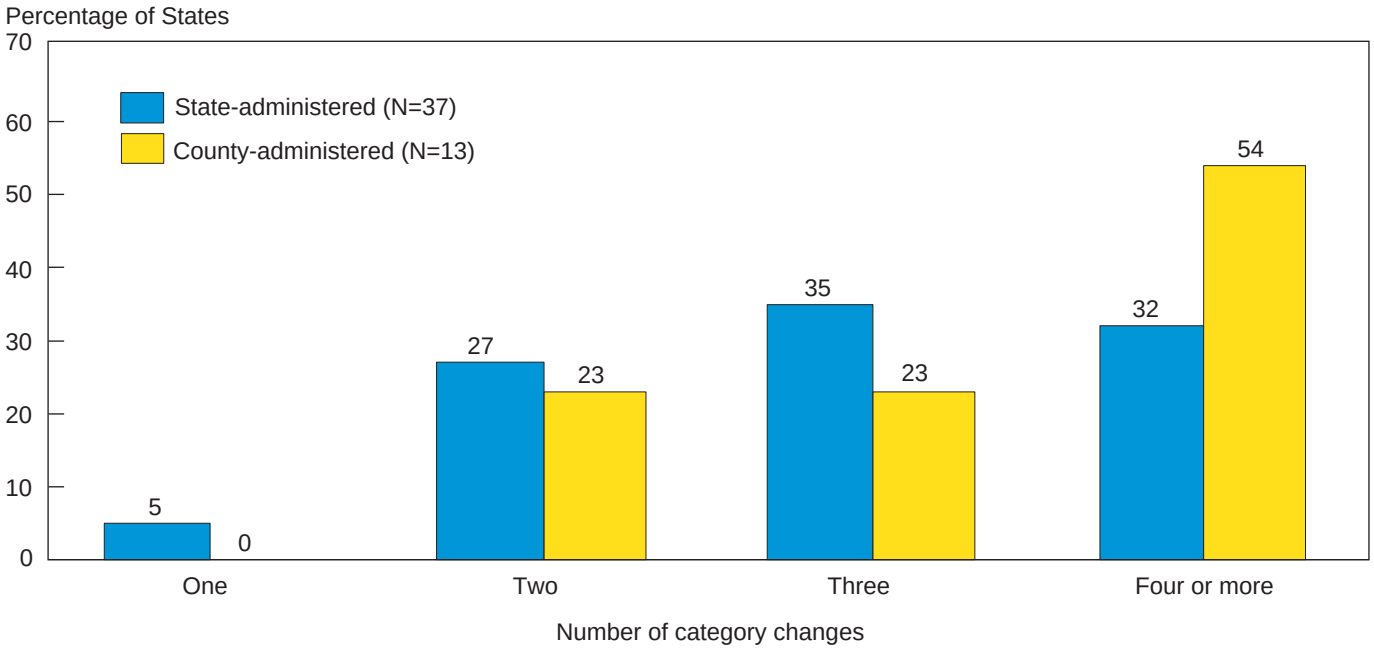
Figure 7
County- and State-administered programs[1]



[1]State-administered refers to States whose FSP's are administered at the State level; in county-administered States, FSP responsibiity has been given to the counties.

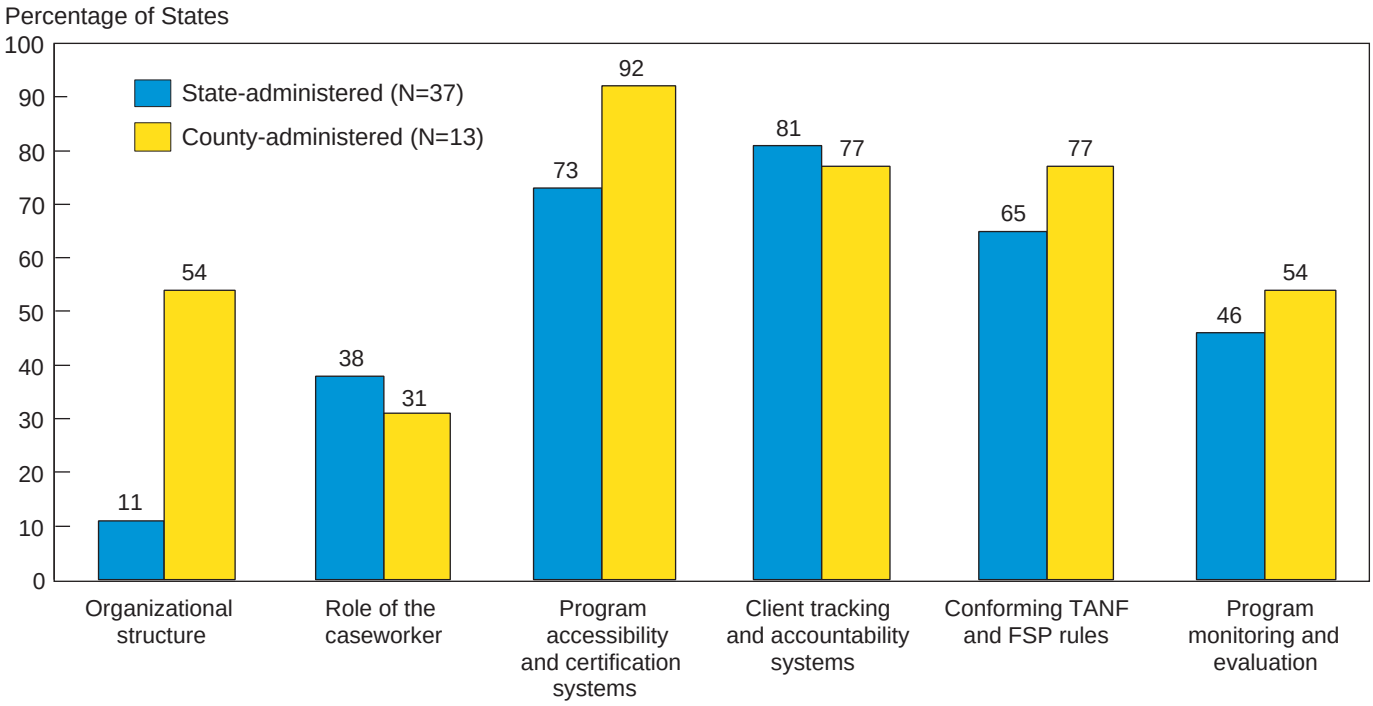
Note: Delaware did not participate in the study.

Figure 8
Percentage of State- and county-administered States enacting re-engineering changes as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by the number of category changes[1]



[1]State-administered refers to States whose FSP's are administered at the State level; in county-administered States, FSP responsibiity has been given to the counties.

Figure 9
Percentage of State- and county-administered States implementing re-engineering efforts as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by category of change[1]



[1]State-administered refers to States whose FSP's are administered at the State level; in county-administered States, FSP responsibiity has been given to the counties.

States (for 92 percent of the States) were changes in program accessibility and certification systems, while the most frequently reported administrative changes among State-administered programs (for 81 percent of the States) were changes to their client tracking and accountability systems.

When the types of changes planned for FY 2000 were examined (fig. 10), the county- and State-administered States had similar responses. For both kinds of programs, the most frequently reported planned change was to their program accessibility and certification systems—a program area that is being heavily stressed by FNS and the public to ensure FSP access for the working poor and those leaving the welfare rolls. In the latter case, the county-administered States reported planning additional changes in their program accessibility and certification systems, since the majority had made such changes prior to FY 2000. While 7 of the 13 States with county-administered programs (54 percent) made organizational structure changes prior to FY 2000, none were planning any changes of this type in FY 2000.

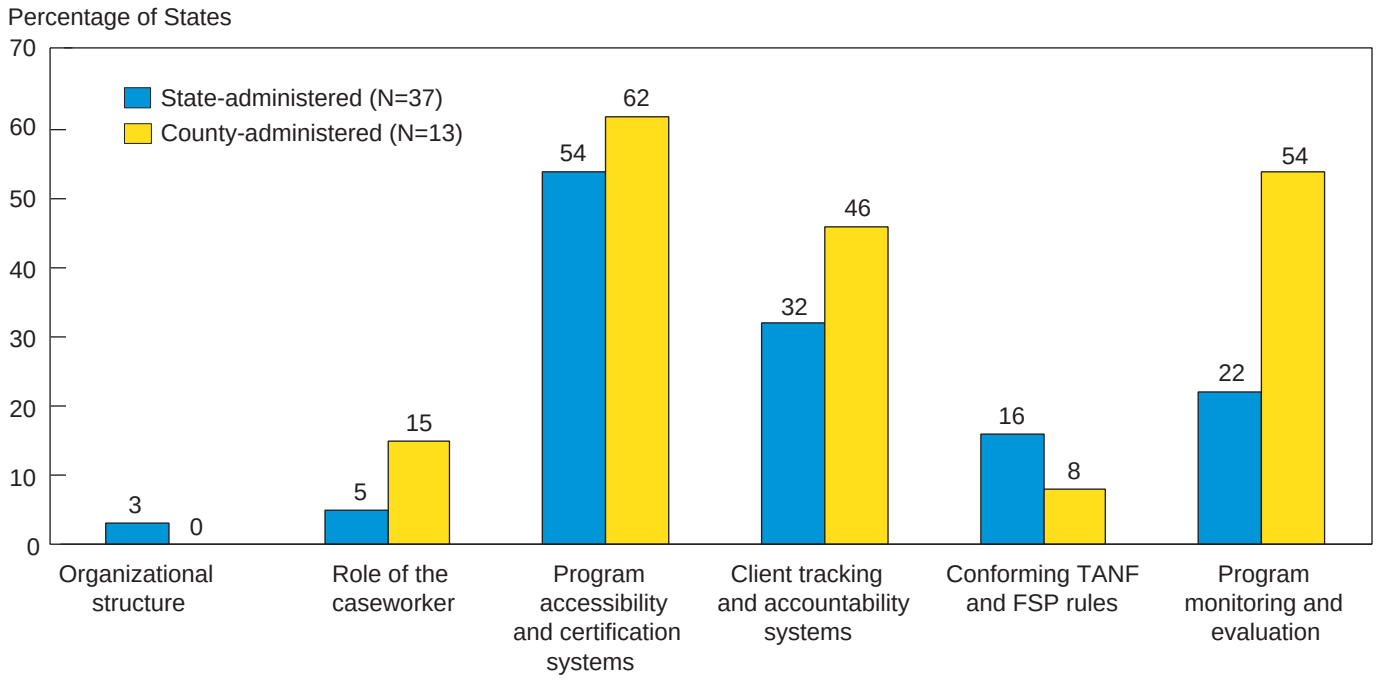
Do Differences Across States Relate to Caseload Size?

Another factor believed to influence the variability of State re-engineering efforts was the size of the State's food stamp caseload. For purposes of this study, States were divided into those with small, medium, and large FSPs, based upon their average monthly caseload in FY 1999, the latest fiscal year for which final FSP participation data were available. A small State was defined as having a caseload of 100,000 persons or less, and a medium-sized State as having a caseload of between 100,000 and 500,000. Large States had caseloads over 500,000 (Food and Nutrition Service 2000(b)). (See appendix table 4 for specific State groupings.)

A total of 13 States fit into the small category, while 25 States were considered medium-sized and 12 were defined as large. When comparing the variation in the number of administrative changes across States by caseload size, minimal differences were found (fig. 11). All of the States with medium and large caseloads had enacted two or more administrative changes through FY 1999, while 85 percent of the small States

Figure 10

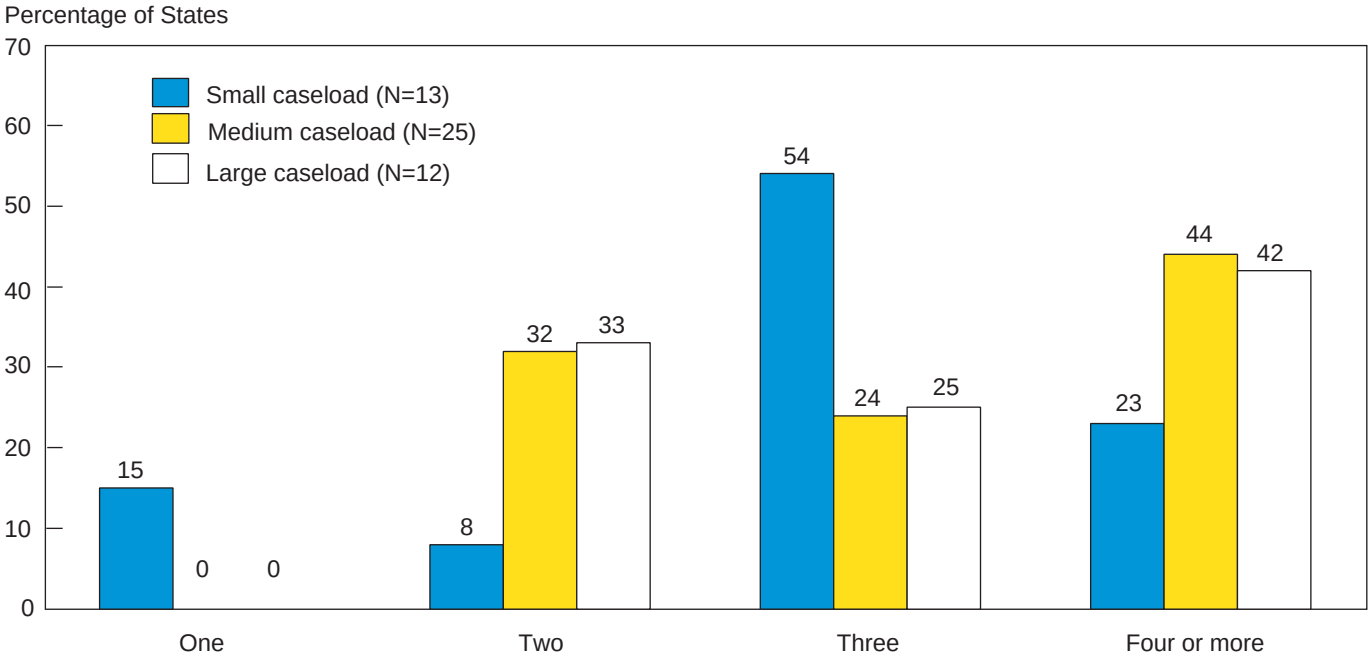
Percentage of State- and county-administered States planning re-engineering efforts during FY 2000 by category of change[1]



[1]State-administered refers to States whose FSP's are administered at the State level; in county-administered States, FSP responsibiity has been given to the counties.

Figure 11

Percentage of States implementing re-engineering efforts as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by number of category changes and by State caseload size



had enacted changes in two or more categories. Seventy-seven percent of the small States had enacted changes in three or more categories, as compared with 68 percent of the medium States and 66 percent of the large States.

In contrast, there were some differences found by State caseload size in the type of administrative changes most frequently reported, as illustrated in fig. 12. All 13 States with small caseloads reported making changes in their client tracking and accountability systems prior to FY 1999. Among States with medium-sized food stamp caseloads, the most common re-engineering efforts were in program accessibility and certification systems, with 20 of 25 States (80 percent) noting changes in this category. The 12 States with large caseloads divided their preference, with 10 (83 percent) making changes in client tracking and accountability systems and the same percentage making changes in conforming their FSP to their TANF program.

States Reporting Variation in Administrative Changes for Rural Areas

In examining the activities States undertake to re-engineer their FSPs, one can not assume that the changes in a particular category are the same across the State. For example, States might modify their re-engineering plans to accommodate the special needs of areas they consider rural. As part of this study, State officials were asked if they made different types of changes within their States based upon whether the program was providing services in a rural or an urban/suburban area. For example, accessibility issues may be greater in rural areas, which have limited transportation and long distances between clients and FSP offices. In addition, fewer staff may be available in rural areas, requiring adjustments in the role of the caseworker, such as creating generic caseworkers to serve all types of food stamp clients; conversely, the availability of a larger number of caseworkers in more urban areas may result in more specialization of caseworker activities.

For purposes of this study, States were not given a standardized definition of what constitutes a "rural" area, but were simply asked if different re-engineering changes were made based upon their own definitions of rural. A total of 18 States indicated that they implemented different types of re-engineering efforts based upon their perception of differing needs in rural areas of their State. The map in fig. 13 displays the States that decided to vary their re-engineering efforts in this way.

Figure 12
Percentage of States enacting re-engineering efforts as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by category of change and State caseload size

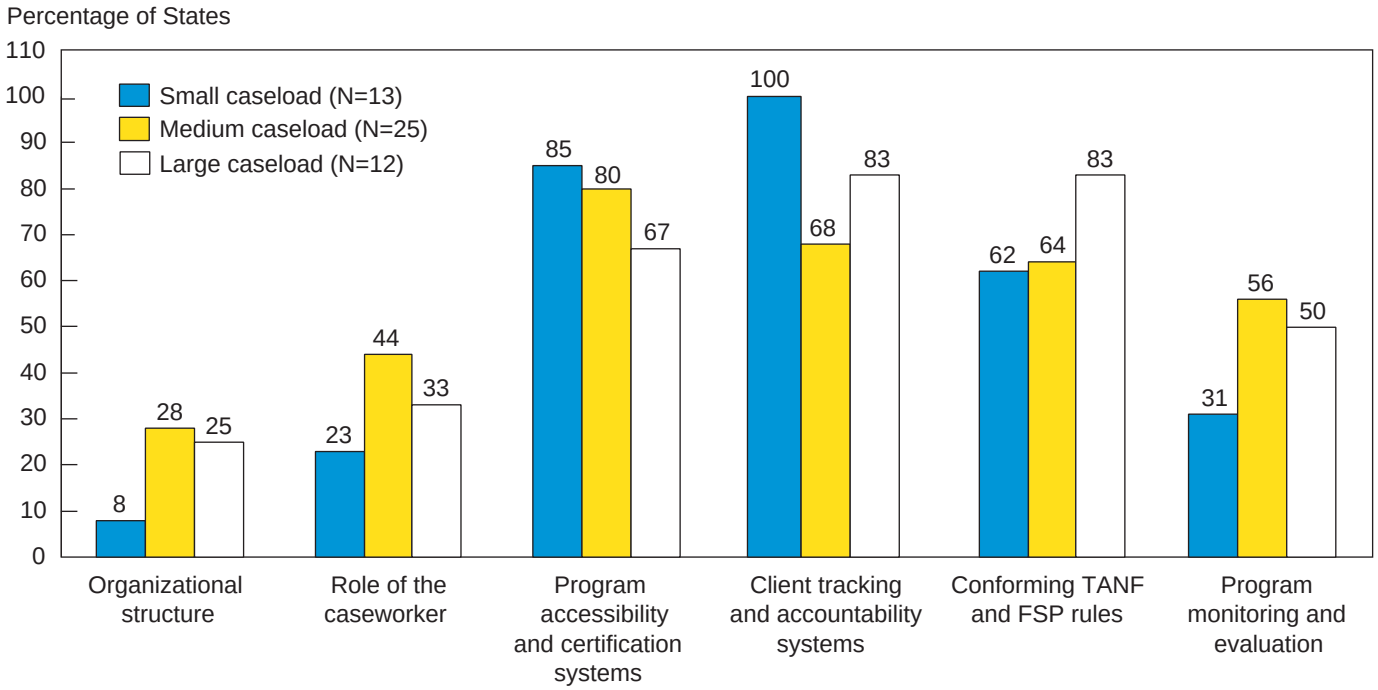
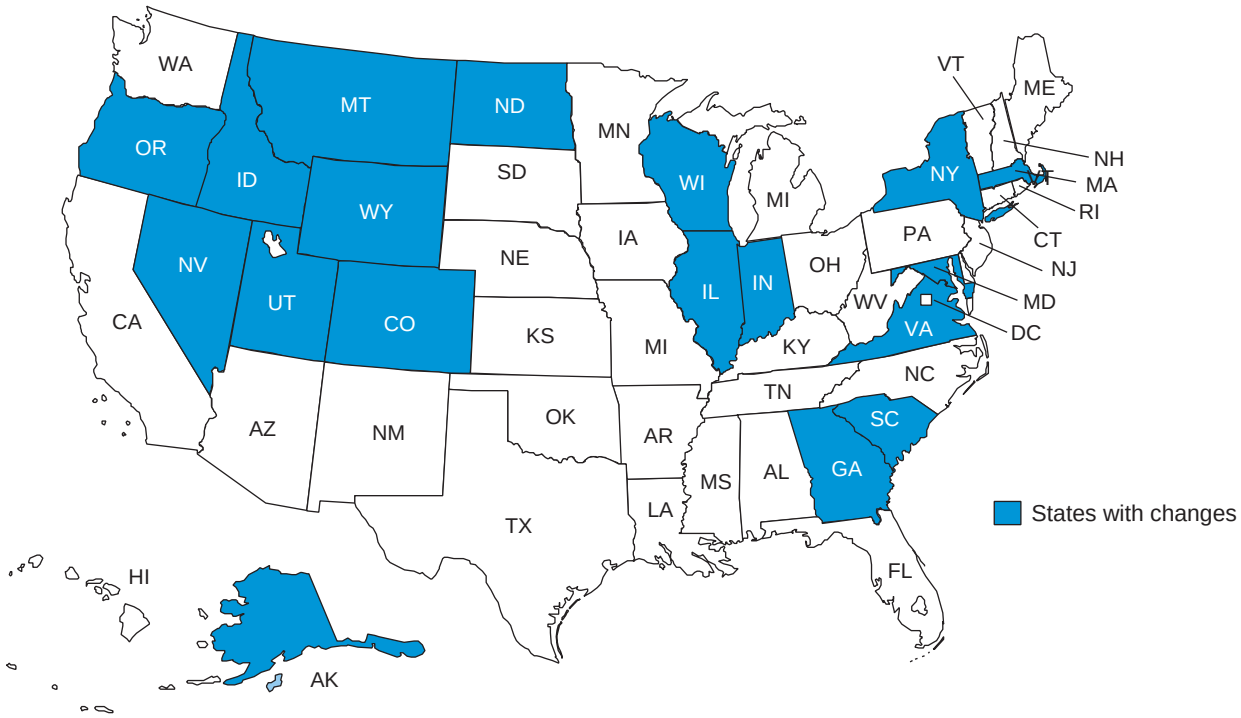


Figure 13

States making changes based on differing needs for urban and rural areas



Note: Delaware did not participate in the study.

States were specifically asked if they took different approaches in their rural areas when they implemented changes in the categories of program accessibility and certification systems or when they changed the role of the caseworkers serving food stamp clients. Nineteen States reported some variation between changes they made in rural versus nonrural areas, with 14 States reporting variation in the area of program accessibility and certification systems and 3 States reporting they had customized changes in the role of the food stamp caseworker for their rural areas.

This chapter has provided a general overview of the level of effort engaged in by States in re-engineering their FSPs as a result of welfare reform. While an examination into the categories of changes is necessary, it is important to note that the specific activities undertaken by States within each category may vary significantly. The next chapter provides an in-depth look at the specific administrative and program operations activities that States performed within the various re-engineering categories.

II. State FSP Administrative Changes Since Welfare Reform

The key findings of the re-engineering survey are presented in this chapter. While the previous chapter described aggregated categories of change in State FSP administrative practices, this chapter details specific changes within these categories. Each of the six re-engineering categories is broken into subcategories to show in detail how States changed or planned to change their FSPs.

Changes in Organizational Structure

Reorganization efforts undertaken by States can vary from simply restructuring reporting relationships within the organization to transferring major program units and/or functions in or out of existing organizational structures. Of interest to this study was whether the increased FSP requirements of PRWORA, combined with the added flexibility provided by PRWORA, resulted in State reorganizations of FSP administration. As was noted in chapter I, 11 of the 50 States included in the study decided to undertake organizational changes related to PRWORA.

The primary goal of States' reorganization efforts was to increase overall program efficiency, expressed in varying ways, with 6 of the 11 States noting this as their main goal. Better coordination between TANF and the FSP were cited by three States as their reason for reorganizing. Other goals included becoming more responsive to local needs, focusing on work issues and self-sufficiency of clients, and improving program accountability.

States used a variety of approaches in changing their organizational structures to meet their intended goals. One of the key areas of interest for this study was the extent to which State FSP administrative responsibilities were expanded or reduced as a result of PRWORA. To obtain information on this, a series of questions were asked regarding the movement of program functions or operations in or out of the FSP administrative unit. Of particular interest was whether the State FSPs added functions or program operations to their existing organizational units, moved functions or program operations out of the FSP administrative unit, or made changes that could be classified as having done both. Second, the study examined whether program operations and functions were added to the responsibilities of the State agency administering the FSP, whether the State eliminated functions that were no longer necessary, or whether it created new functions within its organizational unit that did not exist within the FSP before. The findings in these two areas are discussed below.

Movement of Organizational Functions and Program Activities

One reason States may change their organizational structures is to increase the span of control over program activities by moving functions into a single organizational unit (centralization) or to spread functions that once had been carried out by a single organizational unit into multiple units (decentralization). This study examined whether changes in organizational structure resulted in a more centralized FSP or a more decentralized program.

- ***Centralized Activities or Functions***. States were considered to have centralized an activity or function if one or both of two activities took place. First, if a single State agency absorbed functions that were previously performed by different organizational units within State government, it was considered to have centralized its operations. Second, if States decided to assume activities or functions formerly conducted by local jurisdictions (counties or other localities), then they were considered to have centralized a component of their FSP operations. For example, if a State decided to take over monitoring and evaluation activities that had been the responsibility of local or regional food stamp offices, it was considered to have centralized this operation.

- ***Decentralized Activities or Functions.*** States were considered to have decentralized activities or functions when the converse of the above activities took place. First, if a State decided to identify functions that had been the responsibility of a single organizational unit and distribute these functions to a number of organizational units within the State government, it was considered to have decentralized its operations. In addition, if the State decided to move functions that were previously the responsibility of the State central office to regional or county agencies, then the State was classified as having decentralized that function as well. For example, if States moved

the responsibility for conducting staff training to their regional offices, then they were considered to have decentralized that component of their operations.

The moves to centralize and decentralize State FSPs are not mutually exclusive. A State can make changes in one part of its program that result in a more centralized structure and at the same time can make other changes to decentralize it. This was observed in this study. Of the 11 States that made changes to their organizational structure, 5 States undertook activities that would be characterized as centralizing activities or functions, while 6 States engaged in efforts that decentralized a program activity or function. However, 3 of the 11 States reporting the above changes indicated that they had taken actions that centralized one component of their program while decentralizing another. Therefore, in an unduplicated count, three States decentralized activities, two States centralized activities, and three States implemented a combination of both. Also, three States implemented changes to their organizational structure that resulted in no change in centralization or decentralization of activities. Table 1 displays the States falling into each of these four categories. The case study conducted in Connecticut, discussed in the second section of this report, provides a detailed description of how State reorganization efforts can affect Food Stamp Program operations.

In the States where functions were transferred to another organizational unit or agency, the program elements most commonly transferred were activities related to employment and training. Five of the six States that decentralized functions either transferred employment and training units to a different agency or department or contracted with outside agencies or private organizations to perform this function.

Table 1—States changing organizational structure by type of approach

Centralized activities only	Decentralized activities only	Both centralized and decentralized activities	Neither centralized nor decentralized
Virginia	Colorado	California	Maryland
Washington	Idaho	Connecticut	Ohio
	New Mexico	New York	Wisconsin

Changes in the Responsibilities of the FSP Administrative Agency

One focus of this study was how the changes in organizational structure discussed above affected the overall operation of the State FSP agency. In particular, State officials were asked about two ways change might have occurred. First, the officials were asked if they made any efforts to take over functions or organizational units that were previously the responsibility of organizations located in other State departments. Two States reported that they had absorbed functions previously performed by different departments into the State FSP agency.

Second, State officials were asked if they had eliminated any organizational units or functions that were no longer necessary as a result of PRWORA, or whether new functions or organizational units were created that had not been part of the State FSP agency prior to PRWORA. None of the 11 States reported having eliminated any functions or organizational units as no longer necessary. Four States (California, New York, Virginia, and Washington) noted that they had created new organizational units that had not existed prior to PRWORA to implement time limits for ABAWDs or to increase employment and training programs targeted to this population. This is likely the result of increased tracking requirements for ABAWDs and the increased funding of employment and training programs resulting from the Balanced Budget Act of 1997.

One of the interesting aspects of this re-engineering category is the extent to which States eliminated jobs or positions as a result of their organizational changes. With State reorganization efforts, particularly those that involved consolidating or transferring functions from one organizational unit to another, it would seem reasonable to expect that some jobs or positions would be eliminated. However, none of the States that made organizational changes reduced the number of State positions in the FSP, even when organizational units were consolidated. Finally, States were asked if they planned to make any changes to their organizational structure in FY 2000. The only State reporting a planned change in FY 2000 was Arkansas, which had adopted the Simplified Food Stamp Program option but was planning to return to the standard Federal food stamp rules.

Changes in the Role of the Caseworker

The second re-engineering category examined in this study comprised changes that affected the role of the caseworker. As noted in the previous chapter, the focus of the welfare system on a "work and self-sufficiency" model was likely to change the role of the caseworker. Prior to PRWORA, the caseworker's main role was to determine eligibility and then to monitor changes in income or other factors affecting eligibility status. Often caseworkers specialized in particular programs, which meant that clients participating in multiple programs dealt with different caseworkers. With the passage of PRWORA, States had the opportunity to change the role of the caseworker in a number of ways. Additionally, innovations in program administration, such as the establishment of call centers to recertify clients—along with the increased emphasis on helping clients become self-sufficient—brought about changes in caseworker responsibility in some States.

These changes involve a redirection of program responsibilities and activities beyond the traditional role of determining eligibility. In some States, caseworkers have begun to assume responsibility for assessing eligibility for both the TANF and FSP, as well as for assisting clients with finding employment or support services such as child care or transportation. These changes in caseworker responsibility are documented through job descriptions and employment requirements.

However, there is a second type of change that, while not detailed here, should be mentioned. This more informal change in the role of the caseworker takes place at the level of individual interaction between caseworkers and clients. By taking on responsibilities for helping the client become more self-sufficient, the caseworkers may find themselves spending much more time getting to know the needs of their clients and helping them to develop plans for improving their overall well-being. For example, there may be pressure on the caseworker, whether real or implied, to move clients off the welfare roles and into a job, or there may be an effort on the part of the State to increase support services to allow clients better access to employment opportunities. As a result, the caseworker may find that the fundamental relationship between the client and caseworker has changed in ways that cannot be described by examining civil service job descriptions. It is important to recognize that these types of changes most probably occurred, even though examining them was not within the scope of this study. The case study conducted in Kansas, in Section II of this report, provides an excellent example of how caseworker roles were changed to consolidate functions. It also demonstrates the dilemma faced by caseworkers responsible for moving clients off the TANF rolls while at the same time promoting FSP and Medicaid participation.

State Goals Related to Changing the Role of the Caseworker

Of the 50 States included in the study, 18 reported that they made changes to the role of their caseworkers (see appendix table 5 for specific States). When they were asked about their goals related to these changes, four specific goals emerged. As was true with their reorganization efforts, the States often had more than one outcome in mind when planning changes to the role of the caseworkers. The four main goals noted by States were to:

- ***Increase coordination between the FSP and the TANF program***. This was the most frequent goal, cited by 11 of the 18 States. In particular, some States noted the importance of coordinating eligibility and case management services in order to increase continuity between these programs. This resulted in some caseworkers serving clients who were eligible for both TANF and the FSP (and Medicaid as well) and other caseworkers being responsible for FSP-only participants.

  Note that one State, Arizona, is piloting a project that takes the responsibility for certification of TANF clients, and the commensurate responsibility of helping them find employment, away from government workers and puts it in the hands of a private company. In addition, Arizona Native American tribes are allowed to run their own TANF programs, with State employees remaining responsible for FSP certification. This means that FSP caseworkers must work with the private provider and tribal caseworkers to coordinate certification activities, program change reporting, and followup on persons leaving the TANF program. The case study conducted in Arizona describes how these two programs are functioning and the issues faced by public, tribal, and private caseworkers.

- ***Reduce Fragmentation in the Provision of Services.*** Nine States noted that they changed the role of the caseworker as a way to accomplish this,

often by making caseworkers responsible for the eligibility process for multiple programs. Some States noted the benefits of information not having to be collected repeatedly on the same household by different workers and of caseworkers being able to work with clients to identify additional services and benefits for which they may be eligible.

- ***Increase Efficiency of the FSP.*** Six States reported improved efficiency in the operation of their FSP after changing the role of the caseworker. Examples included better management and coordination of client self-sufficiency activities by caseworkers and less time spent by caseworkers on the recertification process. For instance, Utah, Georgia, and Texas established centers to handle client status-change reporting and recertification activities. Removing this responsibility from the local caseworkers has both helped to reduce error rates and allowed caseworkers more time to assist clients at the time of certification. Case studies in Texas and Georgia describe how such "change centers" have affected both the role of the caseworkers in those States (one State being "State-administered" and the other "county-administered") and the process by which clients are recertified for the FSP.

- ***Increase Coordination Between the FSP and Programs other than TANF.*** Four States noted that their main goal for changing the role of the caseworker was to improve the coordination of food stamp services with other social and health services for non-TANF food stamp households. In particular, better coordination with Medicaid and employment and training activities was cited as a reason for broadening the role of caseworkers serving non-TANF applicants.

Changing the responsibilities of the caseworker often requires formal revisions to civil service job descriptions, which also may alter the education and experience requirements for the job. In addition, the caseworker may assume duties that were previously performed by staff in other job classifications. As a result, the State FSP agency may have been required to obtain formal approval for these changes from other governmental agencies, labor unions, or the State legislature. In addition, once the changes were approved, a transition period was likely to have been allowed so caseworkers could receive training for their new responsibilities. The extent to which changes in the role of the caseworker required formal changes in civil service job classifications, the approval of other organizations, and retraining was examined.

Changes in Civil Service Job Requirements

Of the 18 States reporting that they changed the role of the caseworker, 10 did so by retiring or reclassifying the civil service positions used for the caseworker and by restructuring the caseworker's job description to include responsibilities previously conducted by employees in other job classifications. However, while 10 States made changes to the civil service job classifications, only 3 States altered the education and experience requirements for their new caseworkers. Several States noted that they added new responsibilities to the caseworker job description that were once performed by staff in other State programs. In particular, duties related to helping clients find employment opportunities were most often cited as roles removed from outside agencies and added to the job description of caseworkers serving food stamp clients, thereby changing the role of the caseworker. Figure 14 shows the number of States that combined functions in FSP with those previously performed by other agencies, by the type of programs from which these functions were transferred.

The extent to which States were required to obtain the approval of other governmental agents to implement changes to the caseworkers' role was also examined to determine which State agents were indirectly involved in State re-engineering efforts. In addition, it was assumed that since State agencies receive funding from different sources, they often need approvals before they can implement any programmatic changes they have planned. Figure 15 displays the type of governmental agency or organization from which approval for changing the role of the caseworker was obtained (see appendix table 6 for specific States). The most common agency approvals, as might be expected in changing the job descriptions of civil service employees, were requested of formal civil service boards or personnel agencies. Eleven States reported having to obtain this approval. The governor's office in five States approved the changes to the role of the caseworker, while four States went to their State legislature for approval.

The extent to which the caseworkers themselves were involved in the planning process for changing their roles was also examined. Three States obtained approval of State employee unions or organizations to which the caseworkers belonged, while 12 States

Figure 14

Number of States combining food stamp activities with those previously performed by other agencies as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by type of program

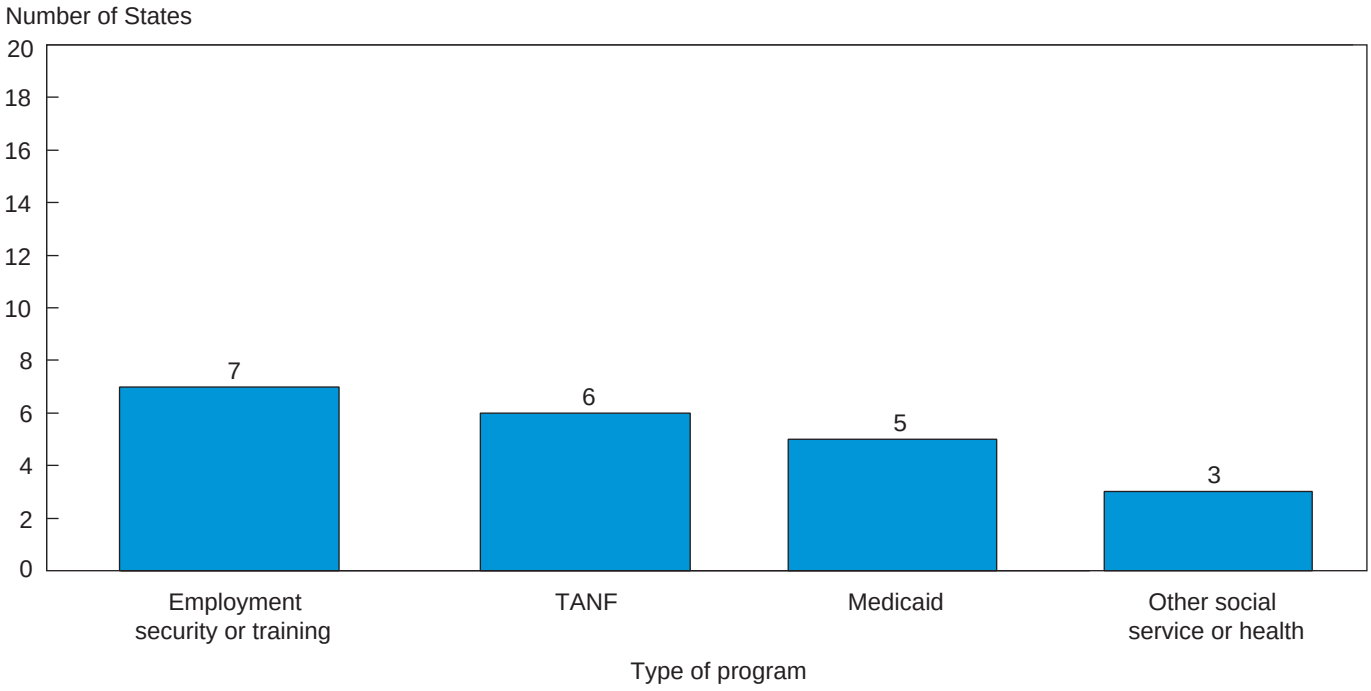
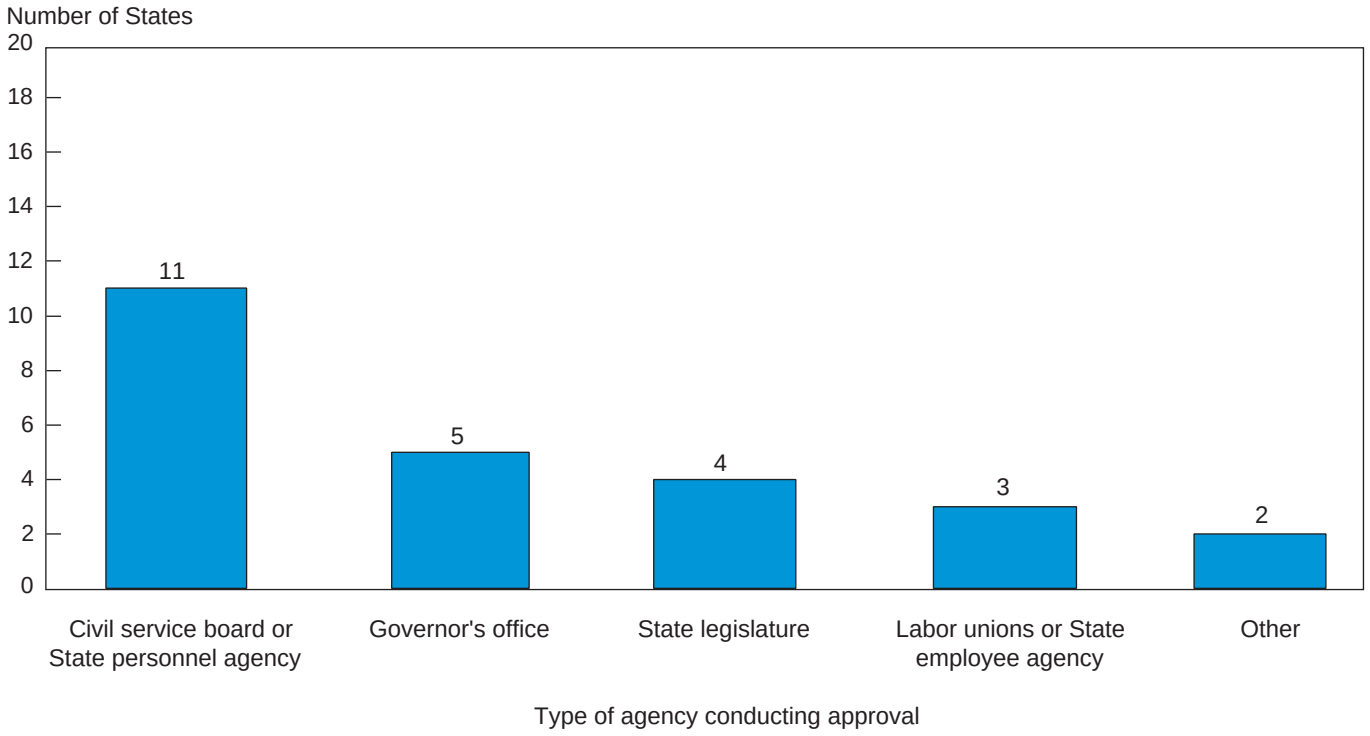


Figure 15

Number of States obtaining approval for caseworker role changes as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by type of agency conducting approval



reported involving the caseworkers themselves through less formal means when changes were being planned. An issue of interest to this study was the extent to which State officials felt they had increased the overall workload of caseworkers when their duties were changed. Of the 15 States that changed the role of the caseworker, officials in 10 of the States believed they had increased the overall workloads and 5 felt the workload remained about the same. Officials in Idaho, Virginia, and Wisconsin reported that they believed caseworker workloads had changed, but they were uncertain of the extent.

Additional Training for Caseworkers

In States where the role of the caseworker was expanded to incorporate new activities, it seemed likely that States would need to retrain caseworkers to assume their new responsibilities. This proved to be the case, since 16 of the 18 States making changes identified additional training to their caseworkers as critical to their re-engineering efforts.

Most frequently mentioned was training to increase the case management skills of former eligibility workers. Seven States noted that caseworkers who once worked only on client eligibility determination were now trained in topics that required both new program knowledge and improved interpersonal skills. Topics for training mentioned by States included how to assist clients in finding employment opportunities and improving case management skills to help clients access health care and other support services.

Six of the 18 States noted that they were required to train their caseworkers on new program requirements, such as changes in eligibility rules, employment requirements, or job training programs. Three States noted that they were required to provide training to TANF workers on FSP rules, and vice versa. Two States reported that they had to train their caseworkers on new computer systems being used to implement new program requirements.

While eligibility determination is still a primary responsibility of the caseworker, States that had made changes in the role of the caseworker noted that other responsibilities related to management of the client cases were important as well. When asked to describe how the roles of the caseworker had changed, the most common response from State officials was that caseworkers now tend to spend more time working with their clients on individual issues related to self-sufficiency. Officials in six States commented that the caseworkers had become more like case managers, assisting clients with both eligibility determination and issues related to finding employment, accessing child care, and accessing other social and health services.

Changes in Program Accessibility

With the increased flexibility provided by PRWORA and the fundamental changes brought about by altering the focus of the welfare system, a number of States have also begun to develop approaches to improve accessibility to their FSPs. As was noted in earlier chapters, there have been dramatic declines in FSP participation since the mid-1990s that are greater than could be accounted for by the economic boom during this period. This is of concern to State and Federal officials as well as advocates. Improving access to the FSP has been viewed as an important component of the continuing food security efforts of Federal and State food assistance programs.

Thirty-nine States reported that they made re-engineering changes to improve program accessibility as a result of PRWORA. As shown in figures 16 and 17, 10 States made 1 change to their program to improve accessibility, while 29 States made 2 or more. Equally important, 28 States reported they planned to make changes in this area in FY 2000, with 18 of those States planning 2 or more activities (figs. 18 and 19).

Program accessibility is related to a number of different activities that affect how clients may access the FSP. For purposes of this study, changes made by States to improve accessibility were divided into three classifications. First, activities related to changing certification systems were examined, both by looking at efforts to improve automated eligibility systems and at other steps taken by States to make it easier for clients to complete the application and recertification process for the FSP. As noted earlier, the complexity of State applications and certification systems may have an impact, positive or negative, on clients' willingness to complete the certification process. Second, the study examined the extent to which States have altered local office practices to help improve access to the FSP, such as changing office hours, providing transportation services and onsite child care, and establishing satellite offices. Finally, efforts made by State FSPs to increase their program outreach services were examined. Each of these three areas is discussed. (See appendix table 7 for specific States.)

Figure 16

Number of States implementing changes to improve accessibility to the Food Stamp Program as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by number of changes

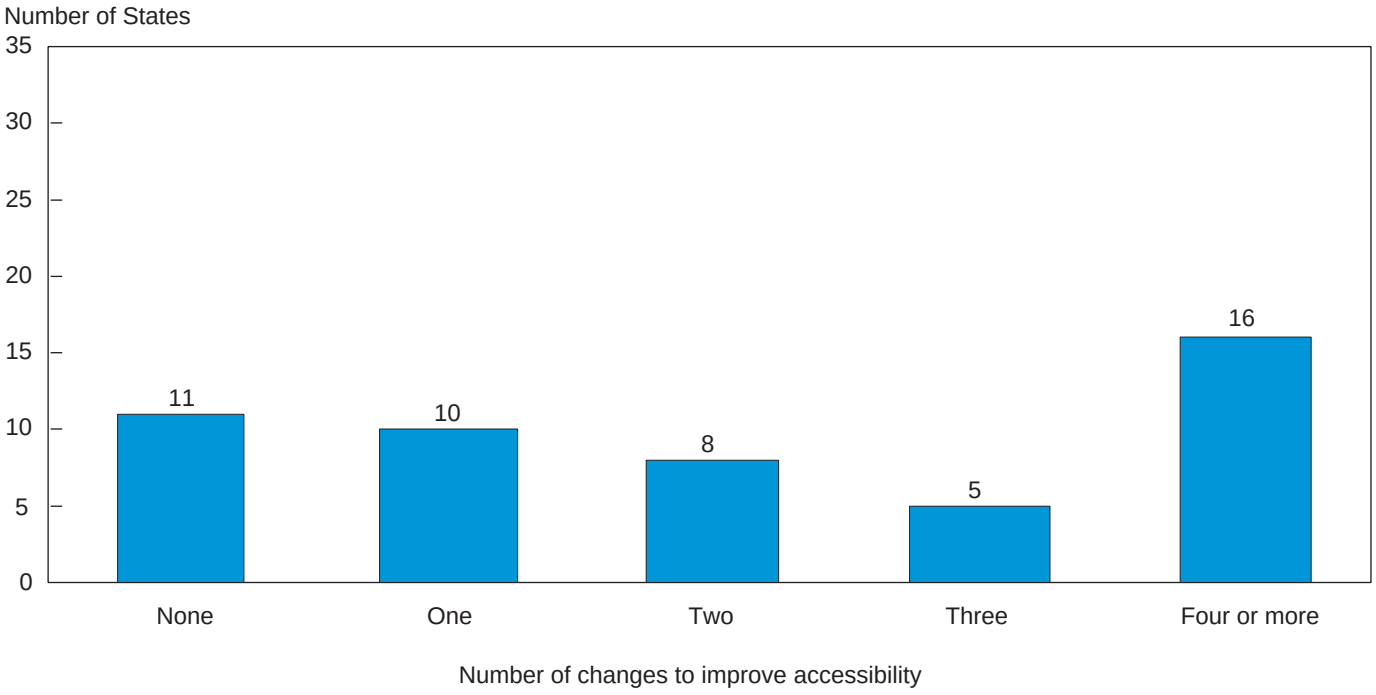
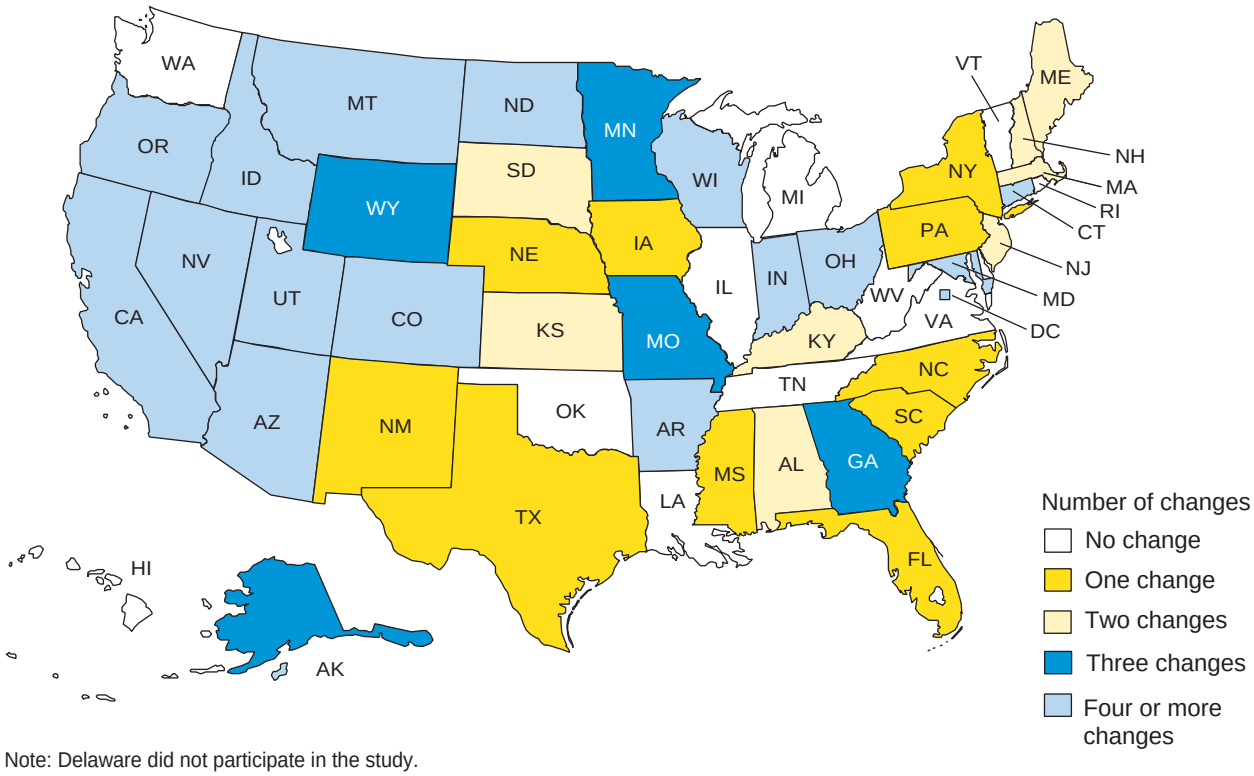


Figure 17

Number of changes to improve accessibility to the Food Stamp Program as a result of welfare reform implemented by States before FY 2000



Note: Delaware did not participate in the study.

Figure 18

Number of States planning changes to improve accessibility to the Food Stamp Program during FY 2000 by number of changes

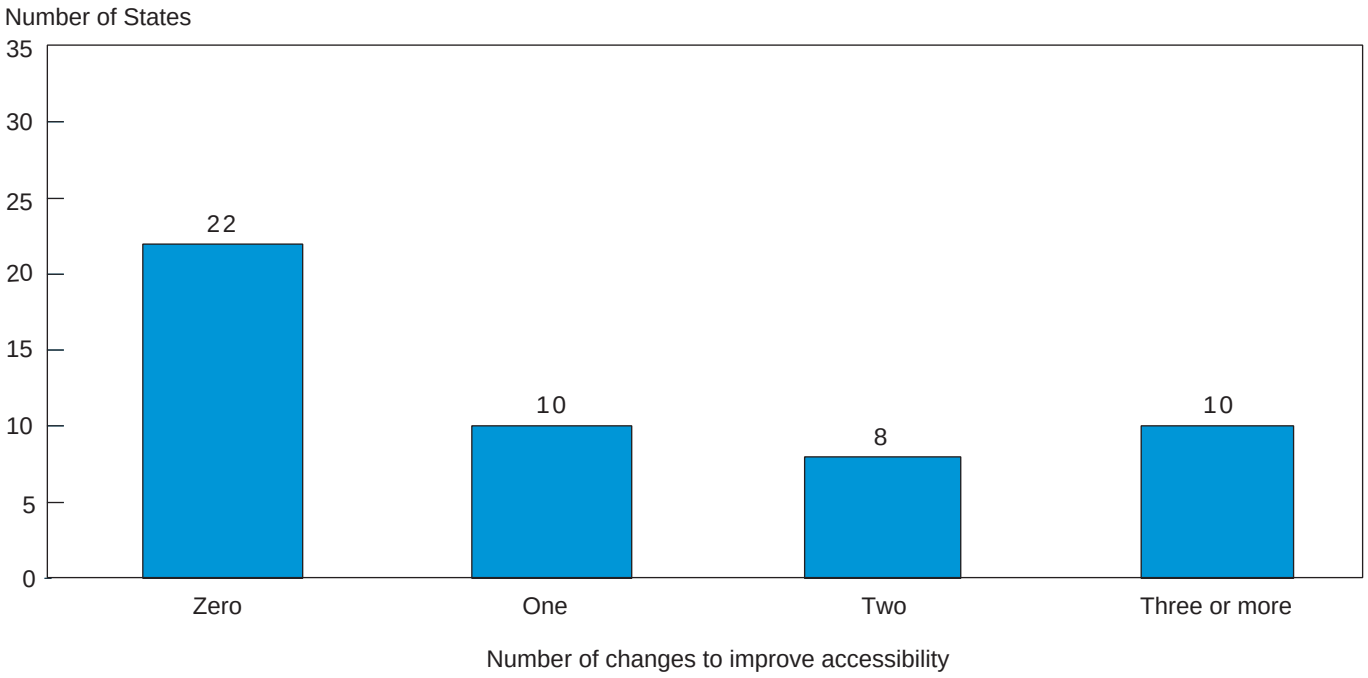
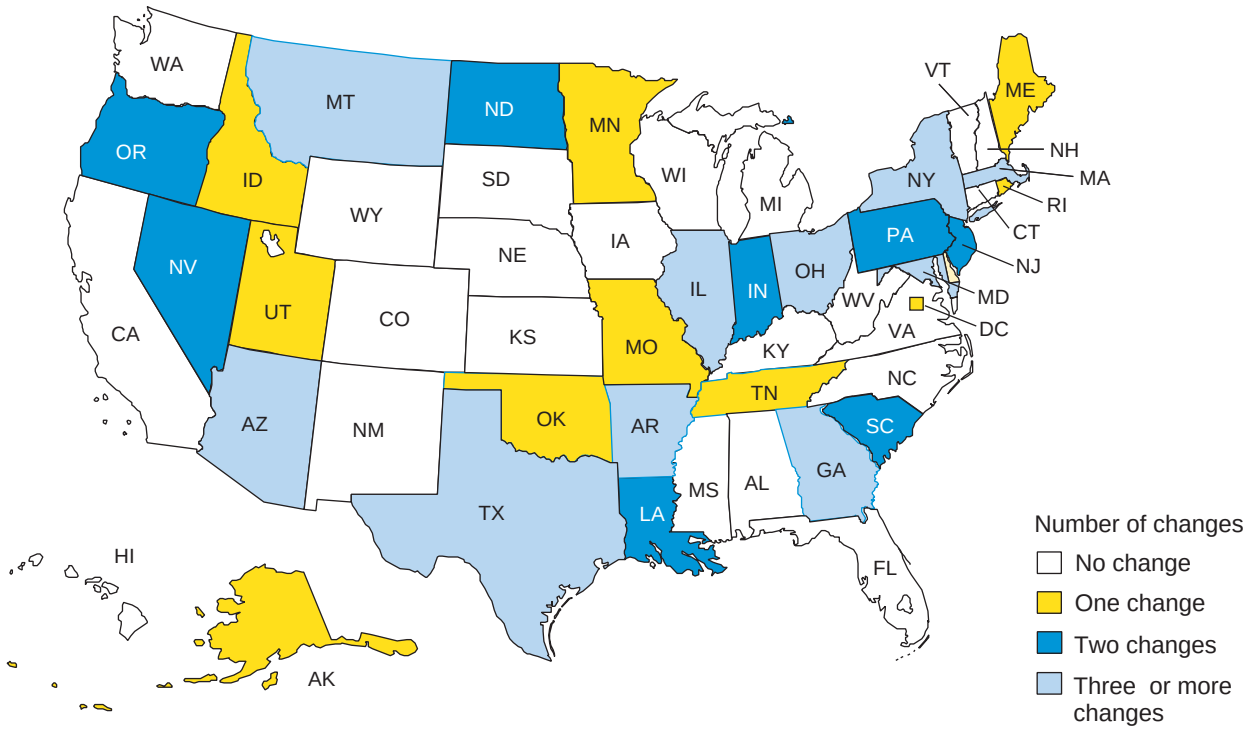


Figure 19

Number of States planning changes to improve accessibility to the Food Stamp Program during FY 2000



Note: Delaware did not participate in the study.

Changes to the Food Stamp Application Process

The food stamp application process has traditionally required significant effort on the part of the applicant, which has served as a barrier to food stamp participation. Research conducted by USDA found that applicants spent an average of 5 hours and $10.31 to complete the FSP application process (Food and Nutrition Service, 2000). Working households and those with long trips to the food stamp office were more likely than other types of households to drop out of the application process before their eligibility was determined (Bartlett et al., 1992). Other surveys of food stamp nonparticipants have found that 10 to 25 percent of respondents report administrative hassles in the application process as their reason for not participating (Coe, 1983; GAO, 1988). The current study reveals that in the last several years States have taken a number of steps to reduce the burden on clients and improve the reapplication and certification processes, utilizing the increased flexibility granted by PRWORA and the technological development of State computer systems.

Twenty-one States reported making changes to their FSP application process as a result of PRWORA. States gave different reasons for changing their certification systems, with several reporting multiple goals. Of the 21 States who made changes, 9 reported that improving the overall efficiency of their certification system was a major goal, while 8 said that reducing the number of certification errors was their primary reason. Six States hoped to reduce the time it took a caseworker to certify a client, and five hoped to improve access to other social service programs by changing their certification procedures.

Changes in the certification system were divided into two categories: changes in computer systems and changes unrelated to computer systems. A total of eight States made changes to their computer systems to improve client certification, with the two most frequent reasons being the need to update the systems to reflect policy changes (three States) and the need to better integrate programs or services (three States).

A larger number of States, however, made changes to their client certification systems that were unrelated to their computer systems. The most frequent was a reduction of the number of questions on the FSP application form; five States reported that they had made this change. Ironically, the second most popular change, implemented by four States, was requiring clients to provide caseworkers with additional documentation of their eligibility. Interestingly, three States combined their FSP application with applications used by other social service programs to allow for certification in more than one program. Table 2 below displays the States that made changes only to their computer systems, made changes unrelated to their computer systems, or made changes to both.

Regarding changes planned for FY 2000, three States reported planning to increase computer automation in their certification systems, while nine States indicated that they planned to make changes in their certification process that are unrelated to their computer systems. Of these nine States, two planned to reduce the number and type of questions on their application, while none planned to increase the documentation requirements of people applying for benefits.

Local Office Practices

States also increased accessibility to program services by changing local office practices. These practices have become an important part of the overall FSP. In particular, States made a number of changes to allow food stamp applicants to have their interviews at more convenient times and more accessible places. States' efforts in this area are discussed below.

A total of 28 States made efforts to improve their local office practices in order to facilitate client accessibility (see appendix table 8 for specific States). As has been true in other categories, States may have made more than one such change. Figure 20 displays the number of States that made changes to their local office practices to improve FSP access, along with the types of changes made.

As can be seen, the most frequent change was extending the hours of operation of local offices by adding or expanding weekend and evening hours to allow clients more convenient times to apply for food stamp benefits. Nine States involved private partners in their efforts to increase accessibility to the FSP. These partners are often nonprofit agencies concerned with food security issues who help the States identify and overcome barriers to FSP participation.

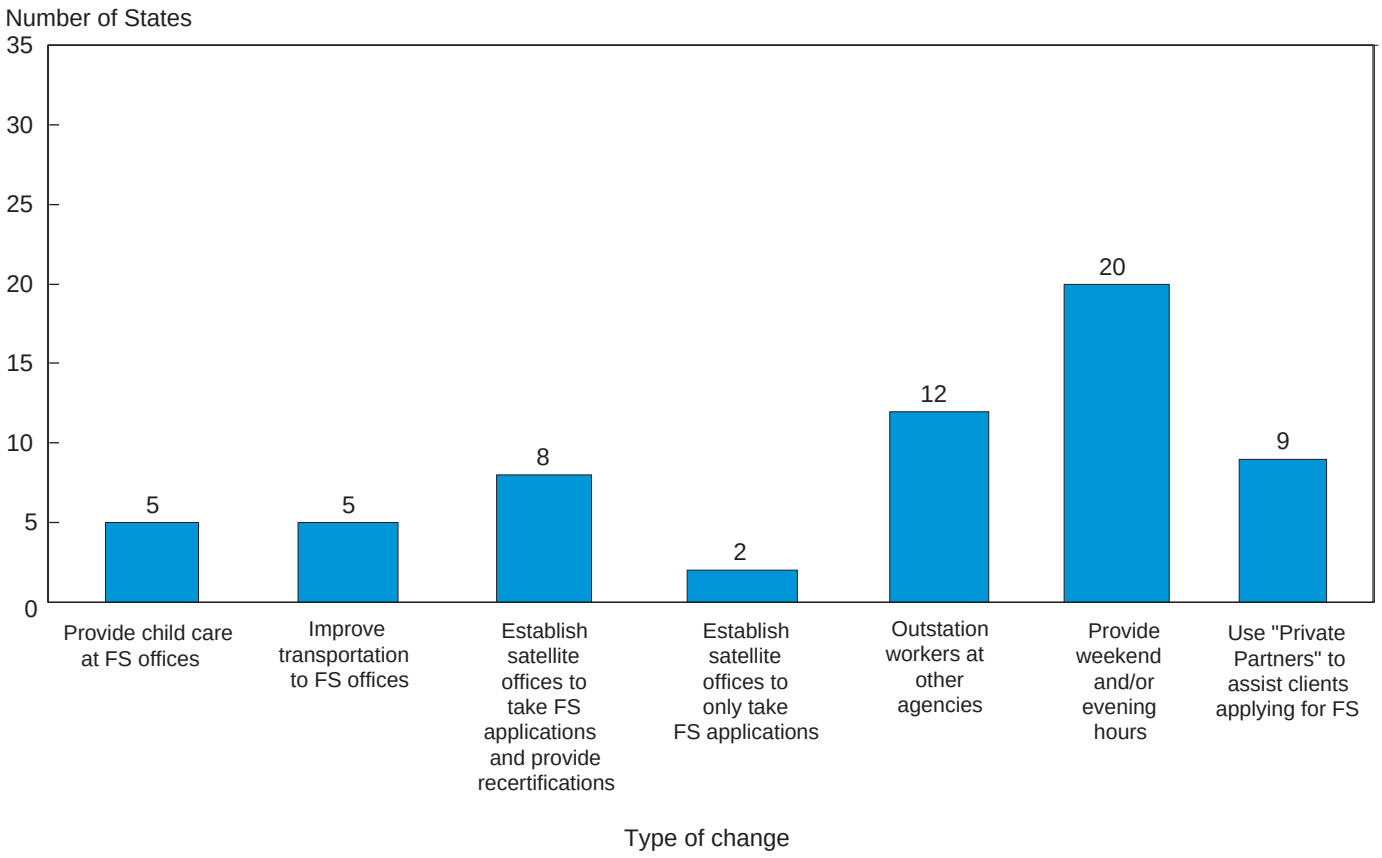
Eleven States planned to increase services provided by local offices in FY 2000 (see appendix table 9 for specific States). Of these, seven planned to increase the times available for clients to apply for food stamp ben-

Table 2—States making changes to their food stamp application processes by type of change

Computer changes	Changes not involving computer systems	Both computer and noncomputer changes
Connecticut	Alabama	Alaska
	Arizona	California
	District of Columbia	Colorado
	Georgia	Maryland
	Idaho	Montana
	Indiana	Nevada
	Kentucky	North Dakota
	Maine	
	Nebraska	
	New York	
	Oregon	
	Utah	
	Wyoming	

Figure 20

Number of States changing local office practices as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by type of change



efits by expanding evening and weekend hours. However, while only five States had implemented programs to assist with transportation for food stamp clients after PRWORA, five States planned to implement transportation assistance in FY 2000.

Efforts To Increase Outreach to Clients

The final type of changes examined with regard to program accessibility involves the efforts States made or are making to improve outreach to potential clients. This has become particularly important because of the decline in food stamp participation discussed earlier in this chapter. Outreach is also important in connection with the extensive efforts being made by States to improve accessibility to local food stamp offices. While making certification times more convenient and welfare offices more accessible is an important part of State efforts to re-engineer the FSP, ensuring that potential clients understand they may be eligible for FSP benefits is also critical. The case study conducted in Massachusetts describes an extensive campaign being made by State officials to reach potential food stamp clients.

Many States are concerned about reaching eligible individuals who are experiencing food insecurity and are not participating in the FSP, as well as about former food stamp clients who have left the FSP but remain eligible for benefits. State efforts to conduct food stamp outreach are exemplified by the number of States making changes in this area or who were planning changes in FY 2000. A total of 24 States (see appendix table 10 for specific States and outreach methods) began or increased outreach efforts prior to FY 2000, with an additional 18 States planning outreach efforts in FY 2000 (fig. 21). These efforts were often targeted at special populations that were identified by State officials as being underserved by the FSP. Figure 22 displays the various target populations and the number of States that tried to reach those populations after PRWORA and on through FY 2000. As can be seen, the populations targeted by the largest number of States were the elderly, the working poor, and ABAWDs. Figure 22 shows that the elderly and working poor populations remain targets for program outreach efforts planned by States for FY 2000. States are also planning to target new groups, including former TANF recipients and persons with disabilities.

The groups targeted least often by the States that increased their outreach before FY 2000 were the disabled and former TANF recipients. In contrast, ABAWDs were the least likely to be targeted by States in the outreach efforts that were planned for FY 2000, followed by the parents of young children and "others."

States used a variety of methods to reach their target populations. Thirteen States distributed printed materials such as brochures, posters, and flyers in low-income communities, while five States relied on public service announcements on television and radio and five expanded referral services at other means-tested programs. Three States noted that they had begun distributing FSP applications at locations such as food banks and hospitals.

As mentioned above, States expanded their use of referrals. Seven States reported efforts to increase the number of referrals to the FSP from other means-tested social service programs. Among the programs mentioned were TANF, where clients leaving the program may still be eligible for FSP benefits, Medicaid, and the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

Finally, as was noted in chapter I, efforts to increase program accessibility sometimes varied within States with regard to urban and rural areas. A total of 14 States reported making different changes to promote accessibility based on the special needs of these areas within their State. Of the 14 States that mentioned urban-rural differences, 4 placed a greater emphasis on providing transportation services to rural clients. Other differences reported by States included establishing more satellite offices in urban areas, providing nutrition education services in urban areas to increase the program's exposure, moving toward a system of telephone contact for initial certification interviews in rural areas, giving greater decision-making authority to offices located in rural areas, and allowing rural offices to develop their own methods to improve accessibility. Table 3 displays the 14 States that accommodated the different needs of rural and urban areas with regard to accessibility issues.

Changes in Client Tracking Systems

While PRWORA created a great deal of flexibility in how States manage their FSPs, several mandatory provisions, as described in the introduction, were also enacted. These mandatory provisions have greatly increased the pressure on States to meet program compliance and audit requirements and to reduce error rates in client certification and the provision of benefits. As a result of these increased pressures, States

Figure 21

Number of States targeting specific populations with outreach efforts as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by type of population

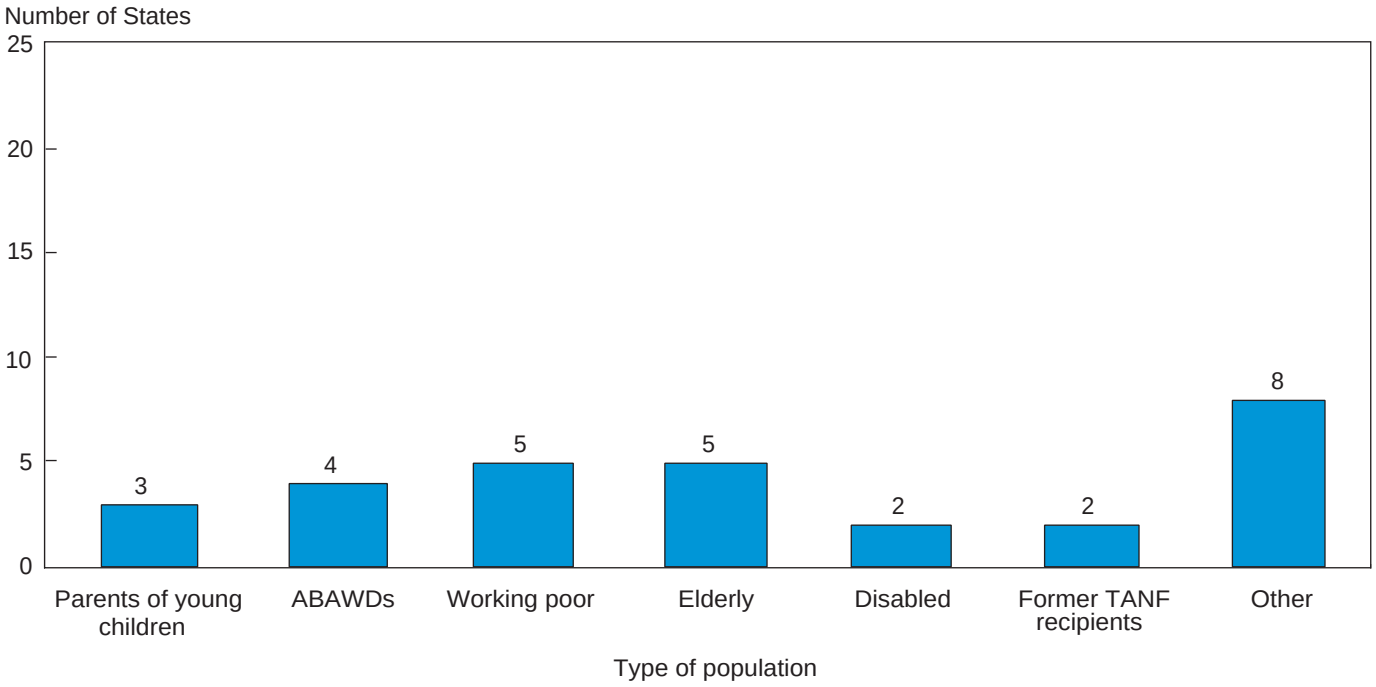


Figure 22

Number of States planning to target specific populations with outreach efforts during FY 2000 by type of population

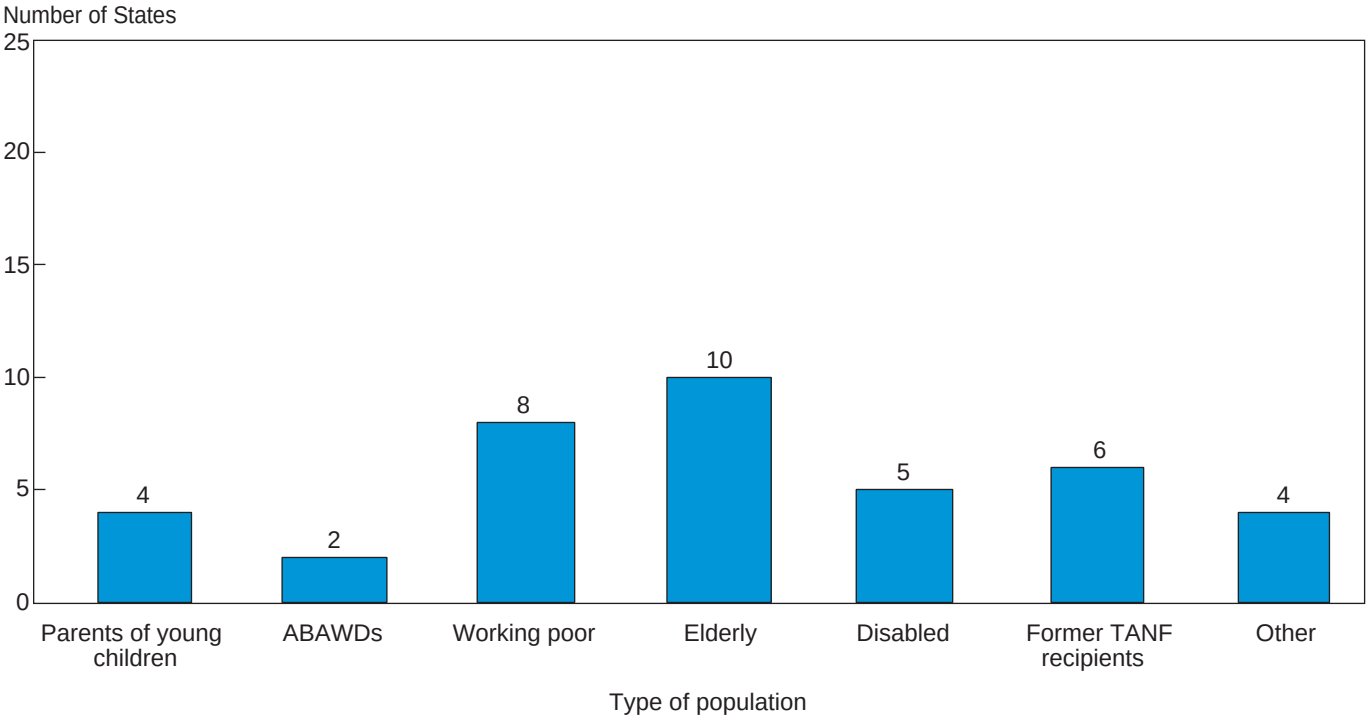


Table 3—States making changes to improve accessibility based on differing needs for urban and rural areas by type of change

Food stamp application process	Local office practices	Efforts to increase outreach to clients
Georgia		
Montana	Colorado	Connecticut
	Idaho	Georgia
	Indiana	Idaho
	Maryland	Oregon
	Massachusetts	Utah
	Montana	
	Nevada	
	South Carolina	
	Utah	
	Wisconsin	
	Wyoming	

have had to rethink how they collect and maintain information about clients.

One of the methods States used to improve program integrity efforts, improving technology and computer systems used to certify clients, was noted above. Another method is matching client databases for the FSP with those of other social service programs. The purpose of this section is to examine some of the ways that States have increased efforts to improve program accountability through enhanced client tracking systems and computer matching.

While States have collected data regarding client eligibility and program benefits for years, the new approaches taken by States to meet the demands of PRWORA have created a need to collect new types of information. Because of the increased complexity of the FSP, as well as the interest shown by States in improving program accessibility, caseworkers may need information about clients' participation in other social service programs in order to be effective in moving them toward self-sufficiency. In addition, matching food stamp administrative data with data from other social service programs has been found to be an effective tool in controlling error rates in client certification and detecting fraud in the delivery of program benefits. Through the use of sophisticated computer programs, States can determine whether clients should be disqualified from FSP benefits because they are categorically ineligible (for instance, as a fleeing felon), have reported different income information to other social service agencies (such as to Medicaid), or have attempted to participate in the FSP in more than one location (dual participation).

A total of 40 States increased their efforts to improve client tracking and accountability systems as a result of PRWORA. The single largest group of States making changes to their client tracking systems did so to meet the PRWORA requirement for tracking time limits on ABAWDs. Of the 40 States that enhanced their client tracking systems, 33 focused their efforts on developing systems for tracking time limits on ABAWDs. In FY 2000 three States were planning to adopt systems to better track the same limits.

While States have been matching FSP administrative data against other databases for years, the passage of PRWORA seems to have motivated them to increase these efforts. A total of 29 States reported that they had increased the number and type of databases within their States with which FSP data were matched. Six States reported that they had begun matching records with programs in neighboring States. Four of the States reported that they also began using private contractors to assist them with client record matching. In addition to these efforts, nine States reported that they had planned to increase the number of databases against which to match FSP records in FY 2000, while two States planned to begin matching records with neighboring States. States noted a number of programs or departments against whose databases their increased FSP matching efforts have taken place (see appendix table 11 for specific States). Some of the more common programs or departments with which matching activities have taken place, or were planned for FY 2000, include:

- ***New-Hires Databases.*** In order to track employment of individuals receiving TANF and food stamps,

States enhanced their tracking of new hires, particularly those reported through State departments of labor or employment. A total of 17 States reported having increased their data-matching with new-hires data, and 3 States reported planning to increase data-matching in this area during FY 2000.

- ***Criminal Records Databases.*** Because PRWORA restricted certain persons with criminal records from receiving FSP benefits, States began matching FSP client information with databases maintained by various criminal justice organizations. A total of 13 States began matching FSP records with criminal justice organizations as a result of PRWORA, and 2 States planned to expand their data-matching to this area in FY 2000.

- ***Records of the Social Security Administration.*** A total of eight States began matching their FSP databases with records from the Social Security Administration. Two additional States planned to begin matching with the Social Security Administration in FY 2000. The purpose is to verify the social security numbers of clients in order to be sure clients are who they say they are and to match clients' social security numbers with the Social Security Administration's records of deceased clients, to be sure fraud is not being attempted.

Changes in Program Monitoring and Evaluation

In addition to making changes in client tracking systems for purposes of controlling fraud and abuse, States also began to recognize that the fundamental changes to the FSP created by PRWORA would result in program outcomes requiring new measurement tools. As a result, some States began to develop systems by which changes in the FSP could be monitored for evaluating program outcomes. These systems, which differ from client tracking systems designed to preserve program integrity, monitor key program outcome measures established by program administrators. In addition, some States have begun to conduct formal evaluations of FSP activities. In this section, the extent to which States increased activities to monitor and evaluate their FSPs is examined.

For the purposes of this study, efforts to monitor the FSP include routinely assessing program operations (such as tracking the number of cases each case manager has or the number of clients enrolled in FSP). Efforts to evaluate the FSP, on the other hand, were generally more formal studies that assessed the program's effectiveness.

A total of 22 States developed new program monitoring tools to help them examine components of their FSPs. In addition, seven States planned to implement changes in program monitoring in FY 2000. Figure 23 displays the types of monitoring activities implemented by States as a result of PRWORA. As shown, monitoring efforts were most often focused on tracking changes in client participation rates (14 States), evaluating client satisfaction (12 States), and evaluating efforts to increase program accessibility (10 States). In addition to the categories identified in figure 23, 11 States noted other areas in which they were increasing monitoring activities. Areas in the "other" category included increased monitoring of error rate reduction measures of the status of TANF recipients who leave the TANF program but may still be eligible for food stamps (leaver studies), of outreach efforts, and of client progress toward finding employment. Table 4 displays the States that undertook these monitoring activities, by type of activity.

In addition to the monitoring efforts noted above, States began conducting formal evaluations of Food Stamp Program activities. Evaluations are considered important because they enable States to determine whether their administrative changes are accomplishing the goals for which they were implemented. Once that assessment is made, States can begin to modify or redirect their re-engineering efforts to maximize the benefits of their programmatic changes. A total of 9 States conducted formal evaluations of one or more FSP activities prior to FY 2000, and 10 States planned evaluation activities in FY 2000. Eleven States noted that they conducted evaluations of program participation levels, as well as the level of client satisfaction with the FSP. These evaluations were primarily done by FSP staff, with seven of the nine States reporting having used State FSP staff for conducting the evaluation.

Conforming FSP and TANF Program Rules

As noted in the introduction, PRWORA provided States with the opportunity to coordinate the program policies and activities of the FSP with their TANF programs. The purposes of this coordination were to assist States in simplifying program policies, to improve the overall efficiency of the two programs, to allow States

Figure 23
Number of States increasing monitoring efforts as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by type of activity

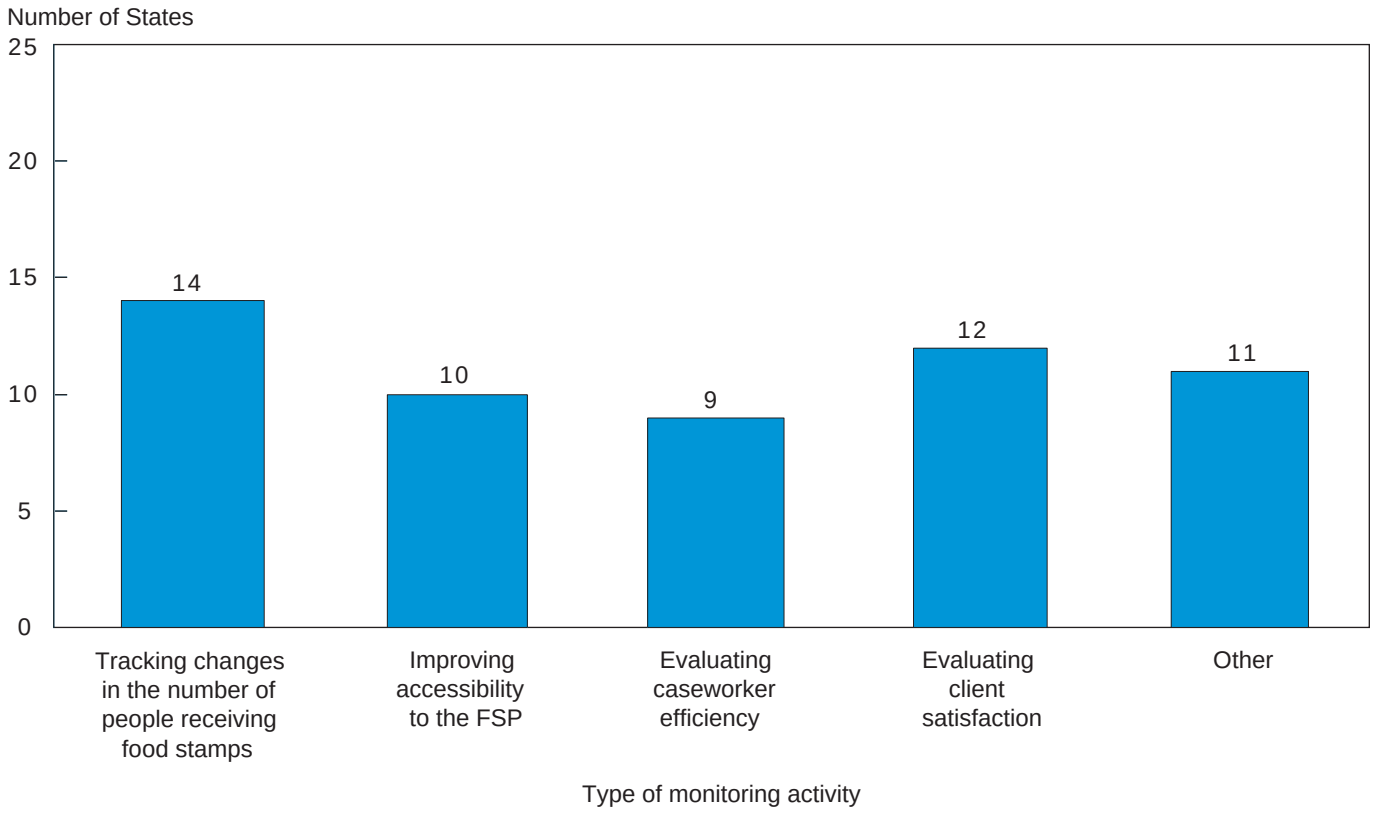


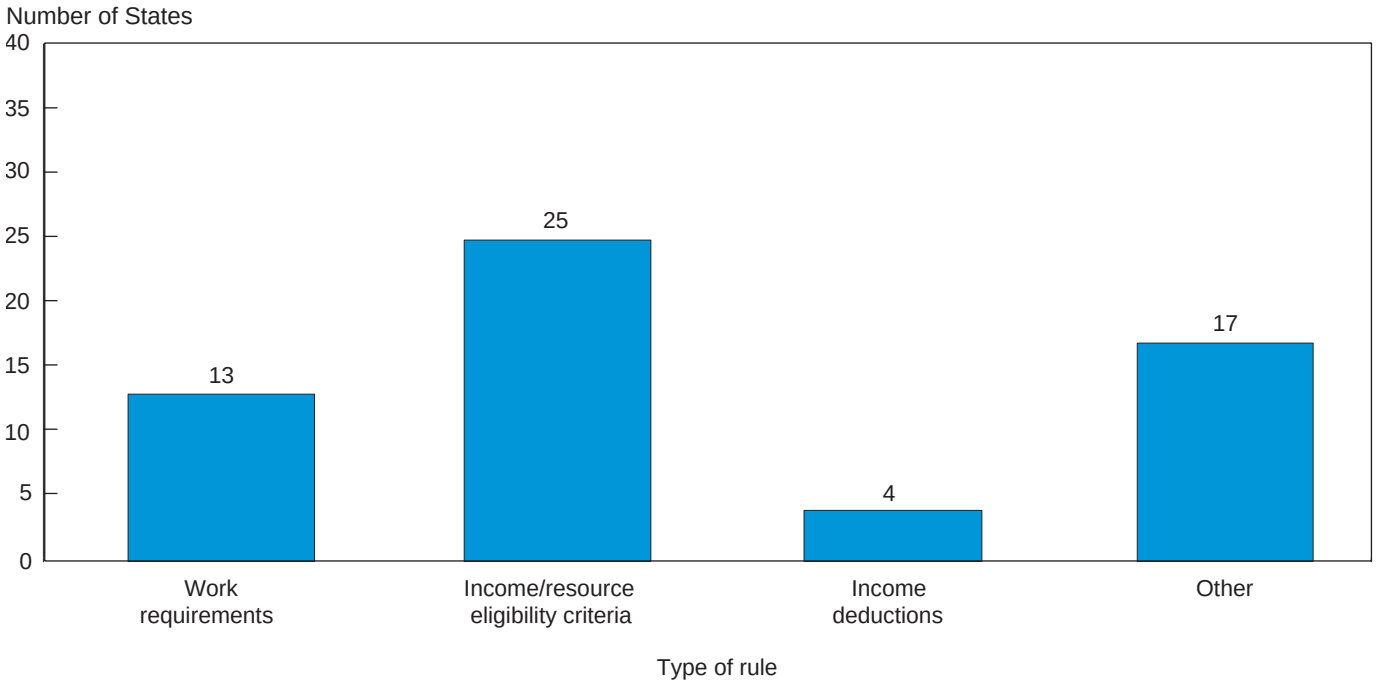
Table 4—States reporting program monitoring activities by type of activity

Tracking changes in program participation	Improving accessibility to FSP	Evaluating caseworker efficiency	Evaluating client satisfaction
Alaska	Arizona	Arizona	Alaska
Arizona	Colorado	Colorado	Arizona
California	Idaho	Florida	Colorado
Colorado	Iowa	Idaho	Florida
Florida	Kansas	Iowa	Idaho
Idaho	Maryland	Maryland	Iowa
Iowa	New Jersey	New Mexico	Maryland
Maryland	New York	New York	New York
New Jersey	Washington	Wisconsin	Ohio
New York	Wyoming		Utah
Ohio			Washington
Washington			Wisconsin
Wisconsin			
Wyoming			

to better coordinate caseworker activities at the local level, and to increase case management activities that promote client self-sufficiency.

A total of 34 States coordinated some portion of the TANF program rules with their FSP. As can be seen in figure 24, the most common attempts to conform the FSP with TANF were in the area of income and resources eligibility criteria, with 25 States adopting conformance measures. In addition, a total of seven

Figure 24
Number of States coordinating TANF program rules to conform with Federal food stamp program rules as a result of welfare reform before FY 2000 by type of rule



States planned to coordinate FSP and TANF program rules in FY 2000.

Another way States coordinated program rules was by adopting the Simplified Food Stamp Program (SFSP). Because TANF and the FSP have separate rules, applying to both programs can be a cumbersome process, both for clients and caseworkers. In order to streamline the determination process for individuals applying for TANF and food stamps, PRWORA gave States the option of adopting the SFSP. Under the SFSP, States may establish one set of rules for both programs. The law also allows States to establish a limited SFSP, which involves only aligning food stamp work requirements with work requirements in the TANF program.

Respondents noted two administrative drawbacks of the SFSP. First, States that adopt an SFSP must also continue to operate a separate FSP, since not all clients receive both TANF and food stamps. Second, the law requires States to prove that the costs associated with operating the SFSP do not exceed the costs incurred by operating two separate programs, which has been difficult to accomplish.

A total of seven States adopted a limited SFSP by coordinating work requirements for TANF and the FSP. As noted earlier in the chapter, Arkansas was the only State to attempt to implement a complete SFSP. However, Arkansas officials made the decision in 1999 to abandon their SFSP and return to a more traditional FSP. The main reason cited by Arkansas officials for this change was the complexity that the State faced in trying to administer the SFSP, while administering a separate FSP for non-TANF food stamp households. The officials noted that caseworkers found the systems confusing and were often unable to determine which clients of the SFSP should receive certain benefits. No State planned to implement either a limited or a complete SFSP in FY 2000.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the specific re-engineering efforts States implemented or planned to implement were described. As can be seen, the numbers and varieties of changes States made have significantly altered how the FSP is administered across the country. Because State re-engineering efforts are not static, it is likely that the landscape of the FSP will continue to change in the future. In chapter III, the study findings are revisited and implications for future research are presented.

This report has provided a description of the efforts undertaken by States to re-engineer their FSPs.

III. Discussion and Implications for Future Research

However, the results of this study should not be viewed as an end in themselves, but rather as the first outcome of a process through which the effectiveness of re-engineering efforts are examined over time. The very notion of re-engineering a program the size of the FSP carries with it issues related to the time needed to fully implement changes and the additional time needed to assess the results of these changes.

With the flexibility created by the passage of PRWORA, States have begun the process of restructuring how they deliver services, including changing the role of the caseworkers, increasing program accessibility, tracking client participation, and evaluating program components. While many States have implemented changes in these areas, it will require additional time for them to fine-tune these changes to improve their program operations.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize some of the key findings of this report and to provide Economic Research Service with suggestions for future research. It is important to note that while this was a point-in-time study, the survey collected information on both changes implemented and activities the States planned to undertake as a result of PRWORA. The survey also was designed to capture information about a wide variety of re-engineering efforts that States made to the administration of their FSPs and about the States' goals for these changes. It is not, however, designed to assess how effective these changes have been. The consequences are unknown, and States will need time to assess how well they were able to meet their goals in re-engineering their FSPs.

Discussion of Key Findings

The number of re-engineering activities that took place as a result of the passage of PRWORA is impressive. While some States began re-engineering their FSPs prior to the passage of the bill, there is no doubt that Federal welfare reform led States to restructure administrative activities related to their FSPs. When the findings of this study are examined together, some interesting aspects of State re-engineering efforts can be noted. A summary of these key findings follows.

- While States have focused on implementing mandatory provisions of PRWORA, a significant amount of effort has been focused on improving access to the FSP. It would be expected that States would make major efforts to restructure their administrative activities in order to implement mandatory provisions of PRWORA. The findings of this study confirm this, as 40 of the 50 States (80 percent) reported completing re-engineering activities in the category of changes to their client tracking systems. However, it is interesting to note that 39 of the 50 States (78 percent) implemented changes to improve program accessibility. In addition, 28 States planned to implement changes to improve accessibility in FY 2000. This finding clearly shows that States are attempting to address concerns related to the decline in FSP caseloads over the past several years.

- The number of States that implemented and planned activities that fall into multiple re-engineering categories was higher than expected. Because State FSP agencies are likely to have limited resources, one would assume that undertaking a large number of activities across multiple re-engineering categories would be uncommon. However, 35 States (70 percent) implemented activities falling into three or more re-engineering categories.

- It would appear that changing organizational structures to implement activities related to PRWORA is not a high priority with States. With the opportunity to conform FSPs with their TANF programs, one might have expected a large number of States to combine or consolidate program functions by changing their organizational structures. However, while 34 States (68 percent) took steps to conform TANF and FSP rules, only 11 States reported changing their organizational structures, and of those, only 3 cited conforming TANF and FSP as the goal of the changes. In addition, only one State reported that it planned to make changes in its organizational structure in FY 2000, and that State was going to discontinue its SFSP.

- There appears to be growing interest on the part of States to increase program monitoring and evaluation activities within their FSPs. Twenty-four States had implemented some form of increased monitoring and evaluation, while 15 States planned to do so in FY 2000. While tracking client participation rates was the primary focus of this monitoring, a number of States also recognized the importance of tracking

and evaluating client satisfaction and efforts to improve program accessibility.

- The level of re-engineering activity demonstrated by county-administered States was also noteworthy. As mentioned in chapter I, less re-engineering activity was expected from county-administered States because it was assumed that many of the re-engineering efforts would take place at the county level. However, 87 percent of the county-administered States undertook changes that fell into three or more re-engineering categories, as compared to 67 percent of the State-administered States. In addition, the finding that 92 percent of the county-administered States undertook changes to improve program accessibility was not expected.

Implications for Future Research

While the findings of this study provide a strong baseline for examining State re-engineering efforts, they must also be viewed in terms of opportunities for future research. Simply knowing that these activities took place, while important, should not be viewed as an end in itself. Over the course of collecting and analyzing data for this study, a number of factors came to the attention of the study team that have implications for further research. These factors are discussed in detail below.

Evaluating County Efforts To Re-engineer FSPs

More research may be warranted in States that pass down the responsibility of administering their FSPs to county governmental agencies. With the flexibility afforded by PRWORA, along with the decisions by States to decentralize FSP operations, counties may have had the same opportunity to adjust how they administer their FSPs as many States have. However, because of this local flexibility in how county programs are administered, State officials were unable to provide information about the types of change taking place within their counties.

Examining the extent to which counties re-engineered their FSPs was beyond the scope of this study. In order to have a complete picture of how the FSP has been re-engineered, a survey of county-run programs would be useful. It must be considered that some county-run programs may have caseloads as large as some State programs (such as Los Angeles County, California) or have some of the same issues related to urban and rural divisions (for example, Riverside County, California) that the States have. A complete picture of the extent to which county-administered programs have re-engineered their FSPs within the categories identified for this study would add significantly to the overall picture of State re-engineering efforts.

Evaluating the Extent to Which Planned Re-engineering Efforts Were Fully Implemented

This study gathered information about the re-engineering efforts implemented prior to FY 2000 along with the activities being planned for FY 2000. In the introduction, it was noted that while planned activities could be described, there was no way of knowing whether they were actually implemented. A followup study would provide a more complete picture of State re-engineering efforts. In particular, States planned a number of initiatives for increasing program accessibility. Because of concerns about decreases in the FSP caseload, it would be interesting to know if the plans for increasing client accessibility were actually implemented.

Evaluating Components of State Re-engineering Efforts

Another area that deserves consideration is the evaluation of some of the specific re-engineering changes made by States as a result of PRWORA. As mentioned earlier, the amount of time to fully implement a re-engineering change will vary, but the change will not often produce measurable results until years later. The changes described in chapter II were each designed to improve some components of the FSP. They should be evaluated individually in terms of whether the proposed change met the goals of the State, whether the re-engineering change was modified as a result of problems identified during implementation, and whether the State plans to continue the change over the next several years.

Specific research questions could be developed for each of the re-engineering categories, including specific measures for evaluating the process and outcomes of the changes. A number of areas raise questions and stand out as deserving further evaluation, as follows:

- How has the changing role of the caseworker affected the interaction between caseworkers and clients? One of the key results of this study is the description of the changes States have made to the role of the caseworker. But as noted in chapter II, the formal

changes in the role of the caseworker may not fully describe how the interaction has changed between caseworkers and clients.

Because interviews and surveys with caseworkers and clients were not within the scope of this study, there was little information available about how the changing role of the caseworker may affect delivery of services. However, the ways that caseworkers now interact with clients, particularly how they manage client cases, the extent to which they provide services to clients in order to support self-sufficiency efforts, and the attitudes of the caseworkers and clients with regard to the changed role, deserve further examination.

- Have efforts to improve client accessibility been effective? Because of the concern over falling caseloads in the FSP, it would seem important to evaluate the numerous efforts being made by States to improve client accessibility. Of particular interest would be an examination of how well efforts to improve accessibility through expanding office hours, improving transportation services, and adding child care have been coordinated with outreach efforts to bring in new clients. In addition, the methods used by States to conduct outreach efforts to potential clients should also be examined. By evaluating the critical components of re-engineering efforts in the area of accessibility, valuable information could be provided to States who are in the beginning phases of developing increased accessibility efforts.

- Have States' efforts to improve client tracking systems resulted in increased program integrity? Chapter II discussed how a number of States have increased their efforts in tracking clients to meet the new requirements of PRWORA. These efforts have included increased use of computer technology to track client groups (such as ABAWDs) and of matching FSP administrative files against those of other social service programs and new-employment databases. Because these efforts are often complex and costly, it would make sense to determine which ones seem to be the most cost-effective in reducing program errors.

- To what extent have efforts to conform FSP and TANF rules simplified or complicated the administration of the FSP at the State and local levels? In chapter II, it was noted that the programmatic and eligibility links between the TANF program and the FSP might be conducive to better coordination between the two programs. However, the practical implementation of efforts to conform program requirements may be too difficult for States to implement. The extent to which States have successfully integrated components of the two programs, and the extent to which problems or issues have discouraged this practice, would also seem to deserve future research.

Tracking State Efforts To Evaluate Re-engineering Changes

As described in chapters I and II, States have begun conducting their own evaluations of FSP components. Developing a mechanism to collect and catalog State evaluation efforts would enable tracking of the extent to which individual States have evaluated their re-engineering efforts.

In addition to State-sponsored evaluations of FSP components, there may be other evaluation efforts at the State level that it would be important to include in such a catalog. A number of State governments have audit agencies in their executive or legislative branches, and these agencies evaluate the effectiveness of such areas as governmental reorganization, local service delivery systems, and State data collection systems. While these evaluations may not be specific to the FSP, they may encompass the entire department or division in which the FSP is located. Because changes in these administrative areas comprise a significant part of States' re-engineering efforts for their FSPs, they may be of value in assessing the effectiveness of administrative changes brought about by State re-engineering efforts.

Future research might also focus on creating a mechanism by which evaluation reports commissioned by State food stamp or welfare agencies, as well as by other evaluation or audit agencies, could be collected on a periodic basis and made available to researchers and FSP program administrators. This would provide a secondary source of data on how well individual State re-engineering efforts have worked.

Ongoing Tracking Systems To Describe Changes in State Re-engineering Efforts

Re-engineering State FSPs is a continuing process, with States conducting ongoing efforts to fine-tune existing re-engineering changes as well as to develop new initiatives. ERS may want to consider a method for promoting continuing research into the types of re-engineering changes being made in State programs. The regional offices of FNS may be able to play a strong role, as they often are made aware of changes in how State FSPs are administered. Information concerning ongoing State efforts may be found through State FSP management evaluations or through changes in the State's Plan of Operations.

Section B: Case Study Reports

Overview and Summary of Case Studies

In 1998, the Economic Research Service (ERS) commissioned a study of State-level efforts to re-engineer Food Stamp Programs (FSPs) in response to welfare reform. The purpose of the study was to provide ERS with descriptive information about the types of administrative changes States had implemented since the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). As a part of that study, six case studies were conducted to examine how local programs have implemented State policy changes. This report presents information obtained from the six case studies.

Overview of Case Study Site Selection

The flexibility provided to States through the passage of welfare reform has resulted in some creative and innovative approaches in program administration and client services. The goal of this case study report is to provide descriptive information about some of the innovative approaches used by States to implement re-engineering efforts in response to welfare reform, and to examine how local programs implement these changes. In order to select appropriate case study sites, information was obtained from a review of data compiled for the national survey of State re-engineering efforts. The process for selecting the specific State and local programs is described below.

- Selection of specific States was based upon two factors. First, States were grouped by the type of re-engineering efforts they were undertaking.This grouping matched the six categories of re-engineering examined in the main study. These categories are:
  - ➢ Changes in State organizational structure;
  - ➢ Changes in the role of the caseworker;
  - ➢ Efforts to improve client accessibility and certification;
  - ➢ Changes in client tracking and accountability systems;
  - ➢ Attempts to conform the State FSP with the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program; and
  - ➢ Efforts to increase program monitoring and| evaluation.
- Next, a determination was made regarding which categories of re-engineering efforts would be represented in the case study selection process. ERS officials indicated that there was more interest in expanding the scope of some of the categories than in ensuring that all categories were represented. As a result, a decision was made to eliminate the categories of client tracking and accountability systems and efforts to increase program monitoring and evaluation.
- Once the categories were determined, it was agreed that the States selected should include at least one that administers its FSP through county governmental agencies. In addition, when possible, States that implemented re-engineering changes in more than one category would be given priority consideration. Finally, survey interviewers were asked to provide input into the selection process, as they were in a better position to identify innovative approaches that States may have used to implement their re-engineering efforts.
- A preliminary list of diverse States was forwarded to ERS for consideration. Upon review of the information provided about the re-engineering effort in each State, ERS selected the six States for inclusion. Individual States were contacted and asked to participate in the case studies. In addition, State program administrators were asked to recommend local programs for site visits.

Each of the six case study sites, along with the rationale for their selection, is described below.

- ***Massachusetts.*** *(Innovation: Efforts to increase program accessibility and outreach.)* Massachusetts has two very innovative outreach projects targeted to persons who are not participating in the FSP. For a number of years, Massachusetts has contracted with Project Bread, a nonprofit agency located in Boston, to provide outreach to potential food stamp clients. Project Bread offers a variety of services, including a toll-free Food Source Hotline that responds to more than 30,000 calls a year. Callers can obtain information in 140 languages. In addition, the program funds community agencies to help potential FSP clients complete the application.

After implementing welfare reform, Massachusetts officials were concerned that clients who left the TANF program might also be leaving the FSP, even though they were still eligible for the FSP. A second outreach project was developed, to target the clients who have left TANF. Clients who drop off both Temporary Assistance for Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC, Massachusetts' name for TANF) and the FSP are contacted by a caseworker and staff from contract agencies, sometimes through home visits, to ensure that they are aware that they can continue to receive food stamps. The FSP is promoted in nutrition education classes and advertised in Head Start newsletters, posters placed in high school teen centers, and flyers provided to clients in other social and health services programs.

In FY 2000, Massachusetts planned to expand categorical eligibility for the FSP and extend office hours to include evening and early morning hours to improve access to the FSP. Officials also planned to use Public Service Announcements and print advertisements on public transportation to increase program awareness.

- ***Texas.*** *(Innovation: Changes in program certification in an urban area.)* In February 1997, Texas established a pilot program in two regions (Beaumont and San Antonio) to allow clients participating in the TANF, FSP, and Medicaid programs to report changes in eligibility status over the telephone. A year later, a change center was opened in Houston and an additional center is currently being established in Arlington. Officials stated that they established the change centers to make the certification process more efficient and to make things easier for clients by putting them in direct contact with eligibility workers when reporting changes. Clients in these regions constitute an estimated 40 percent of the State's TANF, FSP, and Medicaid populations. Texas hopes to open change centers in all regions of the State by 2001. Clients must still go into local offices for initial eligibility determination for the three programs, and for FSP recertification every 3 to 6 months.

- ***Georgia.*** *(Innovation: Changes in program certification in a rural area located in a county-administered State.)* Georgia has begun piloting a centralized call center that may be used by clients being served by local offices in nine counties, eight in the metropolitan Atlanta area and one in a rural county located in the center of the State. The purpose of the call center is to allow clients to report ongoing changes in their eligibility status without having to go into a local office. The call center is open to participants in TANF, Medicaid, and the FSP. At present, the services are available to 15 percent of the State's total food stamp caseload. Recertification continues to be conducted in the local offices. With the implementation of the call center, Georgia State employees will be directly involved for the first time in client certification and change reporting, as client service activities in the past have only been handled by county employees.

  In FY 2000, Georgia officials hoped to add another change center in the southern part of the State to expand these services. In addition to serving the clients noted above, the new center will allow elderly and disabled clients who do not have earned income to call in ongoing changes. This population has a certification period of 12 months. Georgia just received a waiver that allows the State to conduct annual recertification interviews for the elderly and disabled over the telephone.

- ***Kansas.*** *(Innovation: Changes in the role of the caseworker; efforts to conform TANF and the FSP.)* As a result of welfare reform, Kansas undertook major efforts to conform its TANF, Medicaid, and FSP rules. In addition, officials made major changes to the role of their caseworkers by combining functions from the three programs with employment-related functions that had been performed by staff in separate job classifications. The implications of these changes were examined in a rural county located in the northeast corner of the State.

- ***Arizona.*** *(Innovation: Changes in the role of the caseworker; changes in certification systems.)* Caseworkers in Arizona have assumed the responsibilities of case managers whose primary role is to move clients towards self-sufficiency. In addition, Arizona is conducting a pilot program that privatizes their TANF program in a portion of Phoenix. FSP caseworkers must coordinate with caseworkers employed by the private company that manages the TANF program when clients are enrolled in both programs.

- ***Connecticut.*** *(Innovation: Changes in organizational structure.)* Connecticut officials changed the organizational structure of their agency from a centrally administered program to a regionally administered program. They also contracted with another State

agency, the Department of Labor, to provide all employment and training services. A case study was conducted in a rural region of the State to determine how the change in administrative structure and increased flexibility affected program operations.

Overview of the Case Study Methodology

Individual site visits were conducted at each of the six selected local programs over a 3-month period. The primary method of data collection was interviews with key program staff at the State and local level. Because each State included in the case studies represents a different re-engineering category, customized interview guides were developed for each State. Data from the entire data collection effort in each State were aggregated and summarized into an individual case study report. The six individual case study reports follow. Each report provides an overview of the State's innovative re-engineering efforts and State FSP administration, along with findings from the interviews with State and local staff.

Individual Case Study Reports

Massachusetts

Re-engineering Category

Massachusetts was selected as one of the six case study States because of its innovative approach to implementing outreach initiatives to increase accessibility to the FSP after the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). In 1998, Massachusetts began operating the Follow-up Outreach and Referral Families Program (F.O.R. Families Program) to ensure that families who leave the Temporary Assistance for Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC, Massachusetts' name for TANF) program, but who are still eligible for food stamps, continue to receive benefits. In particular, clients that fail to recertify for the FSP are contacted by the F.O.R. Families Program, often through a home visit, to ensure they know of their continued eligibility for food stamps. Along with this followup of clients, the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) offices in the Boston area expanded their hours of operation to accommodate working clients. In addition, the State has been working with Project Bread, a nonprofit agency located in Boston, to conduct outreach for the Food Stamp Program. Project Bread manages social marketing campaigns, operates a hotline that directs low-income individuals to emergency food sources, and trains volunteers to assist FSP applicants with the certification process.

This case study report summarizes findings from interviews that were conducted in Boston from August 21 to August 23, 2000. State staff from DTA who oversee the FSP and State staff from the Department of Public Health (DPH) who administer the F.O.R. Families Program were interviewed. In addition, the regional coordinator and information specialist at the F.O.R. Families regional office in Boston were interviewed, along with supervisors and caseworkers in two local DTA offices, New Market and Roslindale. Because of time limitations, the F.O.R. Families Program home visitors were interviewed by telephone the following week.

Food Stamp Program Context

The Massachusetts Food Stamp Program

The Federal FSP is a State-administered program in Massachusetts. After welfare reform, Massachusetts also began the State Supplemental Food Stamp Program (SSFSP) to provide State-funded food stamp benefits to noncitizens who are ineligible to participate in the Federal FSP. SSFSP benefits are provided to noncitizens who have resided in Massachusetts for 60 continuous days or more before application. Eligibility and case management services for both programs are administered by DTA.

There are 4 DTA regions with 37 local offices that provide services to FSP clients. DTA has an interagency service agreement with the Department of Public Health (DPH) to provide outreach services for potential food stamp clients. DPH either provides the services directly through its F.O.R. Families offices or contracts out the services to Project Bread. Overviews of the F.O.R. Families Program and Project Bread are provided below.

The F.O.R. Families Program

The F.O.R. Families Program was created by DTA and DPH after community advocates expressed concern over the well-being of former welfare recipients. The advocates argued that it was unwise to assume that clients would become self-sufficient once they left TAFDC. Many clients lacked the basic skills to get a job and faced significant barriers that needed to be addressed if they were to lead stable lives. The barriers often included poor access to affordable housing, substance abuse problems, domestic violence, and transportation problems.

In order to address these concerns, DTA set out to create an outreach program to help former TAFDC clients transition off welfare. They envisioned an outreach and referral service that could make clients aware of a broad array of community and government services. Through the program, clients would learn how to access the services and receive assistance if they had any problems. Officials believed that in order to be

effective, the program would have to be staffed by workers that were trusted by former TAFDC clients. Since many clients distanced themselves from DTA and the other services they provide after leaving the TAFDC program, a decision was made not to use DTA staff to conduct the outreach efforts.

DTA approached DPH to determine if it would be willing to administer the outreach program to former TAFDC clients. It was believed that the program would be a natural extension of outreach services the department provided. DPH was already well versed in providing early intervention for a variety of health and nutrition programs, including the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). DPH nurses and social workers were located throughout the State, and the department's field staff had experience working with community-based organizations. As a result, DPH staff were well received by the former TAFDC clients. DPH agreed to provide the services, and both departments worked together to design the program. In 1998, the F.O.R. Families program was established.

Project Bread

Project Bread is an organization begun in 1969 that conducts a wide range of activities to prevent and alleviate hunger. The organization's main objective is to raise money through various fundraising events to support soup kitchens and food pantries across Massachusetts. Its banner fundraising event is the Walk for Hunger, which raises about $3 million each year. Project Bread also lobbies the legislature to promote antihunger policies and conducts outreach to promote participation in various nutrition programs, including the FSP.

Under a contract with DPH, Project Bread staff have developed and distributed food stamp outreach materials to increase awareness of the FSP and other nutrition programs. Project Bread also operates the FoodSource Hotline, which provides callers with information about FSP eligibility rules, the application process, and emergency food resources. The hotline staff also distributes FSP applications when they are requested. In addition, Project Bread collaborates with local contract agencies to provide direct outreach in communities. They train community groups to make presentations about the FSP, screen potential clients, and assist clients with the application process. Project Bread has worked with community groups to target the elderly and immigrants. Volunteers have been recruited from local networks working with the elderly to assist seniors with completing food stamp applications. Volunteers have also been recruited from immigrant-focused networks.

Findings from State-Level Interviews

At the State food stamp office in Boston, interviews were conducted with the Assistant DTA Commissioner and the DTA director of the Boston region. The Assistant DTA Commissioner is responsible for overseeing policy and program management for TAFDC, FSP, SSFSP, Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children (EAEDC) and Emergency Assistance (EA). The director of the Boston region oversees nine local DTA offices in Boston and the surrounding areas. In addition to DTA officials, interviews were also conducted with the DPH Assistant Commissioner, who is responsible for policy and program management, and the director of the F.O.R. Families Program, who oversees the regional F.O.R. Families offices. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain the State-level perspective on the outreach efforts conducted by Project Bread and the F.O.R. Families Program.

Program Administration and the F.O.R. Families Project

As was noted earlier, the majority of the direct outreach services provided by DTA and DPH are conducted through the F.O.R. Families Program. This program provides outreach and referral services to clients in five areas of need: housing and environment, family health, food and nutrition, economics, and social supports. There are six regional F.O.R. Families offices across the State. Each office is staffed with a regional coordinator, a resource specialist, and home visitors. Regional coordinators are responsible for managing the office and assigning cases to home visitors, reviewing cases as necessary, and facilitating contact with local DTA offices. Home visitors are either nurses or social workers with experience in public health, and are responsible for initiating contact with clients referred to the program by DTA. The home visitors complete their assessments over the telephone, or in person when clients cannot be reached by telephone, to determine whether a comprehensive home visit is needed. Once clients have been assessed, assistance is provided to help them access the services they need.

Resource specialists are responsible for managing the toll-free F.O.R. Families hotline. They assess clients over the phone and pass client information on to their

regional coordinator if clients need a home visit. They also refer clients to community and government services and assist them in accessing services when necessary. The resource specialists also support the home visitors by keeping them abreast of what community resources are available.

DTA caseworkers are in charge of referring clients to the F.O.R. Families Program. Caseworkers refer clients to the program if there are signs that clients will have trouble transitioning off welfare. Such signs can include an inability to access food, find work, pay rent, combat domestic violence, and/or overcome substance abuse problems. Caseworkers refer clients before they reach their 2-year TAFDC time limit so F.O.R. Families Program staff can contact clients soon after they stop receiving cash assistance. The referrals they complete include contact information and a description of the barriers the clients face. The referrals are then faxed to the F.O.R. Families Program administrators at the State office, who route them to regional F.O.R. Families offices.

Clients are also identified for the F.O.R. Families Program if they fail to recertify for their food stamp benefits after leaving TAFDC. While many clients remain eligible for food stamps after they reach their time limit, they must recertify within 30 days after leaving TAFDC in order to continue receiving benefits. Each month the names of clients that fail to recertify for food stamps are compiled on a computer-generated list and forwarded to the F.O.R. Families State staff by DTA State staff. The list is then distributed among the six regional F.O.R. Families offices. When the referral mechanisms were put into place, it was assumed that 90 percent of the referrals would come from the computer-generated list and 10 percent would come from local DTA offices identifying at-risk clients. In actuality, the majority of referrals are made by local caseworkers.

The regional offices are responsible for tracking the number of home visits that are conducted, the number of phone contacts that are made, and the numbers and type of referrals that are made to outside services. In order to compile the information, the resource coordinator obtains weekly summaries from the F.O.R. Families staff. The information is provided to F.O.R. Families staff at the State office.

Program Administration and Project Bread

Project Bread began conducting food stamp outreach in 1986 when it started operating a toll-free hotline. When clients called, the hotline staff referred them to emergency food services and conducted a basic screening to determine whether they could be eligible to receive food stamps. In 1990, Project Bread began conducting food stamp outreach for DTA after it was awarded a portion of the $75,000 the legislature earmarked for food stamp outreach. Project Bread used the money to help fund the hotline activities and also searched for low-cost advertising venues to promote the hotline. In 1993, funding for food stamp outreach rose to $350,000. In addition, DPH began managing food stamp outreach on behalf of DTA. DPH entered into a contract with Project Bread to implement a number of statewide social marketing campaigns to promote the FSP. As a result, Project Bread began promoting the FSP through such media as radio, television, newspapers, billboards, and transit posters. DPH also decided to involve five other organizations to train local groups and agencies to screen clients for the FSP and to make presentations to potential FSP applicants and those that serve them. Project Bread was asked to train and manage the five contractors.

In 1998, DPH awarded Project Bread a multiyear contract to continue conducting food stamp outreach services. Under the contract, Project Bread provides hotline callers with information on FSP eligibility rules, the application process, and emergency food resources. The hotline staff also prescreen applicants over the phone and distribute applications to callers deemed eligible for the program. If clients encounter administrative barriers when they apply for food stamps, Project Bread staff contact DTA to determine how the barriers can be overcome. In order to accommodate non-English speakers, Project Bread hired bilingual staff for the hotline and opened an account with AT&T's language line that provides translation services in 145 languages.

In addition, Project Bread continues to help local groups develop community-based outreach. Staff from Project Bread recruit local service providers to distribute food stamp outreach literature and train them to make presentations to prospective applicants, prescreen applicants, and assist them in completing food stamp applications. While these efforts are targeted to

the broad food stamp-eligible population, special efforts are made by Project Bread to target the elderly and immigrants.

Other State-Level Efforts To Improve Program Access

In order to accommodate the needs of working clients, DTA expanded office hours in four local DTA offices. The offices were chosen because officials believed that they had the resources to handle the extended hours. In May 2000, the Pittsfield office, located in Western Massachusetts, the Lawrence office, which serves a large urban area with a large public assistance program, and the Davis Square office in Summerville began operating from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. In addition, the Pittsfield and Davis Square offices stay open until 7 p.m. once a week. In July 2000, a fourth office, the Roslindale office in Boston, also started operating from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. Unlike the other offices, the Roslindale office serves clients from all three DTA offices in Boston. Since it has limited access to information housed at the other three offices, the Rosindale office cannot offer full-scale eligibility services. However, staff members do accept applications and verification documents from clients that are later forwarded to the appropriate office. A number of clients have taken advantage of these extended hours.

Challenges Identified by State Officials

The interviewees all felt that the outreach services offered through the F.O.R. Families Program and by Project Bread were effective. When asked about challenges they had encountered while promoting access to the FSP, they pointed to broader systematic issues.

- Massachusetts works with many nonprofit community-based organizations to improve access to the FSP. They are used to helping clients complete applications and to make presentations promoting the FSP. Respondents felt they could increase the number of FSP clients by using these organizations to enroll applicants, but noted that the role of these organizations is currently limited in order to assure that eligibility decisions are made by DTA employees.

- States have been told to keep their error rate down while increasing access to the FSP. Respondents noted that, at times, it has been difficult to achieve both goals. This is because States that undertake efforts to improve access to the FSP may end up with higher error rates. In addition, officials felt that under-issuance should not count toward the error rate.

- Many clients do not realize that they remain eligible to receive food stamps even though they are no longer eligible for cash assistance under TAFDC. Respondents noted that efforts need to be made to differentiate eligibility rules in both programs.

Findings From Interviews With Direct Service Providers

This section includes information obtained from interviews with staff that operate the various outreach efforts at the local level. There are two different food stamp outreach efforts in Massachusetts, one operating through the F.O.R. Families Program and one conducted by Project Bread. Findings from interviews conducted with staff from each of these programs and local DTA staff are included in this section.

The F.O.R. Families Program

The majority of F.O.R. Families staff in the Boston region are employed by the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) and work out of the BPHC offices. However, the Regional Resource Specialist is employed by DPH and works out of a separate office. All communication between the resource specialist and the home visitors occurs by phone or fax. The F.O.R. Families program conducts a number of outreach activities designed to help individuals maintain their FSP eligibility. These efforts are discussed below.

Serving Clients Through the Hotline. As noted earlier, the F.O.R. Families program maintains toll-free hotlines in order to provide potential FSP applicants with easy access to information about enrolling in the FSP. The F.O.R. Families hotline operated in the Boston region is different from hotlines in other parts of the State because it is part of a general health services hotline. The Boston region hotline operates from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, but clients also may leave messages for staff if they call when the office is closed. The Resource Specialist is responsible for staffing the hotline. DTA caseworkers are responsible for informing clients about the hotline before they lose their TAFDC. The hotline number is also included in a notice clients receive from DTA regarding the termination of their benefits.

When a call comes in, the Resource Specialist begins the conversation by gathering contact information

using a standard assessment form. Information collected includes citizenship status, employment status, family size, education level, race, marital status, and primary language. Over the course of the conversation, the Resource Specialist documents whether the caller has questions concerning housing, health, food, income or employment, and social services or family relations. He/she also documents whether the caller questioned why TAFDC benefits were not extended. If the caller is currently in a crisis situation, information regarding the circumstances is recorded, and clients are asked whether they are concerned about safety, domestic violence, housing, food, health care, emotional stress, depression, or financial stress. This information is provided to the Regional Coordinator, who then assigns the caller a home visitor.

Respondents noted that, in many cases, clients are in a desperate state by the time they contact the office. Many callers report not having enough food to eat, having trouble paying the rent, or being unable to cover the cost of utilities. If callers are not receiving food stamps, they are encouraged to apply and often are referred to Project Bread to receive assistance with the application. The Regional Resource Specialist in Boston often advocates on behalf of the callers. For example, if a client's landlord is threatening eviction, she will attempt to intervene by contacting the landlord herself.

If a non-English-speaking individual contacts the hotline, the Resource Specialist first determines if the caller's language is Spanish; if so, he/she enlists the help of another public health employee in the building who can translate for Spanish-speaking clients. If the caller speaks a language other than English or Spanish, the Resource Specialist refers the person to the Boston Public Health Commission, where staff has access to translation services.

Following Up on Referrals. Each month the Boston F.O.R. Families office receives a list of clients that have failed to recertify for food stamps, along with their contact information. The Resource Specialist contacts the clients on the list to determine why they did not complete the recertification process. Resource Specialists must make three attempts to reach each client, and through the use of an assessment form each call is documented. Over the course of the conversations, it is determined whether the clients are receiving food stamps, and if not, whether they need food stamps and any reasons for their not continuing participation in the FSP. If Resource Specialists determine that a home visit is needed, they gather the demographic information noted earlier and document responses on the assessment form. Any referrals made over the telephone, such as to emergency food providers, are also noted. A week later, the Resource Specialist calls the client to determine if he/she was able to access the FSP. However, respondents report that in many cases, the client has not followed through with the application process. If this is the case, the client is referred to Project Bread in order to receive assistance with completing the application process. The Resource Specialist also passes the client's name and contact information over to the Regional Coordinator, who assigns the case to a home visitor.

Respondents felt that, for the most part, clients react positively to calls from the Resource Specialist. Many clients feel overwhelmed by their problems and need someone to simply listen to what they are going through. The Resource Specialists are empathetic, and clients are often willing to trust them.

Home Visits. Once clients are selected for home visits, their names and contact information are forwarded to home visiting staff. Home visitors initially contact their clients by mail. After the letters are sent, the home visitors make telephone calls to the client to try and arrange a visit. If a home visitor is unable to reach a client after three phone attempts or if the client does not have a phone, the visitor usually goes to the client's home. If the client is not at home when the home visitor first attempts to make contact, the visitor leaves a F.O.R. Families brochure and a note saying that he/she stopped by. If not successful in making contact with the client, the home visitor must attempt to reach the client two additional times. If still unable to contact the client, by phone or through visits, the home visitor often calls the DTA caseworker to verify contact information.

After successfully contacting the client by phone, the home visitor attempts to set up an initial home visit. Respondents noted that most clients agree to the visits, though some are initially reluctant to deal with staff from another State agency or to allow someone they do not know to come into their home.

During the initial meeting, home visitors use an assessment tool to help determine the barriers faced by the clients. The assessment tool covers questions in five categories: housing and environment, family health, family food and nutrition, economics, and social supports. Each area includes a checklist that

must be reviewed with the client. Each item on the checklist is rated with an intensity level, which ranges from 0 to 4. The higher the intensity level, the less stable the client is in that area. For example, to assess housing and environment, the home visitor must determine if the client: (1) owes back rent, (2) is facing eviction, (3) has trouble paying for fuel or utilities, (4) has safety concerns, or (5) has received emergency assistance in the past. The intensity levels are summed for each category to get an overall rating for clients' well-being in each area.

Once the assessment is complete, the information is used to determine which course of action the home visitor will recommend in order to assist the client. These recommendations are customized to the specific needs of the client. For example, clients who are unable to pay their gas bill will be linked to different services than clients who have been issued an eviction notice. The course of action and recommendations are then discussed with the client and documented on the assessment form.

In order to assess client needs in the food and nutrition area, home visitors ask clients whether they (1) are receiving food stamps, (2) have access to a food pantry, (3) are enrolled in WIC (when appropriate), and (4) have children enrolled in the School Food Service or Summer Meals Programs. In addition, they try to assess the client's overall food security status through asking a series of open-ended questions.

Home visitors are required to maintain contact and to follow up on their clients for a period of 1 year. The amount of contact during that time varies, based on client needs. During the year, the home visitors are required to contact their clients a minimum of five times after the initial home visit. Depending on the need, however, the home visitor may make contact several times a week for short periods or make a single contact each month to determine the client's status and whether further assistance is needed.

Client Contact. Home visitors reported that most of their contact with clients has been very positive. In many cases, clients are reluctant to open up during the initial home visits, but are quick to see the value of utilizing the home visitor's skills and access to resources. Home visitors noted that making clients feel comfortable is often the key to a successful visit. If clients feel that they can trust the home visitor, they are not only willing to allow the home visitor to conduct the assessment, but are also more likely to follow up on the recommendations or referrals made during the visit.

Respondents noted that some clients are angry over the fact that they are no longer eligible to receive cash assistance. However, since the home visit usually takes place soon after clients leave TAFDC, the majority of clients are not yet facing a financial crisis, as many of their expenses are still being covered by their last TAFDC check. Providing clients with information to help them prepare for the subsequent months, when they will not have their TAFDC check to help cover expenses, is an important role for the home visitor. Respondents noted that paying rent becomes a particularly stressful issue when the household share of Section 8 housing costs increase because they are working.

All of the home visitors have encountered non-English-speaking clients. To accommodate their needs, the home visitors use translators that are either located within their office or provided by the State. While some non-English-speaking clients have relatives that are willing to translate for them, this practice is not encouraged as clients may be unwilling to raise certain issues in the presence of a family member.

All of the home visitors said they refer their clients to a wide range of services, most commonly to area food banks and the FSP. Other services to which clients are referred include MassHealth, in order to obtain free health insurance for up to a year, DTA for childcare vouchers, the Department of Revenue for child support services, and Legal Services to address issues related to housing. In addition, home visitors noted that they sometimes make referrals to such services as domestic violence intervention, substance abuse and housing services, and GED classes.

Project Bread

This section includes information from a group interview that was conducted with Project Bread staff responsible for food stamp outreach. The respondents included the food stamp outreach manager, a FoodSource Hotline worker, an outreach worker, and a legislative advocate.

Piloting Food Stamp Outreach at Health Centers. Project Bread received a grant from the Department of Health and Human Services in August 2000 to implement a pilot program to provide food stamp outreach in health centers. This outreach effort was developed

on the premise that hunger and access to food assistance is a health-related concern, and should be addressed through a comprehensive health care setting.

The program has been operating in three cities: Fall River, Lawrence, and Boston. Outreach workers prescreen clients to determine whether they are eligible to receive food stamps. They help clients to complete applications, determine which verifications are required, and assist with making copies of required documents. The outreach workers send completed applications to DTA and contact caseworkers to make sure applications are not missing any required documents. If caseworkers need additional verification, they immediately send clients a list of the missing documents.

A number of resources are available to better serve clients who do not speak English. Project Bread hires bilingual staff, the health centers have translators available, and the outreach workers have access to a language line, when needed. Having access to these resources has made the application process less confusing for non-English-speaking clients. Staff believe that the outreach services offered through the pilot program have helped to eliminate language barriers that have kept people from applying for food stamps.

DTA staff have been very supportive of the food stamp outreach pilot project. They have trained Project Bread's food stamp administrator, who went on to train outreach workers at the health centers. DTA also has designated one worker in each local office in the pilot cities to address eligibility questions outreach workers might have. The pilot was targeted to end in October 2000, but one of the health centers will continue to offer food stamp outreach once a week, using graduate students.

Reporting Requirements. Project Bread is required to provide DPH with monthly summaries of its outreach activities. Each month staff prepare reports containing the number of calls received through the hotline, the number of callers that requested general information, the number of callers that requested food stamp information, and the number of followup calls made. The report also includes the number of orders taken for pamphlets and the number of agencies that contacted the hotline for technical assistance. Data are also reported on the number of non-English-speaking individuals calling the hotline, as well as information on the age of the callers. Finally, staff also report on the number of clients that were prescreened and the number who were deemed eligible and were sent applications. For callers deemed ineligible, the project documents the reasons for the determination.

Evaluations. In FY 1998, Project Bread conducted a survey at the request of DPH to determine whether callers were satisfied with the services they received through the FoodSource Hotline. Project Bread developed the survey and administered it to 150 callers. Ninety-nine percent of those surveyed felt that the hotline was a valuable service. Ninety-three percent said they received information that was useful to their situation. All of the respondents reported being treated with respect. The respondents also found the hotline accessible. Fifty-nine percent said they received immediate assistance when they called the hotline. Ten percent reported that they had experienced a wait time of 5 minutes.

Since 1997, Project Bread has conducted two evaluations with DTA and DPH to determine whether clients who are deemed eligible for the FSP actually do apply for and receive FSP benefits. The last evaluation took place from July 1997 to June 1998. During that time, Project Bread collected the names and social security numbers of callers who were thought to be eligible for food stamps and who requested food stamp applications over the phone. Each month, the names and social security numbers of approximately 75 of those clients were randomly selected and forwarded to DTA 90 days after the clients had called the hotline. The 3-month gap was used to ensure that there was enough time for applications to be submitted and processed. DTA then cross-referenced the names and social security numbers of the callers with its computer records to determine how many clients applied for benefits and were receiving benefits. It was assumed that callers whose social security numbers were absent from DTA records did not apply for food stamps.

During the last evaluation period, Project Bread forwarded 902 names and social security numbers to DTA. When social security numbers were cross-referenced with DTA records, 65 percent of the callers (588) did not appear in DTA's computer records, and thus had not applied for the FSP. Among the callers that did apply, 86 percent received food stamps and 14 percent were deemed ineligible.

Local DTA Staff

Of interest to this study was how local DTA staff worked with the two outreach efforts. This section

includes information from interviews with staff in two local DTA offices in Boston, the New Market office and the Roslindale office. The New Market office is the second largest office in Boston. It was created when the State consolidated three other area offices. The Roslindale office is the smallest office that serves clients in the Boston area. One supervisor and two caseworkers were interviewed in each office.

Overview of Local Operations. In addition to providing basic TAFDC, FSP, and Medicaid eligibility services, DTA also provides transitional services and postemployment services to TAFDC clients and former TAFDC clients through the Employment Services Program (ESP). Since Massachusetts currently uses a generic worker model to provide TAFDC services, individual TAFDC workers are responsible for providing all services related to eligibility, case management, and employment. The employment services responsibilities include developing employment plans, linking clients to employment resources, and encouraging clients to participate in employment and training services. The local offices also have food stamp-only workers. Staff at both offices said the caseloads carried by food stamp-only workers increased significantly after welfare reform.

Roles and Responsibilities. Roles and responsibilities at the New Market and Roslindale offices follow:

- ***New Market Office.*** During the site visit to the New Market office, it was noted that the office has experienced difficulty keeping food stamp-only caseworkers employed because their caseloads are so high. Just prior to the site visit, the office had lost 1 food stamp-only worker who was carrying a caseload of 220 to 250 clients. In contrast, the caseload for TAFDC workers ranges from 100 to 110. It was noted that with welfare reform, the characteristics of the food stamp caseload changed. The program now attracts more elderly people, immigrants, SSI recipients, and people who are employed.

  The TAFDC caseworkers are responsible for providing eligibility and case management services to TAFDC clients. They also are responsible for food stamp certifications for TAFDC clients. The majority of TAFDC clients also receive food stamps through either the Federal or State-run program. When clients reach their 2-year time limit, caseworkers are required to inform them of their possible continuing eligibility for food stamps. If they believe that clients will not follow up on continued FSP participation once they have reached their time limit, the client is to be referred to the F.O.R. Families program.

  After a client loses the TAFDC benefit, caseworkers continue to carry that case for a month, and then pass it along to a food stamp-only caseworker. The caseworkers are also responsible for completing food stamp recertifications in the first month. Respondents noted that determining benefits for households with some members that qualify for State food stamps and others that qualify for Federal food stamps can be extremely confusing.

  One of the primary responsibilities of the caseworker is to help TAFDC clients find work and obtain training. When clients enter their second year on TAFDC, caseworkers review their client status every month to make sure that they are progressing towards self-sufficiency.

- ***Roslindale Office***. Staff in the Roslindale office have duties similar to those in the New Market Office. The Roslindale office has 900 food stamp-only cases in the office, which are divided among 9 workers. The office staff reported receiving a number of food stamp referrals from Project Bread, Catholic Charities, refugee resettlement organizations, and elderly outreach programs.

  Caseworkers noted that in some instances, workload has increased since welfare reform even though caseloads have fallen. This is because the scope of their jobs has increased. In addition to normal TAFDC eligibility determination activities, caseworkers are also now responsible for employment services as well as for referring clients to the F.O.R. Families Program. In addition, caseworkers may continue to carry a client's case as a "food stamp only" case for 1 year after TAFDC eligibility ends.

Food Stamp Recertification. After clients lose their TAFDC benefits, they have 30 days to be recertified for food stamps. The staff at the local offices noted that clients are informed of the recertification deadline during their exit interview, along with being provided with information about other services available. In most cases, clients do not want to take time to go through the food stamp recertification process, but some are willing return to the office in order to apply for transitional childcare services. When clients return to the office to request childcare services, their caseworker reminds them that they are still eligible to receive food stamps.

DTA is trying to make the food stamp application process easier to complete. Clients are now allowed to request an application through the mail. They can also return their application through the mail instead of dropping it off at an office. In order to promote participation in FSP, food stamp outreach workers have also been stationed at the Social Security office, health centers, and housing facilities for the elderly. Before their application is approved, potential clients have to attend a face-to-face interview, although this can be waived for elderly and disabled clients.

Referrals to F.O.R. Families. The TAFDC workers noted that they often refer clients to the F.O.R. Families Program before they lose their TAFDC benefit. Clients are referred to the program if they do not have a plan for how they will transition off welfare or if their extension request for continued TAFDC benefits is denied. The referrals are faxed to the F.O.R. Families regional office, and staff from the F.O.R. Families Program follow up with the caseworker. Neither of the two local offices is tracking the number of former TAFDC participants who later reapply for the FSP through a referral from the F.O.R. Families Program.

Project Bread. All of the local DTA staff interviewed have a high regard for the outreach services provided through Project Bread. Respondents noted that Project Bread is responsible for referring a significant number of applicants to their office. Project Bread also helps clients gather verifications that are necessary for completion of the application process. If information is missing, caseworkers send clients a checklist indicating which documents they need to provide along with a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Staff at the New Market office said Project Bread played an instrumental role in establishing the Saturday office hours and gathered input for the health center pilot program from their office. In addition, Project Bread staff met with the supervisor at the Rosindale office to develop a checklist for food stamp applications. The interviewees said that Project Bread became more visible after welfare reform due, in part, to its social marketing campaigns. Staff at both offices make referrals to Project Bread, particularly in cases where clients are ineligible for food stamps, so they can benefit from area food pantries and food banks.

Challenges Identified by Staff in Local Outreach Offices

The F.O.R. Families staff interviewed believe that the program is a success because it is not invasive and links clients with resources that help them obtain self-sufficiency. Staff said the program has increased awareness of and participation in the FSP. Without the F.O.R. Families Program, many clients would not know that they were eligible for food stamps. The staff also pointed out some barriers that still need to be addressed:

- Respondents noted that some clients report negative experiences when applying for and receiving public assistance benefits. As a result, some clients may be distrustful of the social service delivery system. When staff from the F.O.R. Families Program contact these clients, they are reluctant to accept help because they have had negative experiences with DTA in the past and are now distrustful of agencies associated with the welfare system.

- DTA caseworkers are supposed to inform clients that they may remain eligible for food stamps when their TAFDC benefits are discontinued. According to some respondents, clients report that that they were not told they would still be eligible for FSP benefits. Additionally, clients have reported that they have not received food stamp recertification forms in the mail as they were supposed to; in some cases, by the time they do receive them there is not enough time to reapply in order to prevent a break in service.

- Home visitors carry a large caseload, ranging from 90 to 140 cases. Managing so many cases can be overwhelming, especially if a large portion of the clients have significant problems, as these cases tend to be very labor intensive. Home visitors suggested that if the resource specialists could be responsible for parts of low-intensity cases, such as making calls on behalf of clients, their workload would ease up. That would allow home visitors to work more closely with clients with multiple barriers.

- As mentioned earlier, the F.O.R. Families hotline for the Boston region is unique because it takes calls for several programs, including MassHealth, Healthy Start, and FirstLink, in addition to calls from F.O.R. Families clients. As a result, the Resources Specialist

has to be knowledgeable about a wide array of programs and services. At times, it can be overwhelming to be responsible for so much information.

Project Bread staff believes there is much to be done in the aftermath of welfare reform to ensure people are not going hungry. A major concern is the dramatic fall in food stamp participation in Massachusetts. The staff brought up the following problems when asked about issues that have yet to be addressed:

- The rules governing the SSFSP and the Federal FSP are complicated and can be confusing. The confusion often increases when caseworkers have to certify members of the same family for both programs. This occurs when some members are eligible for or receiving State food stamps while others are eligible for or receiving Federal food stamps. DTA workers often try to solve the problem by requiring all family members to bring in the same verifications, even if they are not required to do so under the rules of both programs. This approach causes confusion and can put an undue burden on the client.

- Administrators in Massachusetts pay considerable attention to fraud prevention. One byproduct of this is that the FSP pays a large amount of attention to preventing fraud during the initial client orientation. According to some respondents, this focus on fraud prevention may deter clients from completing the application process. Respondents noted that clients have informed them that because of this focus, they feel like they are treated with suspicion during the application process.

The staff at the local DTA offices felt as though the food stamp outreach services provided by the F.O.R. Families Program and Project Bread were successful. They said that Project Bread was particularly effective at increasing the number of applications coming into their office. They raised the following policy-related issues that they felt needed to be addressed in order to improve access to the FSP:

- Face-to-face recertification interviews can be problematic for clients who are working or who have children. Respondents suggested that elimination of the face-to-face interview requirement would increase FSP participation.

- Some respondents felt that outreach services to the elderly should be increased. The elderly are less likely to seek out the FSP, and outreach efforts directed to them, while often needing to be more intensive in nature, may help to bring them in for certification.

- Respondents also believe that the State should make more of an effort to help the elderly meet their food needs. Staff believe this could be done if there were a way to increase or supplement the minimum food stamp benefit from the current level of $10 per month.

Texas

Overview of Re-engineering Effort

Texas was selected as one of the six case study States because it established a centralized system for food stamp and other social service program clients to report changes in their eligibility status. These "change centers" are located in the Arlington, Beaumont, Houston, and San Antonio regions and are designed to allow participants to telephone in changes that may affect their eligibility status within programs. The change centers provide clients with access to State program staff, known as "change agents," who make every attempt to verify and document the reported changes while the client is on the telephone. Change agents have the same job description and basic training as regular eligibility workers in local field offices, but receive additional training in change center procedures and customer service. The centers serve TANF recipients, food stamp clients, and children and pregnant women receiving Medicaid. The centers operate from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. In addition, the centers have telephone message systems that clients may use after hours. As a result, clients can report changes 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

This case study report summarizes findings from interviews that were conducted from September 11 to September 13, 2000. An interview was conducted with a Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS) staff person who spearheaded the development of the change center in San Antonio. TIERS, which includes the change center pilots, is a large automation and re-engineering program directed by the central headquarters of the Texas Department of Human Services (TDHS). At the regional level, the TDHS regional director, the assistant to the regional director, two case analysts, and the change center program manager were interviewed. Additionally, two supervisors and two advisors working at the change center were interviewed. To complete the process, supervisors, advisors, and case

readers located in two local TDHS offices served by the change center were interviewed. The San Antonio change center was chosen for closer examination because it was the first change center established in Texas. The local offices in Brighton and Sutton were chosen for site visits because they serve clients living in urban areas.

Food Stamp Program Administration

The FSP in Texas is a State-administered program. Overall program administration is conducted through the TDHS, with local services being provided by TDHS staff working in field offices throughout the State. Ten regional offices oversee the local offices. TDHS eligibility workers, known as advisors, are responsible for determining eligibility and conducting recertifications for food stamp, TANF, and Medicaid clients. Food stamp benefits are issued on a debit card called a Lone Star Card. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) oversees employment and training activities for the FSP. Rather than operate local field offices, the TWC funds services provided by local workforce development boards and one-stop career centers.

Findings From State and Regional Interviews

This section includes information gathered from the TIERS change center leader, who was the regional director when the change center was implemented in San Antonio. Also interviewed were the current TDHS regional director, the assistant to the regional director, two case analysts at the regional office, and the change center program manager.

Overview

The first change center was established in San Antonio, and was fully implemented in February 1997. It currently serves 38 local offices in 28 counties. The San Antonio region covers a diverse range of counties, including several on the Texas-Mexico border. In FY 2000, there were 48,982 food stamp households in the region. In addition to the San Antonio center, change centers have been opened in Beaumont, serving 15 counties in southeast Texas, and in the Houston region. The Houston change center serves only the city of Houston, although the region includes suburbs and several rural counties. Recently, a change center was opened in the Arlington region, which includes Dallas. The Arlington center currently serves 70 percent of the region.

History of San Antonio Change Center

The change center in San Antonio was born out of a move to integrate and streamline eligibility services for 15 health and human services programs through the Texas Integrated Enrollment Systems (TIES) initiative. In order to promote efficiency and customer service, the State opened bidding for eligibility services to private companies. TDHS entered into a partnership with two private organizations, EDS and UNISYS, and proposed the establishment of call centers[1] as part of its bid for the TIES contract. In 1997, the Clinton Administration ruled that private employees could not determine food stamp eligibility. In response to the ruling, the Texas legislature scaled back the TIES initiative so it included only the automation of the eligibility system. Because of the modifications to the TIES initiative, eligibility determination remained a function of TDHS. Re-engineering and automation efforts, including the change centers, continue under TIERS, the successor to the TIES initiative.

The bidding process for the TIES initiative made it clear that State jobs could be endangered in the future if TDHS did not become more competitive. As a result, TDHS began looking for ways to make their programs more efficient, provide better customer service to clients, and improve quality control. In 1997, the regional director of the TDHS office in San Antonio sought approval to implement a change center that clients could access to report changes. Local TDHS offices had a history of either failing to document changes reported by clients or noting them long after they were reported. Their inaction often adversely affected clients, who were forced to repay benefits that were incorrectly issued. It also increased the State's food stamp error rate. Inaction on the part of caseworkers led to "failure to act" and "failure to act timely" errors.

Reported changes were often ignored because documenting them was not the highest priority in local offices and because the reporting process was cumbersome. The unwritten rule that governed eligibility services was that client certifications and recertifications should take priority over change reporting. As a result,

[1]The proposed call center would have allowed clients to be certified and recertified over the telephone. USDA determined that, under FSP rules, applications and reviews must be done face-to-face, except in cases where recipients are eligible for SSI. Texas requested a waiver that would allow most of the interviews to be conducted over the telephone, with the "closing" interview to be done at local offices. Its waiver request was denied.

eligibility workers who were often overworked put off their change-reporting responsibilities. The procedures local offices used to document changes were also complicated. Clients could not report changes directly to their eligibility worker. Instead, they had to report changes by mail, telephone, or in person to a clerk at their local TDHS office. The clerk entered the changes into the computer system, and forwarded paperwork noting the change to the advisor handling the case. If verification documents were not provided when the change was reported, advisors would have to "pend" the case and send the client a letter requesting additional documentation. The reported change would then get filed until the client contacted the advisor or clerk with the proper documentation. When the client forwarded the documentation, the change would be noted.

The change center in San Antonio was designed to simplify the change reporting process for local TDHS staff and for clients. In 1997, program managers in the Brighton and Sutton TDHS offices in San Antonio, the two largest local offices in the region, began creating change-processing units with six to eight advisors each, under the direction of the regional office. The advisors in the new units, who became known as change agents, were responsible for documenting all changes clients reported to the local office. Other advisors in local TDHS offices remained in charge of completing certifications, but were no longer responsible for tracking client changes. The new division of labor allowed advisors to become experts in completing certifications and recertifications, while agents became experts in change reporting. It also created a staff whose top priority was documenting changes.

Staff in the local TDHS offices directed clients to report their changes to the change units by fax, mail, or over the telephone. When clients reported their changes by telephone, they were directly linked to a change agent. The agent documented their changes and attempted to verify them through a three-way call with a collateral contact. In the majority of cases, the changes were verified during the initial telephone call. When contacts could not be reached, the agents had the option of using client statements as the "best available information" or they could ask clients to send verification documents through the mail. Because so many verifications were done over the phone, the number of paper verifications that were required dropped sharply.

The change processing units were eventually consolidated and housed in the basement of the Sutton office building. The consolidation took roughly a year. The regional office then began drawing advisors from other urban and rural TDHS offices in the San Antonio region to work at the change center. The change center is currently staffed with over 50 change agents.

Sharing Case Files and Verification Documents

A virtual file sharing system is used to enable TDHS staff and change center staff to access and update client information stored in SAVERR, the Statewide computer system. Client information is first entered into SAVERR by local TDHS staff as part of the eligibility certification process. An online application form, known as the Generic Worksheet (GWS), is used to enter the information. Once the information is saved, it is automatically stored in SAVERR. At that point, case files are accessible to change center staff and local DHS staff.

In order to ensure that case files are not duplicated, the system requires that the case files be checked out to one worker at a time. If change center agents need to access a record that has been checked out to a TDHS worker at a local field office, they notify their customer service representative, who contacts the local office to find out why the record is being used and who is using it. If TDHS advisors need to access a record checked out to the change center, they contact a liaison (usually a supervisor) in the field office. The liaison then contacts the customer service representative at the change center to try to get the record released. This process often takes place when change center agents have to pend cases because they were unable to reach a collateral contact. It also takes place when clients are served a notice of adverse action because a change they reported affects their benefit level. When the latter occurs, agents must hold the case for a 13-day appeal period.

Since change center agents try to verify reported changes over the telephone, the number of paper documents clients have to provide has been significantly reduced. When change agents ask clients to provide verification documents, the documents are mailed or faxed to the change center. Once the documents are reviewed, they are forwarded to local offices, where they are filed. At this point, the only change center that maintains copies of verification documents is the

Beaumont change center. In Beaumont, the documents are scanned and filed on compact discs. Scanning technologies have been purchased for the other offices through the TIERS initiative and will be implemented in the near future.

Quality Control Initiatives

Several quality control initiatives were implemented in the San Antonio Region to reduce the food stamp error rate. A food stamp case reading project began in November 1998 to prevent certification errors. Local offices are required to read 100 percent of food stamp applications before processing and 50 percent of all recertification applications. The review of recertification applications includes high-risk cases, as defined by the program manager at each local field office. Under the project, each program manager must provide a monthly case-reading report to the regional office. In August 2000, the regional office added a validation process involving regional case analysts who review the results of food stamp case-reading procedures at the local office.

In September 1999, the regional office redefined food stamp certification periods. Local offices were provided with the new guidelines. One-month to 2-month certification periods were set for households facing unpredictable circumstances. This category includes households with an ABAWD who is reaching the 3-month time limit, households with a member whose alien eligibility status is about to change, and households with a member who applied for Unemployment Insurance Benefits but has not begun to receive them. A 3-month certification period was set for households with an employable adult who is unemployed or employed less than full time and does not meet the criteria defined for households facing the 1-month to 2-month certification period. Certification periods of 6 to 12 months were set for households with more stable conditions.

In March 1999, a recall project was implemented to reduce the number of changes that go unreported in the San Antonio Region. Through State error rate tracking, it was determined that the majority of unreported changes in the region occur during the first month after certification. To ensure that changes are acted upon in the first month, the region established a recall center at the change center with staff who are responsible for contacting food stamp clients in the four urban offices with the highest error rates a month after they are certified. The advisors take action on any changes that clients report in the first month. In order for the case to be tracked, clients must be receiving between $100 and $499 in monthly food stamp benefits.

Evaluation

In 1999, TDHS requested funding to expand the change centers statewide. The Texas legislature responded to the request by mandating that an evaluation of the change centers take place before granting funds. TDHS has been charged with overseeing an evaluation of existing centers. At the time of the interview, the department was in the planning phase of the evaluation and hoped to have it completed by the beginning of the next legislative session, February 2001. The evaluation will be based on data from all four of the change centers and cover a range of issues including customer satisfaction, accuracy, and timeliness.

Challenges Noted by State Officials

The State officials and the officials in the regional office all felt that the change center in San Antonio had improved eligibility services. It has made the reporting process more efficient by allowing clients to deal with one worker and has improved customer service by putting clients directly in touch with change agents. Roughly 70 percent of the clients are able to report their change with one telephone call. In addition, supervisors monitor calls to ensure clients are being treated with respect. Also, because agents and advisors have been allowed to specialize, fewer changes go unreported. Nonetheless, there were still some problems and challenges the officials would like to see addressed.

- The interviewees would like to see the wait time that clients experience when they call the center reduced. When the change center first opened, clients were kept on hold for 30 to 45 minutes before their call was transferred to a change agent. The wait time was reduced to 1 minute and 15 seconds, but it has been steadily increasing because of job vacancies. Officials indicated that they need to address this issue to ensure that clients keep calling the center.

- Some policies were written with the assumption that change reporting would take place at the field office where clients and workers meet face-to-face. For example, if reported changes affect benefit levels or cause clients to become ineligible for food stamps, they receive a “notice of adverse action” and are told

that they have 13 days to appeal. Under existing rules, clients may waive their right to appeal during the 13-day period if they are in their worker's presence. Because all interactions at the change center take place over the telephone, the policy had to be interpreted by field staff. The interpretation used by the change center allowed clients to waive the action over the telephone and, as a result, have the change processed immediately. But during a State review, it was determined that under the existing policy, clients could only waive their right to appeal in the presence of a worker. The interpretation has increased the workload for change center staff, who can no longer process the change through one telephone call. The change center has submitted a waiver request to the State office requesting that the requirement be waived in San Antonio.

- When the change centers were first established, some local offices resisted relinquishing change reporting responsibilities. Once the functions were removed, the staff saw their local offices and the change centers as completely separate entities. But both offices must work in tandem for eligibility services to be seamless. Most caseworkers are willing to work with the change center now because it has made their lives easier, but some still need to be reminded that good customer service requires cooperation.

- Change center agents were pulled from the pool of TDHS advisors, but the skills that make a good advisor are not the same skills that make a good agent. The State needs to create a new job description for the change agents so the distinctions are better understood. The same holds true for supervisors who work in local offices and supervisors at the change center. The change center uses a "matrix management" style and requires supervisors to manage workers as a team, unlike local TDHS offices, which assign supervisors their own unit.

- There are major differences in the way the four change centers operate because they were established in different regions under different management. For example, the Beaumont change center still uses clerks to answer telephones rather than transmitting calls directly to change agents. State officials want to see things standardized so services are consistent when the centers are eventually expanded statewide.

Findings From the San Antonio Change Center

This section includes information gathered from the program manager who oversees the San Antonio change center. Two change center supervisors who oversee the change reporting process and two change center agents who respond to incoming calls from clients reporting changes were also interviewed.

Overview

The change center in San Antonio is located in the basement of the Sutton office building. It was modeled after the call center of the QVC Shopping Channel, which is one of many corporate call centers that were established in San Antonio after Southwestern Bell installed fiber optics across the city in the early 1990s. When TDHS first consolidated the change units from the Brighton and Sutton offices to form the change center, many of the agents were employed part-time at the QVC call center. Because the call center was a popular place to work, senior staff at the change center contacted management at QVC Shopping Channel to learn more about their business practices. TDHS staff developed a rapport with the management at QVC. QVC staff worked with TDHS staff to set up the change center and to train change center agents.

Organization

The change center is responsible for documenting client-generated changes and agency-generated changes that affect food stamp, TANF, or Medicaid benefits. Two call arenas and five specialized centers were established to carry out those duties. The call arenas house all of the change agents. Each arena is equipped with a running board that charts the number of callers on hold, the number of callers that requested services in English or in Spanish, and the average wait time. One arena contains a "super cube" that is equipped with a computer that tracks the status of all incoming calls. The supervisor on floor duty occupies the super cube. The other arena contains a cube that houses the customer service representative. The customer service representative functions as the liaison between the change center and the local offices. All of the change agents sit in cubes that are equipped with telephones and computers. Because of the proximity of the super cube, they can easily access a supervisor

when they have questions. During the core hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., there are 30 to 45 agents in the call arenas. Roughly 40 percent of the agents speak Spanish.

The technical center was developed to process agency-generated changes that result from database matches or reports, including SSI and social security match reports from other States, and reports on incarcerated household members. The technical center staff are also in charge of documenting new-hire reports. Over 6,000 new-hire reports are generated each month. Before they are documented, the reports are forwarded to clerical units in the Eagle Pass and Del Rio offices so they can be screened. New-hire reports that need to be documented for change reporting are referred back to the technical center in San Antonio. The technical center also processes TANF sanctions for the State, as well as cases that have been put on hold due to unclaimed or returned mail. Staff are also responsible for processing cases with clients transferring off TANF who are eligible for transitional Medicaid. The technical center is staffed with an assistant supervisor and seven technicians.

The clerical center monitors pending cases to ensure that actions are taken before their due dates. The center receives all agency-generated reports and is responsible for distributing them to change agents, the technical center, or units in the Eagle Pass or Del Rio offices. The center also maintains paper logs on all cases and uses them to track down information when there are inquiries about a case or disputes surrounding a case. The clerical center is also responsible for preparing and distributing written notices that are sent to clients to confirm that reported changes were made or to request that additional documents be provided. The clerical center is staffed with a supervisor, an assistant supervisor, and eight clerks.

The recall center is responsible for implementing a regional initiative to track error-prone cases 1 month after recertification. Staff at the recall center contact error-prone clients and take action on any changes that they report in the first month. Clients must receive between $100 and $499 in monthly food stamp benefits for their case to be tracked by the recall center. The recall center is staffed with a supervisor, assistant supervisor, and four advisors who handle between 400 and 700 cases each month.

The completion center was established in response to a review of practices used by the change center. Before the review, the change center was allowing clients to waive their right to appeal an adverse action over the telephone. But, as was noted above, the State determined that the practice violated existing policy. The change center was directed to place the case in a pending file for the 13-day period. As a result, the center began pending all adverse action cases. The new policy interpretation significantly increased the change center workload because clients facing an adverse action could no longer be served through one telephone call. The completion center now processes all pending cases.

The policy support center is responsible for staying up-to-date on policy changes and interpreting policy for staff at the change center. They train staff, track data for the change center, and conduct case reviews.

Roles

The roles of supervisors, agents, and customer service representatives are as follows:

Supervisors. The change center has five supervisors who are responsible for managing the call arenas. They are part of a matrix management team that oversees all of the change agents, unlike supervisors in local TDHS offices that oversee their own units. At the time of the visit, each supervisor had floor duty for 3 hours a day. During that time, the supervisor oversaw all incoming calls, responded to questions from agents, and silently monitored select calls to ensure that agents were providing strong customer service. The supervisors are also responsible for conducting yearly evaluations, quarterly reviews, and case readings. They also have other individual management responsibilities at some of the centers. One supervisor manages the clerical center, another the technical center, and a third the local computer system, while a fourth oversees the recall center.

Agents. At the time of the interviews, there were 53 change agents responding to client calls. The change agents do not carry a caseload like advisors in local offices. Instead, each day a certain number of calls are routed to them based on their availability. During peak time, agents may not be able to respond to clients immediately. As a result, clients encounter a wait time of up to 15 minutes. Informational messages about the change centers and welfare reform are played during the wait time.

Agents follow specific steps when responding to clients' calls. They begin each call by greeting the

client and requesting the client's name and social security number. They enter the social security number into SAVERR so they can access the electronic file. They ask the caller what changes he/she wants to report and enter the changes into the case file. Then agents attempt to verify the change through a three-way call with a collateral contact. In 75 percent of the cases, they are able to verify the change while they have their client on the telephone. If change agents are unable to reach the collateral contact, they may either use the client's statement as the best available information and process the change or request that verification documents be sent to the change center. If further documentation is requested, agents send clients a "notice of delay in eligibility" form with a return envelope. The client has 10 days to respond. The agents then "pend" the case. At the end of the day, all of the pended cases are moved to supervisors' open cases. When call volumes and wait times are high, agents document reported changes on paper to avoid spending time bringing up electronic files and initiate calls to collateral contacts without having clients wait on the telephone.

Customer Service Representatives. The change center has one customer service representative who serves as a liaison between the center and local TDHS offices. All contact between local TDHS offices and the change center are routed between the local office liaisons, typically supervisors, and the customer service representative. The customer service representative interacts with local field office liaisons when change agents and local office advisors must share virtual case records. The representative also handles customer service questions and complaints. Agents may transfer calls to the customer service representative or provide the caller with the customer service representative's number and e-mail address.

Quality Control

The change center reviews food stamp cases through floor reviews and case readings. All reported changes that affect food stamp benefits are reviewed before they are processed through floor reviews. Floor reviews take place after change agents document and verify reported changes. To indicate that a case is ready for review, agents stand up in their cubes. While clients are still on the telephone, case reviewers or case readers look over the computer screens that include information on household composition, income, and deductions. These items are reviewed because they have historically caused the most errors. The reviewers also check the management screen that lists household income and expenses side-by-side. If cases are free of errors, change agents process them. If errors are found, the agent corrects them and notifies the client of the changes.

Each month approximately 650 cases are reviewed after they are processed through case readings. The case readings are much more comprehensive than the floor reviews because the cases are read in their entirety. Each month, case readers review a sample of 250 cases drawn from the pool of cases that were processed. In addition, supervisors review three cases from the pool of cases change agents processed that month. The cases are then further reviewed by case analysts at the regional office. The case analysts read five cases that were read by each supervisor and five cases reviewed by each case reader.

Findings From Local Department of Human Services Offices

Researchers visited two local TDHS offices in San Antonio to learn how they process food stamp applications and inform clients of the change center. At each office, they interviewed supervisors, eligibility workers (called "advisors"), technicians, and case readers. This section summarizes findings from the interviews.

Overview

The Sutton office and the Brighton offices are both located in San Antonio. The Sutton office is located on the east side of the city, close to downtown. It serves clients living in the east and northeast sections of San Antonio and clients living downtown. Its caseload is currently 4,710 food stamp households. The Brighton office is located on the south side of the city and serves clients living in the same area. Its caseload is currently 6,332 food stamp households. The staff in the local offices are responsible for carrying out initial certifications and recertifications for TANF clients, food stamp clients, and children and pregnant women receiving Medicaid. There is some variation in the way the local offices are organized and in the way they administer eligibility services, described below.

- ***Brighton Office.*** There are five ongoing units at the Brighton office responsible for overseeing food stamp certifications and recertifications. Each unit is staffed with a supervisor, an assistant supervisor, approximately 10 advisors, and a certification technician. The office also has an administrative unit with a supervisor, seven front desk clerks, two case

analysts, four case readers and a risk assessment unit with two eligibility examiners, and two verification technicians.

When clients walk into the Brighton office to apply for food stamps, they receive an application from a front desk clerk. While they are in the lobby, they may view a bilingual video about DHS services that provides an overview of the change center. After they complete the application, the clerk screens it to determine whether they are eligible for expedited food stamps. If they do not qualify for them, the clerk schedules an appointment with an advisor. Before the appointment, risk assessment unit staff use a data brokering system to verify the information clients provide on their application. They can assess information on property ownership, vehicle ownership, and marital status and access credit reports, which advisors use as case clues during the initial interview. At the initial meeting, the advisor informs clients about their rights and responsibilities, issues their Lone Star card, and notifies them about the change center. Clients receive a bilingual card with the telephone number and mailing address of the change center. They are also told that they can use the workstation to report changes. The workstation has a telephone, a fax machine, and a copier. All food stamp applications are forwarded to the administrative unit to be read before they are processed.

Clients who recertify for food stamps at the Brighton office are required to attend a group orientation meeting that is led by one of the advisors with the help of the administrative assistant. During the orientation, advisors review work rules and sanctions and remind clients to contact staff at the change center to report changes. After the orientation, advisors meet with clients one-on-one to guide them through the certification process. After gathering verification documents and entering their information into SAVERR, advisors forward food stamp cases to the administrative unit to be reviewed. After the review, the cases are processed.

- ***Sutton Office.*** The Sutton office has four ongoing units. Each unit has a supervisor, from two to three assistant supervisors, from six to eight advisors, and a certification technician. There is also an administrative unit with a supervisor, two case analysts, three case readers, and three clerks. In addition, the Sutton office has a specialized unit with risk assessment staff (which includes one eligibility examiner and one verification technician) and support staff, including front desk clerks.

  Clients begin the certification process by submitting a completed application to a clerk who screens it to determine whether the case should be expedited. Clients then receive an appointment to talk with an advisor. Before they meet with their advisors, TANF and food stamp clients are required to attend an orientation session where they are provided with general information about work requirements, sanctions, and change reporting requirements and procedures. They receive a card with contact information for the center and a stamped envelope addressed to the change center that they can use to report changes. They are also told that they can use the workstation to report changes. After the orientation, clients meet with their advisor, who gathers verification documents, reviews specific information about their case, including when they will begin receiving benefits and how much they will receive, and answers client questions. Before the case is processed, a case reader in the specialized unit reviews it for accuracy.

  During the recertification process, clients meet with a certification technician who gathers and reviews their verification documents and recertification form. After the review, the technician forwards all of the paperwork to the advisor in charge of the case. The advisor enters the information into the client's case file in SAVERR. The advisor then forwards the case to the specialized unit where a case reader reviews it. After it is deemed to be error free, the case is returned to the advisor, who processes it.

Both local offices noted that they began using shorter recertification periods for food stamp clients in the fall of 1999. The shorter recertification periods, which were set by the regional office, are intended to reduce the number of unreported changes. Before that time, most food stamp clients were recertified every 6 months. Now, recertification periods for food stamp clients range from every month to every 12 months. Working clients with a fluctuating income are required to recertify every 3 to 6 months, depending on their expenses. Clients who are unemployed and lack stable housing must recertify every 1 to 2 months. Clients with a stable income and predictable expenses are allowed to recertify every 6 to 12 months. This group usually includes elderly recipients who are receiving SSI and are in good health. Most food stamp-only recipients are required to recertify every 3 months.

Quality Control

Each local office is required to review all certification applications before they are processed and 50 percent of the recertification applications. Depending on the local office, case readers or assistant supervisors conduct the reviews. The Sutton office has five case reader positions. Four of the positions are filled by assistant supervisors who rotate out of their units for 4-month periods to review cases. The fifth position is a full-time case reader who reviews cases year-round. At the present time, only three of the positions are filled because of staffing shortages. All completed food stamp cases are forwarded to the supervisor overseeing the case readers. The supervisor selects cases that need to be read and assigns them to the case readers. Case readers in the Sutton office try to read 25 cases per day. The Brighton office has two case analysts and four case readers. Between 225 and 250 cases are reviewed in the Sutton office each month.

A selected number of cases go through a second review after they are processed to ensure that advisors and supervisors catch errors. Each month supervisors in both local offices review five processed cases from each advisor's caseload to ensure that they were completed accurately. Five cases are pulled from each case reader's caseload and reviewed by the supervisor to ensure they are being reviewed accurately. The most common certification and recertification errors relate to three aspects of client eligibility: determination of household composition, calculation of household income, and determining the shelter deduction.

Client and Staff Response

Staff at both local offices said that clients were initially leery about using the change center. Since clients cannot go to the change center, they believed that the center was staffed with a bunch of operators rather than employees trained to take changes. In addition, they had established relationships with their advisors and staff at the local offices. The center, on the other hand, is set up so clients rarely interact with the same person. They did not see a need to involve another person in the change reporting process. Now most clients seem to enjoy using the change center because, unlike in the past, their changes are being documented. Each time they report a change, they receive a confirmation number and a letter in the mail. In addition, they no longer have to go into the local office to report a change. All they have to do is pick up their telephone. That is particularly important for clients who face transportation barriers.

TDHS staff reacted to the change center in different ways. Some staff embraced the change center because they felt it would reduce their workload. Other staff felt as though their cases were being given away. They wanted to see them through rather than hand them over to someone else. When the local offices began to lose staff to the change center, staff had mixed feelings. On the one hand, the change center was reducing their workload by taking on change reporting responsibilities. On the other hand, it was leading to staff reductions at the local offices and increasing their caseloads as a result.

The staff interviewed felt as though the change center made their jobs easier overall. They indicated that not having to track changes helped to offset the increased client monitoring they are required to do under PRWORA. It also eliminated the need to stay abreast of policy changes that are related to change reporting. The staff also said that advisors face fewer interruptions in their workday since they have been allowed to specialize.

Challenges Identified by Local Staff

The staff at the change center raised some of the same challenges that the State interviewees and regional staff pointed to when asked to list barriers they face. They noted that some policies were written for traditional caseworker-client interactions that occur in field offices rather than for services that are provided over the telephone, and they pointed to the confusion over the right to appeal an adverse action. They also said that staff in some local offices do not see the change center as part of TDHS and that this view disconnects the services offered at local field offices from those provided by the change center. They pointed to the following challenges:

- It is difficult to control workflow because of the variability in the number of calls that may come in on a given day. Because peaks are unpredictable, it is difficult for supervisors to assess staffing needs. If there are not enough agents in the call arena to handle the volume of calls, they document reported changes on paper and verify them later, rather than initiating a three-way call to verify changes on the spot and enter them into SAVERR. That approach can be frustrating because the underlying goal is to serve clients through one call.

- The change center generates a lot of paperwork because every change or request for information has to be documented in writing. The center purchased a bursting machine that is used to fold the notices. Use of this machine, however, requires clerks to spend a good deal of time inserting notices into envelopes. For a little more money, the center could have bought a machine that automatically prints the notices, folds them, and puts them into envelopes directly from the computer.

- The computers at the change center operate off of three local area networks (LANs). When one LAN crashes, it impacts the entire center. In August 2000, the computers were down off and on for 3 or 4 days. During that time, agents took changes manually and called clients back to complete the change reporting process.

The staff interviewed at the local offices felt the change center was successful. However, they cited two challenges that have arisen since its implementation:

- Staff in both offices said their workload had increased because they had lost workers to the change center. As mentioned earlier, the first units of the change center were composed of staff from the Brighton and Sutton offices. The staff from the units eventually moved to the change center settled in the Sutton building. Because they were never replaced, both offices have had to spread their work over a smaller pool of people.

- Staff indicated that accessing case files that have been checked out by change agents can be frustrating. Advisors cannot contact the change center directly. They have to go through their local office liaison with a request that the file be released. The liaison then contacts the customer service representative at the change center, who determines why the case is unavailable. In some instances, it takes a day or two to get a case from the change center.

Georgia

Overview of Re-engineering Category

With the advent of welfare reform in Georgia, State officials became concerned about the high level of certification errors in county-run social service programs. An investigation into the source of these errors found that most could be attributed to county-level caseworkers processing changes in client eligibility status outside of the approved processing timelines. In looking for solutions to this problem, Georgia officials decided to pilot a project that established a State-run change center to assume responsibility for helping the counties process and complete changes in client enrollment status.

This project was modeled after a similar project that is taking place in Texas. However, one key difference between the Georgia pilot and the Texas program is that Georgia administers its social service programs through local county government offices, while Texas administers its programs using State employees. Up until the development of the change center, Georgia State employees were not involved in the day-to-day operations of the Food Stamp Program (FSP). With the advent of the change center, the responsibility for ensuring that changes are correctly reported in the pilot counties became a State-level responsibility. The initial pilot county for the project, which began in 1999, was Fulton County, encompassing parts of Atlanta. During the first year, the pilot was expanded to seven more urban counties in the greater Atlanta area. Finally, in the year 2000, a rural county (Baldwin County) was added.

The purpose of this case study is twofold. First, the study is designed to provide information on the development and implementation of the change center and how the project affected county-administered programs. Second, the study was interested in whether or not the change center was effectively serving the needs of the pilot rural county. To gather information for this case study, interviews were conducted with the State FSP manager, the director of the change center, the administrator of the Baldwin County Economic Support program, and program supervisors and caseworkers in Baldwin County.

Food Stamp Program Administration

As noted above, Georgia administers its social service programs through county governments. State officials provide counties with policy direction for the FSP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Medicaid program, and operational responsibility for these programs rests with the counties. State officials noted that there is little difference between counties in the way the FSP is administered.

State staff responsible for overseeing these programs are located in a series of regional offices, which are called field areas. Georgia has divided its counties into

14 field areas, with a Field Area Administrator responsible for communicating and implementing program policy in each area. In addition, each field area has a number of program consultants who are responsible for helping county staff with policy questions, providing training on changes in policy, and monitoring program compliance with State regulations.

In 1999, counties in the Atlanta area were given the option of participating in the change center project. To fund the project, the State used funds that normally would have been returned to the U. S. Department of Agriculture as a result of the high error rate. Additionally, counties choosing to participate were required to transfer county-funded positions to the State for staffing purposes. Counties were initially requested to provide one position for every 5000 cases they managed. In turn, the change centers assumed all responsibility for recording and processing client status changes, including any error rates associated with the processing of those changes. The State plans to expand the pilot program in 2001, adding an additional change center to serve 70-80 smaller counties in southwest Georgia.

The organizational location of the change center is somewhat unique within Georgia's social service delivery system. The change center is not part of any particular field area, but exists as a separate entity. The change center is physically located in Atlanta, and uses State employees to staff the project. Clients who wish to report changes in their eligibility status are encouraged by the county caseworkers to telephone the change center. In addition, the center staff uses computer matching to identify potential client changes. When client records from the FSP are matched with data from other programs and potential changes in the client's eligibility status are identified, the change center staff take a proactive approach by contacting the clients to verify whether the change actually occurred. For example, staff use the Medicaid birth records database to match new births with FSP and TANF client records to determine if any infants should be added to the family record.

Findings From State Administrators

Background on Change Center Operations

As noted above, the change center started out serving clients residing in Fulton County, and then expanded to seven other urban counties in 1999. Baldwin County was added at the end of 1999 and was the first rural county in Georgia to be added. As previously noted, county programs were required to provide positions to staff the center. Each county was asked to identify appropriate positions within their organization at a civil service classification that could be used by the State for staffing the center. Because many of the civil service classifications used by the counties were consistent with those needed by the State, the position transfer process worked smoothly. However, it is important to note that individuals who may have occupied the positions at the county level were not transferred along with their positions. This fact was important to State officials, as the skills needed to work in the call center are different than those needed by local caseworkers.

The primary purpose of the change center is to record and document changes in eligibility status submitted by clients. Changes can be reported by a telephone call from a client or through a fax from a county caseworker. When a change is reported, it is the responsibility of the "change agents" to verify the change, collect documentation when needed, and process and record the change. In addition, a separate unit is responsible for recording and adding newborn infants to family records. Change agents are also responsible for matching client records with other social service databases, including Medicaid birth records and data from a "new-hires" database.

In January 1999, the change center began processing Fulton County changes, which involved 26,500 cases. In April, when the 7 additional counties were added, the center processed 63,500 cases. In September, when all of the counties were up and running, the total number of cases expanded to 119,500. This caseload continued to grow, and in March of 2000 the total number of cases processed by the center was 152,600.

The amount of time needed to respond to the calls averages about 4 to 5 minutes each. Most of the calls (55 percent) are related to the Medicaid program, with about 35 percent of the calls involving FSP changes and the remaining 10 percent being associated with TANF program issues. While the center is designed to be used by clients only for reporting changes, the change center supervisor reported that at least one-third of all calls are general inquiries about the FSP. When general calls are received, staff refer these clients to their local county programs.

Change Center Staffing

The change centers are primarily staffed with change agents. At the time of these case study interviews, there were a total of 30 change agents working in the center. A recent assessment of the staffing needs for the center indicated that current volume would support a total of 55 agents. In addition to the change agents, there are three supervisors and three program consultants representing each of the three social service programs and one quality control supervisor. The program consultants provide assistance to the supervisors and change agents with regard to policy questions, while the quality control supervisor reviews a limited number of client records each day to ensure that they were properly handled.

The change center director requested and received approval for adjusting the job specifications for the civil service classification used by the center. The original classifications transferred by the counties, while at the same salary range, often were tied to job specifications that related to employment services. The new job specifications focused more on the ability to manage cases over the telephone. However, many of the staff hired into the positions had not worked with a system that used telephone calls for reporting client information along with a computer system for processing and documenting changes.

On-the-job training is provided to staff by the supervisors. New staff are first assigned to a mentor, someone who has worked there for a while and is familiar with the system. The change center supervisor noted that the first 2 weeks are very hard for new employees, as they are often not prepared for the constant telephone calls. In addition, agents are required to finish up their cases on the same day the report comes in, so there is pressure to complete all of their cases, but at the same time not to let clients remain on hold for long periods of time.

Processing Client Changes

When a client first calls the change center, an automated answering system asks if they prefer to communicate in English or Spanish. The center maintains two Spanish-speaking agents to handle clients who wish to report in Spanish. Once the language of preference is established, the clients are asked if they wish to add a newborn infant to an existing family record or simply report another type of change. Clients are then transferred to the first available change agent, who will process and record the changes. Once the changes are recorded, the change agent will send the county caseworker handling the case an e-mail or fax notifying them of the change. Each county has a contact person responsible for working with staff at the change center to resolve any outstanding problems or issues.

Clients may report changes any time the center is open, which is from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays. The average time for each call runs 4 to 7 minutes. The center is equipped to handle up to 60 calls at a time, but current staffing is such that only 30 calls can be processed at a time. The computerized telephone system used by the agents includes a feature that tracks how long clients have been on hold waiting for an agent, which clients hang-up, and how long clients waited before they hung up. In addition, the system can tell supervisors how many clients are waiting at any given time. Through this system, supervisors can monitor the flow of work and pull more agents into telephone service when calls are heavy. While no formal client satisfaction system is in place, agents report that clients seem to like the system and have not had problems with long waits. Most of the clients who hang up do so without waiting.

Challenges Identified by State Staff

Both the State FSP manager and the Change Center director reported that the counties are happy with the services provided by the change center. However, they did note the following challenges:

- Training and retention of staff is often difficult, as there are not many State employees with the type of experience necessary to handle this unique job. Many people who apply for jobs at the change center have not worked with a computerized telephone system before. New employees report a great deal of stress in conducting their day-to-day business, simply because of the high volume of calls they are expected to handle. The requirement that all cases be completed on the day they are processed adds additional stress. State officials believe that the addition of more staff would reduce the amount of stress and lead to a more productive work environment. However, counties are not likely to transfer any more positions than they must to the change center, so the likelihood of obtaining increases in the number of staff is low.

- Even if new staff became available, a second problem identified by State officials is the limited amount

of space available at the current location. The change center site, which is in the basement of leased space in Atlanta, is currently very crowded and will not hold more desks or cubicles. In order to expand staffing, the change center would require additional space, at a significant cost (for moving telephone and computer lines). Currently, no funds are available to expand the center's physical layout.

- It is very difficult to consistently provide telephone coverage if a person is absent due to illness or vacation. The leave policy of the change center requires that only a limited number of change agents can be out at one time. This has created some resentment among staff who would like to take vacation time around holidays, but are denied because of staffing limitations. In addition, if a person is sick, the change center can not bring in a trained replacement. This means that staff who are there must pick up the workload of the person who is absent.

- The pay levels for change agents have created a problem with retention. The starting salary for a change agent is $22,000 per year, which is low for the Atlanta area. In addition, while the skills needed for the change center are somewhat unique in State government, they are not unique on the open market, particularly in the areas of Internet customer support and telemarketing. Sometimes agents find that they can make more money with the same skills by leaving State government and working for private companies.

- State staff acknowledged that there were initial issues with county staff's resentment over the fact that they would not be handling the entire case file of their clients and that caseworker positions were being transferred to the State. While State officials feel that these issues have been resolved, they understand that in some counties the loss of even one position may have put a burden on the remaining staff. Officials are hopeful that if the pilot projects are extended and the program made permanent, the positions will be established in the State budget, and the ones transferred from the counties could be returned.

Findings From Baldwin County

Overview

Baldwin County is a rural county located in the center of Georgia. Much of the county's economic base is related to small manufacturing facilities, a local university, service industries, and agriculture. While the county has a high employment rate, staff in Baldwin County believe that many of the jobs available to the low-income population they serve are minimum wage. There are some manufacturing facilities in the county, but they tend to limit their hiring to skilled workers. The Baldwin County Department of Children and Family Services is located in the county seat of Milledgeville, and the Economic Support Division is staffed with eight Family Independence case managers and two supervisors. Family Independence case managers generally serve a caseload of around 400-450 clients. The caseworkers handle enrollment for the FSP, Medicaid, and TANF programs. About 150 cases of each caseworker's load are food stamp recipients.

After welfare reform, TANF cases declined in the county, FSP cases stayed the same, and Medicaid cases increased. The county began having problems with their error rates in 1997, and had an error rate as high as 48 percent in 1998. At that time, the county was processing an average of 150 changes a month, and officials discovered that these changes were often not processed in a timely manner. In order to bring the error rates down, Baldwin County officials requested to be included in the change center pilot project. This choice was a difficult decision, as officials knew that they would lose one of their staff positions if they were accepted into the pilot, and this loss might create staffing problems in the future. However, county officials came to the conclusion that it was worth losing a position in order to reduce the error rates. Since their inclusion in the change center, the error rate for Baldwin County has dropped to less than 1 percent.

County Program Administration

Baldwin County accepts applications for Medicaid, TANF, and the FSP 5 days a week, but schedules eligibility interview appointments only 2 days a week. This system was established to allow staff time to inform clients of the documentation they will need to bring to the interview and to allow staff the time to process the applications once the interview is complete. When a client submits an application, he/she is assigned a caseworker who helps with completing the application process. During the interview process, clients are informed about other social service programs for which they may be eligible.

When the application process is complete, and a client is found to be eligible for services, he/she is given an information packet describing the types of changes in economic and family situation that must be reported

and is provided a card with the change center telephone number. Clients are instructed to contact the change center whenever they have a reportable change. However, even with the change center information, some clients may still try to drop off change information and documentation at the county office. This practice is discouraged, as the county staff are then required to fax the client's changes to the change center for processing. Instead, if a person shows up at the office to report changes, the county has made available a telephone "hotline" for the client to use to call the change center.

At the time of the site visit, the office was short-staffed, with three of eight eligibility workers being new. It is often difficult to bring on new staff and have them begin serving clients right away. The State provides training to all new caseworkers through training sites located around the State. Once a new caseworker is hired, he/she must spend 5 weeks away from the County at the training site to complete all of the required training. This means that new employees can not begin serving clients until 6 weeks after they are hired.

Challenges Identified by County Officials

In general, County officials are pleased with the use of the change center. There were some initial problems identified by county staff with changes getting recorded properly and in a timely manner. After the county was accepted into the pilot, caseworkers monitored the change center processing very closely to be sure the materials that were sent to the center were handled properly. During the first 3 months, caseworkers and county officials identified a number of problems with the way the change center was processing the information from Baldwin County, and supervisory staff spent a great deal of time calling these problems to the attention of change center staff. As a result of Baldwin County's followup, the change center made a number of adjustments to their procedures for recording changes, and all are now satisfied that the process is meeting the needs of Baldwin County officials.

Other implementation issues identified by county staff are described below:

- The major issue for Baldwin County officials was the loss of one staff person to the change center, representing a little over 10 percent of the total program staffing. While TANF cases have been declining, FSP caseloads have remained about the same, and Medicaid cases have been increasing. The result of the staff reduction has been to put additional burdens on the remaining staff. Officials are hoping that in the future the State will assume responsibility for the change center staffing and the position will be returned to Baldwin County.

- Some workers miss not having complete control of a client's case. In the past, the caseworker was in charge of all aspects of the client's enrollment and participation in the programs. Now, the caseworkers find that they are unaware of changes in their clients' status until they are processed at the change center and the change is reported to the caseworker. While the reporting of changes to the caseworker is most often done in a timely manner (within 30 days), some caseworkers expressed a desire to have total control of the cases.

Kansas

Overview of Re-engineering Changes

Prior to the implementation of welfare reform in 1997, the Kansas Food Stamp Program (FSP) operated under separate program rules from other public assistance programs. With the passage of welfare reform, Kansas officials decided to avail themselves of the opportunity to consolidate and conform these various programs. To do so, they decided to make three major changes in how they operated their public assistance programs. First, through the efforts of the State legislature and the governor's office, they moved the programs toward emphasizing employment and self-sufficiency as a goal for all clients. Second, Kansas program administrators decided to combine operations for public assistance and employment programs, functions that were previously performed by separate organizational units. Finally, Kansas officials attempted to simplify program rules for the TANF, Food Stamp, and Medicaid programs in order to provide consistency in program policy whenever possible.

While Kansas officials were successful in accomplishing the first two of these objectives, the third objective, a consistent policy across programs, became more difficult. Originally, Kansas officials hoped to be able to consolidate a number of program rules and procedures to make the process of obtaining program benefits easier for workers and clearer for clients. However, they were able to report only limited success. While

they were able to combine the operations manuals for the three programs and were successful in conforming some of the rules and procedures, a number of factors—such as inability to obtain necessary waivers, conflicting program goals, inability to combine two diverse data collection systems, and resistance from some local offices—kept them from accomplishing their goal completely.

However, among the changes Kansas officials were able to accomplish, the largest single undertaking was changing the roles and functions of local caseworkers. The purpose of this case study is to describe how the role of the caseworker was changed in Kansas and to provide information on how these changes affected a rural program in Atchison, Kansas. To accomplish this purpose, interviews were conducted at the State headquarters office with the Director of Economic and Employment Support, the Food Stamp Program Manager, the Manager of the Economic and Employment Support training programs, and the Manager of Research and Planning. In the Atchison office, interviews were conducted with the Area Chief of Economic and Employment Support, two Economic Employment Support Supervisors, and three caseworkers.

Food Stamp Program Administration

The Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services is responsible for administering public assistance programs through State offices located in 11 management areas across the State. These management areas cover 105 counties, with at least one office located in each county. Total FSP caseload in Kansas averages around 117,000 clients per month in 53,000 households. After the implementation of welfare reform, FSP caseload dropped 30 percent over the period 1997-99. However, in 1999, FSP participation began to increase by about 4.5 percent. Kansas officials are unsure why FSP participation increased, as they had not enacted any type of outreach program to potentially eligible clients.

Program management in each of the 11 areas is provided by program directors, who, in turn, report to an area director. The programs administered in these 11 management areas include Economic and Employment Support (FSP, TANF, and Medicaid), vocational rehabilitation programs, and child support programs.

Program policy is developed at the headquarters office in Topeka, with input from regional staff. Each of the major programs in the Economic and Employment Support Division has a program head, who is responsible for identifying program policy changes that may be required by Federal or State law. However, with the advent of welfare reform, Kansas officials decided to combine all of their Economic and Employment Services policies into a single manual. Kansas has created a Policy Development Team, composed of four central office staff and four representatives from the management areas. It is the responsibility of the Policy Development Team to review and approve any proposed policy changes the individual programs may wish to implement. In addition, the Policy Development Team identifies areas where program requirements can be conformed in order to avoid confusion about different program rules and regulations at the local level.

The growing number of Spanish-speaking clients has increased the need for bilingual staff and the production of Spanish language materials. Currently, there are very few bilingual staff, and many of the materials, including the applications and notices, are not translated into Spanish. Clients often have to rely on family members or friends to help them complete the application process. In addition, a growing number of Russian immigrants have moved to Kansas. A few areas have also seen a significant increase in clients who speak only Southeast Asian languages.

Findings From Interviews With State Headquarters Officials

Changes in the Role of the Caseworker

Prior to welfare reform, caseworkers worked with differing program regulations and multiple policy manuals for the three major public assistance programs. One of the major goals of Kansas officials in implementing welfare reform was to promote as much consistency between programs as possible. While local areas have flexibility in how they implement their programs, consistency in policy was pushed by headquarters staff as a means to better serve clients and eliminate confusion about different program requirements in similar areas. While consistency in policy development was the overall goal, Kansas officials realized that having multiple individuals responsible for implementing policies across programs might defeat the purpose. To prevent fragmentation of policy application at the local level, a decision was made to combine the job functions of staff responsible for program eligibility with those of staff responsible for employment programs.

In doing so, Kansas created a new civil service classification called Economic and Employment Support Specialist. The purpose of the new job classification was to combine activities related to determining program eligibility with those related to helping clients find employment and gain self-sufficiency. Caseworkers were expected to become case managers, with an individual caseworker becoming responsible for all program activities related to an individual client. In combining these activities, State officials envisioned that clients facing the challenges of welfare reform would be more likely to respond positively to a single worker handling their case than to having to deal with multiple caseworkers.

The development of the Economic and Employment Support Specialist classification was a two-phased process. First, State officials had to create the classification and identify the existing positions that would be transferred to the new classification. With the cooperation of the State civil service board, specifications for the class were developed, and new requirements for qualification for the class were examined. To the extent possible, the job requirements mirrored those of the old classifications. However, the scope of responsibility for the new classification was much broader than that of the old classifications.

The formal work on development of the new job classification was rather easy compared to that for the second phase, which was to convince local program staffs that the change in job classification was appropriate and necessary. Initially there was much resistance from local caseworkers. This resistance was based upon a lack of familiarity with the duties being performed by each of the two groups of caseworkers and by concern as to how combining functions would affect individual jobs. For example, caseworkers responsible for program eligibility were not familiar with the activities of their counterparts in employment services, nor were those working in employment services familiar with program eligibility. While some areas accepted the change, others resisted cooperating. Finally, the secretary of the agency issued a letter to all Area Directors requiring them to cooperate with the job classification change. Some areas accepted this and moved ahead quickly to implement it, while other areas were not as cooperative. But by the end of 1998, the change was to be fully implemented.

Staff Training

One of the major tasks faced by Kansas officials was retraining staff for their new positions. Employees needed training in three areas. First, because two different computer systems were being used to support employment services and eligibility services, staff needed to be cross-trained on at least one of the systems. Second, staff who had previously worked only in employment services had to be trained on eligibility determination, while eligibility caseworkers had to be trained on employment services. Finally, because a number of policies had been changed to promote consistency and a new, combined manual created to reflect these changes, all staff needed training on the new policies.

Once staff had been trained, local programs began reassigning cases to individuals. In order to provide support to staff who were working in an unfamiliar program area, teams were developed so individuals had a resource to provide support and answer questions they might have about a particular policy.

Challenges Identified by State Officials

Kansas officials identified a number of challenges to implementing welfare reform and changing the role of the caseworker. A discussion of these challenges follows.

- More involvement of local caseworkers in the process of creating the new job classifications might have helped smooth implementation. Most of the work on the new job classification was done by headquarters staff working with local program directors. Caseworkers themselves were not involved in the process. As a result, caseworkers were probably more resistant to the changes than they might have been had they been directly involved.

- At the same time the job reclassification was taking place, Kansas made a number of changes in how it implemented employment programs. Kansas had traditionally emphasized client participation in education and employment training programs, which often had little impact on an individual's ability to find employment. However, over the years strong relationships had been developed between Kansas educational institutions, such as the University of Kansas, and State employment programs. Through

contracts with the State, these institutions provided education and training at various locations throughout the State. When the emphasis changed from longer-term training to job readiness and actual placement of clients into jobs, the educational institutions complained bitterly that they were being left out of the process, and that caseworkers without adequate training in employment issues would be responsible for implementing this important component of the program.

- Many of the staff who had worked in employment programs prior to welfare reform also had difficulty with making the adjustment to the Kansas "work first" philosophy. Local program staff had always viewed their work as helping clients to find long-term solutions to self-sufficiency and to identify potential long-term career paths. When caseworkers were required to shift this philosophy to one of finding clients employment as quickly as possible, it was a difficult transition. Caseworkers have expressed concern that the short-term employment opportunities usually found for clients will disappear if the economy takes a turn for the worse, and then clients will not have the training or skills necessary to find jobs requiring more skills.

- While combining functions has worked well in many areas, the sometimes conflicting service philosophies faced by caseworkers handling clients participating in multiple programs can be problematic. Caseworkers are often put in the position of pushing clients towards employment and self-sufficiency in order to help them leave the TANF rolls, while at the same time promoting participation in the FSP and Medicaid programs. This is often confusing to the clients, who when pushed to leave the TANF rolls believe they should be leaving the FSP or Medicaid programs as well.

- The antiquated nature of the Kansas computer systems is also a major problem that has not been resolved. One of the selling points for the combined jobs and policy manuals was a promise that the two separate computer systems used by caseworkers (one for eligibility, one for employment services) would be discarded and a new combined system would be developed. This, however, has not materialized. As a result, caseworkers must work with two different computer systems when serving their clients. State officials still hope to eliminate this problem, but currently, no funds are available for data system development and computer purchases.

- Within the next 5 years, a large number of caseworkers will be retiring. This will result in a need for new caseworker recruitment. Many of the caseworkers that are retiring are located in rural areas, where it is often difficult to recruit. In particular, the rural areas of Western Kansas are facing a severe recruitment problem in the near future.

Findings From Interviews in the Atchison Office

Overview of Service Delivery

The Atchison office is located in the northeast corner of Kansas, and is included in a service area with six other, mostly rural counties. Approximately 3,400 households are being served in the area, with around 500 in the Atchison office. Overall responsibility for the administration of Economic and Employment Support programs within the area belongs to the Program Chief, who in turn relies on program supervisors within each office. Each office has at least one program supervisor, who is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the office. The recently created Economic and Employment Support Specialists report to the supervisors and are responsible for enrollment of clients and providing case management services. The office has very little turnover, as the positions with the State are some of the best paying in this rural area.

In their role as case managers, staff in the Atchison office have developed strong ties to community organizations serving the same population. These strong ties allow the case managers to assist the client with issues that can not normally be resolved by the public assistance programs. For example, caseworkers noted strong ties to the local community action agency, which helps clients obtain energy assistance funds. Among the various other agencies with which the caseworkers coordinate are the local WIC program, the Salvation Army, the local independent living center, the county hunger task force, and local food banks. Program representatives from these agencies meet on a periodic basis to discuss community needs and to plan for future services.

Changing the Role of the Caseworker

In general, the caseworkers in the Atchison office are pleased with the change in their roles since the passage of welfare reform. All three of the caseworkers interviewed said that they enjoyed being able to provide true case management services by handing all of the

client's issues and that they were able to devote more time to case management than when they were responsible for only a portion of the case. The caseworkers also noted that under the old system clients would be passed back and forth between caseworkers, which created some frustration for the clients.

The Atchison office had a relatively easy time with the transition to the new job classification. Atchison was somewhat fortunate during the transition, in that one of the employment caseworkers had worked as an eligibility worker prior to coming to the county program and was knowledgeable about both programs. With her knowledge, other caseworkers had someone to whom they could go to for answers to questions or to receive help in working the computer systems. However, even with this assistance, the caseworkers all had to be cross-trained on systems with which they were not familiar. The program chief credits the enthusiasm of the staff with making the entire transition process move smoothly.

The single biggest change in the day-to-day activities of the caseworkers is working with clients under the increased emphasis on employment services. Prior to implementation of welfare reform, 70 percent of the AFDC participants who were required to participate in employment and training activities were attending the University of Kansas. However, only 14 percent of the clients completed the program. Of the group that completed the program, only 10 percent went on to complete a college degree program. Local officials believed that they were paying for a program that was not producing results.

The new emphasis of the caseworkers is on employment readiness and preparation for job seeking. Caseworkers have worked hard to build relationships with employers in the area, who are mostly in service-related industries. Local employers have provided the caseworkers with information about the kinds of issues they have faced with hiring public assistance clients. In turn, the caseworkers have begun working with clients to help build their practical skills, including such basics as showing up for work on time and notifying their supervisor when they will not be coming into work.

The major sources for employment for public assistance clients who live in this rural area are low-end manufacturing plants, tribal casinos, telemarketing companies, and food service providers. Over the past year, the economy in the area has been strong and there have been labor shortages in many of the service-related areas. As a result, clients who seek employment often can find a job in the service industry. However, caseworkers noted that the major agricultural industries, such as the grain elevators, would not hire public assistance clients.

Another function assumed by the caseworkers has been increased effort to conduct outreach to FSP and Medicaid clients. Two of the priorities for the office are the enrollment of children in the State Child Health Insurance Program and working to end hunger within the region. As a result, the public assistance agency has teamed up with local private agencies to form what they call a "dream team" to address community outreach needs. This group meets to assess community needs and designs potential outreach efforts. Representatives from the Atchison office participate both on the steering committee for the dream team and on special committees that are created to work on specific problems.

Another benefit of their changing role cited by the caseworkers was the increased flexibility they have in working with clients. Because they are now responsible for all aspects of the client's case, they can work with the clients to develop individual plans for dealing with self-sufficiency issues. The caseworkers also believe that clients like the new system better, as they only have to deal with one caseworker, and clients can feel comfortable that the caseworker is familiar with their situation.

Challenges Faced by the Local Office

While noting that the staff in the Atchison office were very pleased with the changes in the role of the caseworker, there were some challenges the local office faced in making the transition, as discussed below.

- When welfare reform was first implemented, clients who could be easily placed into employment situations were the first off the rolls. Clients currently being served through TANF are very hard to serve, and require much more time than other clients. As a result, case management of clients is taking more time, and the problems identified as barriers to employment are much more difficult to resolve. Caseworkers noted that many of the clients they are currently serving have problems such as mental health issues, substance abuse problems, and chronic health conditions.

- Finding employment in a rural area is difficult, and can be frustrating for clients and caseworkers alike. While the Atchison office has had success in finding employment opportunities for clients who want to work, they have run into resistance with firms that pay higher wages. It is difficult to convince local employers that TANF and FSP clients will make good long-term employees. Many will not even interview clients if they find out they are on TANF.

- A large number of elderly individuals in the county live at or near the poverty level. One of the key outreach goals of the office has been to encourage elderly individuals to apply for food stamps. Caseworkers are concerned about the growing number of elderly who are at risk of food insecurity. However, caseworkers have found it very difficult to convince elderly individuals that it is worth their effort to apply for what end up being very limited program benefits.

- Using the dual computer system is frustrating and takes more time than it might if the two systems were integrated. While the caseworkers noted that they are now used to the two systems, it is still very time consuming for them to work with both. The caseworkers and the supervisors both noted that with a more efficient system, they could spend more time working on case management issues.

- While the caseworkers are pleased with their increased case management role, they worry that their FSP error rates are on the rise. Supervisors believe that this increase can be attributed to both the difficulty of the cases now being carried and the complexity of the rule changes that were implemented during welfare reform. Supervisors are encouraging caseworkers to spend more time on quality control, even if it means spending less time with the client.

Arizona

Overview of Re-engineering Effort

In 1997, the Arizona legislature passed a welfare reform measure designed to begin a process of privatization of the welfare system. Influenced by Wisconsin's attempts to involve private enterprise in managing the welfare caseload, the Arizona legislature established a nine-member procurement board and charged them with developing plans for contracting with a private agency to help move public assistance clients into employment and off the welfare rolls. Problems in the legislation and the inability to obtain waivers for privatization of Medicaid and the FSP limited privatization efforts to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. The procurement board issued a Request For Proposals in 1998 to pilot a project in Maricopa County (greater Phoenix area) to allow private companies to manage the TANF program.

Two companies bid for the project, with the award being given to Maximus, a company located in Virginia. The contract calls for a 4-year pilot program, with a rural county to be added after year 2. The contract is incentive-based, with a requirement that Maximus must show overall 10 percent savings in total program costs. The basic contract provides for funding of services provided to a specific caseload level (currently over 4,000), but does not include the cost of data systems and facilities, both of which are provided by the State. Incentives for additional revenue are built into the contract based upon meeting performance standards. The State named this project "Arizona Works."

The purpose of this case study is to examine how this privatization effort has affected the Food Stamp Program and how local State-run FSPs work with the contractor to coordinate services. Interviewed for this case study were the State's project director for the Arizona Works project, the coordinator for the Maricopa County JOBS program, which competes with the Maximus project in Maricopa County, two local JOBS caseworkers, and an FSP supervisor. In addition, the Maximus project director for Arizona Works was interviewed, along with a project supervisor. Finally, two FSP caseworkers at the Salt River Reservation were interviewed.

Food Stamp Program Administration

The FSP in Arizona is administered by the State, with regional and local offices located throughout the State. State employees handle eligibility determination in most areas of the State for the three major public assistance programs, FSP, Medicaid, and TANF. Clients apply at local offices, where their applications are processed and eligibility is determined. Once determined to be eligible, clients who must meet work requirements are placed in a special JOBS program, where they are provided assistance in finding employment and building job-seeking skills. State officials report a strong job market, particularly in Maricopa County, and placing clients in jobs has been relatively easy.

There are two exceptions to the above description of program services. In Maricopa County, the Arizona Works program provides TANF and employment services to eligible clients, while a separate State-run office located next door to Arizona Works provides FSP and Medicaid services. The second exception to the above relates to a number of Native American Tribal programs that provide TANF services to clients on reservations. In this circumstance, the State provides caseworkers that work at the Tribal public assistance offices to certify clients for FSP and Medicaid services. In both cases, coordination between the State employees and the Maximus and Tribal caseworkers is important.

Findings From Interviews With Headquarters Staff

Overview of the State Program in Maricopa County

Maricopa County is unique in that it has three separate agencies operating TANF programs within the county. The State-run TANF program covers the western part of the county, the Arizona Works program covers much of the eastern portion, and Tribal programs exist on reservation land located within the county. Each of the three programs works independently of the others. However, the State stations FSP and Medicaid eligibility workers at the Tribal public assistance office so that clients applying for TANF can also apply for these other services. In addition, caseworkers located at the Tribal offices process FSP and Medicaid-only applications for Tribal members.

The primary focus of the Arizona public assistance programs is to assist clients with finding employment and reaching a point of self-sufficiency. Major efforts are undertaken to help clients find employment, including motivational programs, resume development, job readiness training, and job placement services. Clients who are in a mandatory employment category (TANF and FSP Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents) are required to attend these different sessions, but all FSP participants are encouraged to attend.

Employment opportunities seem plentiful in Maricopa County. The State JOBS Program supervisor reports that a number of employers, including large trucking companies, State governmental agencies, small manufacturing plants, and temporary agencies, hire public assistance clients. The average wage for a public assistance client is $7.40 per hour. Caseworkers are encouraged to make followup contacts with clients to be sure that they are successful in maintaining their employment.

During interviews with caseworkers and the JOBS supervisor it was noted that the initial placement of clients was very successful after welfare reform, but the current group of TANF clients is much harder to place. Caseworkers cite mental health and substance abuse issues as problems with the population they currently serve. In addition, the lack of job skills has hampered successful retention of employment. Caseworkers note that many of the hard-to-serve clients will not show up for work if they have a minor problem at home and will not call their employers to let them know they will be absent. Many of these clients end up coming back into the system, and the State-run program has limited funds to provide support services to help returning clients succeed.

State Services in Eastern Maricopa County

In eastern Maricopa County, State employees are responsible for providing Medicaid and FSP services, while Maximus provides the TANF and employment services. The State office is located next door to the Maximus office, and they share a common entry area. When clients come into the State office to receive services, they are first asked if they are applying for TANF or for food stamps or Medicaid. If they are applying for FSP or Medicaid services only, their applications are taken at the State office. If they are also applying for TANF, they must complete a separate application in the Arizona Works office. The same is true if someone applies for TANF at the Arizona Works office and also desires food stamps or Medicaid. Therefore, clients applying for TANF and FSP/Medicaid services must go through two interview processes.

The State office in eastern Maricopa County is staffed with 31 workers who handle the FSP and Medicaid caseloads. While the State-run program and the Arizona Works programs operate as separate entities, they have worked out a memorandum of understanding by which each of the programs will coordinate operations on a limited basis. For example, caseworkers from both programs are required to coordinate with each other when making changes to client records. However, State-level caseworkers reported that they sometimes have difficulty obtaining the information from Arizona Works caseworkers, which often is the basis for eligibility errors and for clients having to return overpayments of their benefits.

Services Provided by Arizona Works

The Arizona Works program began in 1999, with 4,000 TANF cases transferred from the State-run program in eastern Maricopa County to the new program. The primary purpose of the Arizona Works project is to assist TANF clients with finding employment. The program is responsible for taking and approving applications for TANF, providing support services to TANF clients related to job placement, and finding jobs for the clients.

The Arizona Works program manager reports to the State procurement board. The State Department of Economic Security has appointed a project manager to work with the Arizona Works program as a liaison between Maximus and the Department and to serve as a policy expert when policy interpretations are required. It is the responsibility of the State Project Director to coordinate and resolve issues that may come up between the Arizona Works program and the State-run program. For example, the program manager was recently involved in negotiating additional space for the Arizona Works program at the State's leased facility shared by the State-run program.

When Maximus assumed the responsibility for the TANF program, they were allowed to hire their own staff. This meant that a number of State employees who were previously serving these clients needed to find new jobs. Because Maximus had a short amount of time to implement this program after the contract was signed, they offered the State employees the opportunity to join the project team at Maximus and continue their work. Approximately 60 percent of Arizona Works employees are former State employees who chose to move over and accept employment with Maximus, usually at a higher salary but with fewer benefits. The remaining State employees were offered transfer opportunities to other State programs. State officials note that no State employee lost his/her job through this transfer of function.

The contract between Maximus and the State is a performance-based contract, with strong incentives for placing clients in jobs. To carry out its mission, the Arizona Works program has developed a number of unique programs to support clients in obtaining employment. Because the Maximus program can provide more support services than the State-run program, caseworkers are able to conduct an assessment of client barriers to employment and then provide financial and programmatic support to help the clients overcome these barriers. Specific support services included assistance with paying rent and utilities to give the client a month to earn money; providing clients with transportation assistance to help them find and maintain a job; and providing specialized training in job retention or other employment-related skills. To provide clients with training and assistance in finding long-term employment, Maximus has established a training program in partnership with a local community college to help clients develop skills needed for employment. The programs available to clients range from specific job-related skills, such as computer use or basic trade skills, to employment readiness skills. Clients even receive college credit for some of the classes. In addition to the contract with the college, Maximus has developed a network of vendors that is used to provide support services. These vendors are local businesses that contract with Maximus to help with transportation, utility and rent payments, childcare, and other support services.

In order to meet the performance standards in the contract, the Arizona Works project operates in direct competition with the State-run program in western Maricopa County. Statistics from both sites will be compared to determine the extent to which Arizona Works has reduced caseloads as compared to the State-run program. Some of the State officials feel that this comparison is unfair, as they believe the western portion of the county contains a higher percentage of hard-to-place clients. In addition to this comparison, the Arizona Works project is being evaluated by Abt Associates, who will produce a final report in 2003. The procurement board will use this report to determine if the project will be expanded statewide, modified in any way, or discontinued.

Officials at Maximus point out a number of advantages their program has over the State-run program. In their initial year of operation, the Arizona Works program was able to reduce caseloads in their service area by 24 percent. In addition, Arizona Works officials point to the high level of case management and support services provided by the caseworkers as an indication of the extent to which they will help clients succeed in becoming self-sufficient. Officials also believe that clients are happy with the services provided through Arizona Works.

Maximus will open a second office in a rural Arizona county in 2001. Maximus officials see this new office as an important challenge, as employment opportunities in rural Arizona are not as plentiful as in the met-

ropolitan centers. In addition, transportation issues will be a challenge in the rural county. As with the urban center, the Arizona Works program in the rural county will be compared with another rural county where a State-run program exists. Planning for the new office was underway at the time of the case study interviews.

State Services on the Salt River Reservation

Two State employees assigned to the eastern Maricopa County office are stationed at the Salt River Indian Reservation. The purpose of the two out-stationed workers is to provide FSP and Medicaid eligibility services to Tribal members. As was noted earlier, the Tribe provides all TANF services to its members.

Clients applying for public assistance are met at a counter in the Tribal office, where they are given an application. If they are applying for both TANF and for food stamps/Medicaid, the Tribal caseworker involves the State caseworker to determine joint eligibility. Because the Tribal program uses the State's computer system, the data on eligibility is readily shared between the two programs.

As is true with the Arizona Works program, the Tribal program operates on a different set of standards and rules from the State TANF program. For example, more efforts are made with the Tribal program to provide support services to clients. The Tribal program also uses different income standards and payment schedules. The main focus of the Tribal program is self-sufficiency, but unlike most of Maricopa County, employment opportunities on the reservation are very limited. Often the cases handled by the Tribal caseworkers are very difficult to serve, with caseworkers noting a high incidence of physical disabilities, health problems, mental health issues, and substance abuse problems as barriers to self-sufficiency. In addition, transportation is cited as a problem with both obtaining employment and attending scheduled appointments for certification interviews. The reservation covers a very large area, and many Tribal members do not have adequate transportation. As a result, the State caseworkers report a high no-show rate for clients who are applying for food stamps.

In contrast to the State employees at the Arizona Works site, the caseworkers located on the reservation feel the working relationship between the two programs is well managed. Information sharing is common, and the State workers feel that they have access to all of the information they need to manage their cases in coordination with the Tribal caseworkers. Because of the informal atmosphere, as well as the fact that the caseworkers do not feel as though they are in competition, services seem to be provided in a well-coordinated manner.

Challenges Reported

A number of challenges are reported by both State-level staff providing services in Maricopa County and by the Maximus staff. The greatest challenge appears to be the competition between the Arizona Works program and the State-run program. There is an acknowledgment by both State and Maximus officials that the Arizona Works program is in direct competition with the State-run program, and, as a result, the two programs have some difficulties cooperating with each other on issues of mutual interest. One State official notes that it may be hard for State employees to help Maximus succeed when their own jobs may be in jeopardy as a result. Another official comments that State-level caseworkers feel resentment towards the Arizona Works program because it can offer clients more in the way of support services than the State-run program. Many individuals feel that this fact alone makes the comparisons between the two programs invalid.

Other specific problems and challenges include the following.

- The short startup time for the Arizona Works project created a high level of stress for both Maximus officials and State employees. Many State employees were forced to make a choice about whether to remain as State employees and work in other departments or join the private sector and lose their seniority in government. This level of stress caused some State employees to be fearful of an expansion of the Arizona Works program.

- State officials express some concern about the working relationship between caseworkers in the Maximus office and those working in the State-administered program. In order to keep error rates to a minimum and to avoid confusing clients, cooperation is necessary between caseworkers in the two programs. For example, if a client served by both systems finds employment, the information about

his/her new earnings must be passed on in a timely manner to the caseworker in charge of the FSP portion of the case; otherwise the client may be required to pay back benefits to the State. However, as one State official noted, it is difficult for State employees to cooperate and trust an entity that may, in the future, cost them their jobs.

Respondents express concern that requiring clients to undergo two separate eligibility processes may discourage them from participating in the FSP. In addition, officials are concerned that clients are becoming confused as to whom they should report changes in their status. As a result, officials are worried that clients who may still be eligible for FSP and Medicaid benefits after they leave the TANF program may not know they are eligible. At this time, Maximus does not track whether clients who leave the TANF program remain in the FSP or Medicaid programs.

- Maximus officials comment that under the current system they are required to utilize the State's data system to process TANF enrollments. This creates a situation that discourages the development of innovative approaches to computerizing enrollments and makes the project dependent on State technical support, which at times can be slow in responding to the project's requests for assistance.

- A number of small issues have also contributed to the lack of cooperation between the two programs. For example, a recent expansion of Arizona Works staff into space previously occupied by State caseworkers resulted in the State's caseworkers being moved into another building within the same complex. This move created resentment on the part of the State-level staff, as now the workers must travel between buildings to meet with clients. Workers questioned the need for Arizona Works to expand into the space, and felt that they were not given a say in the matter. Other issues include delays in providing information to caseworkers needed for determining eligibility (both entities noted this complaint), inconsistency in following agreed-upon office procedures, and delays in reporting client status changes.

- Expansion of the Arizona Works program into a rural county will create a new set of challenges for Maximus staff. First, Maximus plans to offer the current State employees the opportunity to leave State service and come to work for Arizona Works. However, if State employees wish to remain with the State, it is unlikely that they will be able to find another State job in the county. This will mean that these employees will either need to relocate to an area where more State jobs are available or accept a position with Maximus, which they may feel forced to do to remain in the area.

- A second challenge for Maximus will be to find employment opportunities for clients located in this rural area. State officials point out that there are nowhere near the employment opportunities in the rural areas of the State that there are in more urban areas. In addition, training and vendor resources are limited in rural areas, which may limit the amount and type of support services the Arizona Works program can provide.

Connecticut

Overview of the Re-engineering Effort

Prior to 1995, the State of Connecticut administered its public assistance programs through a centralized organization. State headquarters staff were responsible for overall program operations, and programs were implemented by State staff placed in local offices throughout the State. These local offices were supervised by a district manager, who, in turn, reported to a Director of Field Operations in Hartford.

Connecticut began implementing welfare reform in 1996. One of the key elements to their welfare reform effort was the decentralization of program administration and operations. The State created five "human services regions" around the State, and it assigned responsibility for the implementation of public assistance programs within each region to a Regional Administrator. The Regional Administrators report directly to the Agency Commissioner, and program directors (e.g., of FSP, TANF, and Medicaid) have no line authority over Regional Administrators.

With the passage of Federal welfare reform and increased efforts on the part of Connecticut to move clients towards self-sufficiency, the regional offices were given broad authority to customize program operations within their areas (although the regions are bound by State civil service regulations). While overall policy is still developed at the State level, Regional Administrators play a strong role in deciding how policy will be implemented in their particular regions.

The purpose of this case study is to examine how welfare reform efforts were implemented in Connecticut using a regional approach. Site visit interviews were conducted with State headquarters staff in Hartford and with staff located in the regional office in Norwich. The Director of Family Services and the Adult Services Manager responsible for the FSP were interviewed in the State headquarters office. In the regional office, the Regional Administrator, a Field Manager, two program supervisors, and two caseworkers were interviewed.

Social Service Program Administration

Responsibility for administering the FSP in Connecticut is shared between Policy Managers located in the State headquarters office and Regional Administrators located within the five regional offices throughout the State. Policy units are responsible for assuring that proper policies and regulations are developed and communicated to the regions, and the Regional Administrators are responsible for day-to-day operations of the program. The Regional Administrators have a great deal of discretion in how public assistance programs are implemented.

The Adult Services Division, located within the Department of Social Services, is responsible for the development of FSP program policies. These policies are communicated to the regional offices through a policy manual. Staff within the Division of Adult Services are responsible for communicating changes in policy to the regions and answering any policy questions from regional staff. In addition, the headquarters office is responsible for providing training to regional office staff on new policies, reviewing program data reports produced by the Department's management information system, and maintaining contracts with programs providing support to the regions, such as a contract with the University of Connecticut to provide training to staff.

Prior to welfare reform, the major emphasis of public assistance programs was to provide clients with program benefits. With the passage of welfare reform in Connecticut, the primary goal was revised to identifying potential employment opportunities for clients and assisting them in becoming self-sufficient. Connecticut's "Jobs First" program provides TANF, employment services, and safety net services to low-income families.

The State provides a very generous benefit package to its clients to assist them in making the transition from welfare to work. In determining benefits, the State disregards all earnings when total household income is below the poverty level. In addition to receiving a cash benefit, most clients also receive food stamps, Medicaid, and comprehensive support services to help them find employment. While employment-related services were transferred to the Department of Labor in 1998, staff continue to work with clients on providing support services to facilitate obtaining employment. However, clients subject to work requirements are only allowed to receive cash assistance for a total of 21 months. They may continue to receive cash benefits and services beyond this 21-month period only if they have been looking for work in good faith, if they are working but not earning enough to make them ineligible, or if they encountered circumstances beyond their control that prevent them from working.

Findings From Interviews of State Headquarters Officials

Overview of State Headquarters Operations

In 1995, the FSP caseload in Connecticut was averaging 110,000 clients a month. The current FSP caseload is 80,000 clients per month. State officials believe that clients' confusion about their eligibility for food stamps once TANF benefits have been terminated is responsible for the drop in caseload. It is the policy of the State program to encourage clients who have continuing eligibility for Medicaid and FSP to continue in these programs, even if their TANF eligibility has ended. Regional staff are asked to conduct "exit interviews" with clients leaving the TANF program to assess whether they are eligible to continue with Medicaid and the FSP. However, officials believe that inconsistent application of the exit interviews between regions may be partially responsible for eligible clients leaving the FSP.

Another issue identified as a barrier to ongoing participation in the FSP is that clients who remain in the FSP after their TANF eligibility has ended must then begin monthly reporting of potential eligibility changes. Headquarters staff believe that this monthly reporting "hassle" may be enough to discourage ongoing participation in the FSP. Officials also noted that once clients decide to leave the FSP, they tend not to return. The drop-off in caseload was also evident in the State-run Food Stamp Program for noncitizens. Prior to welfare reform, there were around 4,000 noncitizens participat-

ing in the FSP. With the changes brought about by welfare reform, only 2,000 of the noncitizens reenrolled in the State-funded FSP.

Headquarters staff were generally supportive of the regional structure used to administer the FSP and other public assistance programs. The staff felt that the centralized administrative structure had been too inflexible and often created situations that hurt program operations. By allowing the regions to adapt their programs to local needs, officials believe that the programs are in a better position to serve clients. In addition, headquarters officials noted that the flexibility afforded in the regional structure allows regional staff to develop strong working relationships with private service agencies within their region, and therefore allows for better coordination of services at the local level. In addition, regional offices have the capacity to write local contracts for support services, which allows the region to customize its support service network to meet the unique needs of the region.

On the other hand, headquarters staff found that the regional structure presented difficulties for the State-level Program Directors, since they have no line authority over the Regional Administrators. These individuals are responsible for programs that have Federal rules about eligibility determination and redetermination, definition of "good cause" for noncompliance, and other aspects of program operations. Yet, the Program Directors are limited in their ability to influence the decisions of the Regional Administrators with regard to program operations. Regional Administrators attend monthly meetings with the Department Commissioner, but Program Directors only attend these meetings if invited.

Headquarters staff were asked if they believe there are major differences between how public assistance programs are administered among the regions. The main differences they noted were between urban and rural areas. For example, officials noted that most offices in rural areas operate on a very strict appointment schedule, while offices in urban areas operate more on a walk-in basis. In addition, staff in rural areas tend to function more as case managers, while staff in urban areas tend to specialize as eligibility workers or workers reporting client changes, which means that in urban areas clients are more likely to work with more than one caseworker.

While headquarters staff believe that policy is implemented in a consistent manner, they believe that there are a number of operational differences in how strict regions are with client documentation. For example, officials believe that some regions do a much better job in keeping clients on the FSP by allowing more flexibility in how and when clients produce documentation for reporting purposes. Another example provided by headquarters staff is the difference in the level of effort made by caseworkers to conduct exit interviews. In some regions, caseworkers are very aggressive in scheduling exit interviews and recertifying clients for FSP benefits. In other regions, caseworkers do not make the same strong efforts, and as a result, many clients do not come back to be recertified for the FSP.

Challenges Identified by State Headquarters Staff

As noted above, headquarters staff were generally supportive of the regional structure from the perspective of local operations. However, they did note a few challenges, as follows:

- In some cases, headquarters staff feel that they are responsible for an activity, but have little control over how the activity is managed. For example, error rates are calculated based on statewide (not regional) data and are handled through the headquarters office. However, the headquarters staff feel they have little say in directing the regional offices to undertake activities related to improving the error rates.

- State officials expressed concern as to how the TANF limitations and variable efforts on the part of caseworkers to continue clients on the FSP will be viewed if there is a downturn in the economy. If headquarters officials are correct in their view that operational flexibility at the local level is a contributing factor in the decline in FSP participation, then there is concern about an increase in food insecurity among low-income populations in the State.

- The waivers under which the FSP and TANF programs operate (including the 21-month time limits and earnings disregard) will end in September of 2001. At that time officials believe it will be necessary to make major changes to program operations. For example, when the waiver expires, earned income will be counted for TANF recipients when calculating their FSP benefits. There was some concern expressed that additional major changes in the way the programs operate will create more confusion at the local level, and may result in more

inconsistencies in program operations that could ultimately have a negative impact on clients.

Findings From Interviews With Regional Office Staff

Overview of the Regional Office

The Norwich regional office covers a mostly rural section of Connecticut in the northeast section of the State. Currently there is an office in Norwich and a satellite office open part-time in the Killington area northeast of Norwich. Staff from the Norwich office travel to the satellite office 4 days a week.

The regional office is organized into three divisions, one addressing the needs of families, one addressing adult services, and one responsible for working with the elderly and persons with disabilities. Much of the FSP and TANF caseload is located within the Family Services Division. Workers in this division are responsible for enrolling clients into the programs, providing case management services, processing EBT cards for clients, and processing changes in client eligibility status. Prior to welfare reform, caseworkers were far more specialized, with some of them processing applications and others processing reported changes. With the flexibility afforded with the regionalization of services, caseworkers were provided the opportunity to act more like case managers and handle all of a client's needs. Local staff felt that this holistic approach to serving clients was more successful than the old approach.

Under the organizational structure of the regional office, three division directors, known as Field Managers, have responsibility for program operations within their division. Each of the Field Managers reports to the Regional Administrator. Reporting to the Field Managers are office supervisors, who in turn direct the activities of the Family Independence Representatives (FI Reps). Family Independence Representatives handle varying caseloads, based upon the programs in which the clients participate. An FI Rep who works with TANF clients, or clients participating in multiple programs, is more likely to have a smaller caseload than those working with FSP- or Medicaid-only clients. FI Reps handling TANF cases tend to have caseloads averaging around 100 clients, while FI Reps who handle FSP- and Medicaid-only cases tend to manage around 400 cases.

In addition to the three division directors, the regional office has two regional planners and one regional trainer. The regional planners are responsible for helping to design the service delivery system within the region, and for identifying any future activities that may be necessary to implement new policy. The regional trainer provides training to staff within the region on both program and policy issues, as well as general training on useful skill-building and management issues.

Regional Service Delivery

Because of the large geographic area and limited public transportation, the Norwich region offices work on a strict appointment system. Clients must come to the office to enroll, but may report changes through telephone calls or faxes. Clients enrolled in the TANF program are connected with a caseworker in the Department of Labor who can assist them with finding employment. Caseworkers in the regional office keep in close communication with the Department of Labor staff to track the extent to which clients are finding employment and to assist in providing support services to help the clients reach self-sufficiency. While much of the communication between regional office staff and Department of Labor staff is by telephone and fax, there are plans to install an electronic file-sharing system between the two departments to allow caseworkers to share files.

Employment options for clients living within the region are somewhat limited. The majority of clients who find work do so in the food service or hospitality industries. The FI Reps noted that there are two very large Native American casinos in the region, both of which pay well and will hire public assistance clients. However, experience has shown that it is very difficult for clients with children to maintain employment at the casinos, as employees are often asked to work different shifts and be available for overtime. Because childcare within the region is so limited, most clients with families can not be flexible enough to meet the demands of working at the casinos.

FI Reps work closely with other community agencies to provide coordinated services and referrals to clients. Staff within the regional office actively work with programs such as WIC, childcare providers, and housing agencies to assist clients in overcoming barriers. One of the FI Reps noted that their role is to identify the barriers clients may face in becoming self-sufficient

and assist them with accessing resources within the community to help them overcome these barriers.

The regional office staff also work with community organizations to promote the FSP and Medicaid programs administered in their regions. Supervisors participate in a regional speakers' bureau and travel to meetings around the region to provide information about the FSP and Medicaid programs to other programs that may be serving the same clients. In addition, caseworkers participate in outreach efforts for the Connecticut Child Health Insurance Program. Staff believe that most low-income families in their region are aware of the services provided by their office. Finally, regional office staff participate in monthly regional advisory council meetings, which include representatives from the community who can provide guidance to the region on how to improve program coordination.

Regional office staff have limited contact with headquarters staff. Most of the contact occurs between the Field Manager and the policy staff in Hartford. Communication revolves mostly around policy questions that require an interpretation. The majority of the questions are related to defining "good cause" for TANF clients attempting to extend their time on the program or interpreting a question regarding the definition of a "household". In addition, Field Managers are given the opportunity to participate in statewide workgroups. For example, recently a Field Manager from the Norwich office participated in a workgroup examining how to strengthen the help desk that assists with EBT issues.

Regional Administration

The Regional Administrator who was interviewed believes the flexibility permitted by the regional approach allows administrators to better customize their programs to meet the needs of their clients. However, it was interesting to note that while the Regional Administrator felt he had flexibility with regard to operational issues, he expressed the belief that the program continues to be much more centralized than it would appear. For example, budgets for the regional office are still controlled by headquarters, and the Regional Administrator has very little flexibility in making changes to the budget. A second example provided by the Regional Administrator involves the ability to reclassify positions within the region. The regional offices do not have the flexibility to change the job classifications of vacant positions in order to meet what they view to be a local need. All changes in job classifications must be approved by headquarters staff. In addition, with a hiring freeze currently in effect, the regions must compete with one another to be able to fill the vacant positions within their regions. In some cases, positions are moved from one region to another based upon a strong justification for increasing staffing within a region.

The Regional Administrator also said that it is his belief that Regional Administrators have done a good job in customizing their programs to meet local needs. He did, however, acknowledge that there are differences in how some of the regions approach dealing with clients. He cited as an example the emphasis his region puts on followup with clients to be sure they are reporting changes to their eligibility status in a timely manner and providing proper documentation. He noted that his caseworkers often make three or four attempts to help a client in danger of being dropped from the FSP, while in other regions clients are dropped after only limited efforts to help or to understand why the required report was not submitted on time.

Challenges Identified by Regional Staff

The overall goal of regional administration of public assistance programs was to allow more flexibility in the day-to-day administration of program activities. With the implementation of welfare reform, the regional offices faced a number of challenges, described below.

- While the regional offices were responsible for implementing a number of changes as a result of welfare reform, they were not given any additional funds or staff with which to implement the changes. As a result, staff were very stressed during the transition phase. Because priority within the Norwich region was placed on ensuring smooth continuation of client services, the error rate within the region increased. Now that much of the implementation has been complete, the region will focus more on quality control and reducing errors.

- Lack of control over the regional budget and personnel system has created problems for the Regional Administrator in implementing innovative ideas. The Administrator noted that over the course of implementing welfare reform, staff have been able to identify uses for funds and staffing that will better serve clients. However, the Regional Administrator did not have the authority to make the necessary adjustments

to accommodate staff wishes. As a result, the Regional Administrator believes that the regional programs would be better served if they were given more control of budgets and personnel.

- Staff noted that the large geographic area covered by the region makes it difficult for clients to come into the offices for services. Staff are hopeful that additional field offices can be established in order to better serve clients living in the most rural parts of the region.

- The Regional Administrator would like to develop more internal quality control mechanisms. Currently program supervisors are responsible for overseeing the quality of the work of the FI Reps. The Regional Administrator would like to develop an independent quality control system in order to identify problems that may span the region. This independent quality control system would then be used as the basis for changing program operations to improve program accountability.

- Overall, Connecticut's change in organizational structure to a regional organization resulted in a limited degree of decentralization. While it provides the advantage of some flexibility for Regional Administrators to develop relationships with local providers in order to tailor services, Regional Administrators have little control over budget allocation and personnel decisions.

There is an inherent conflict between administering programs that have federally mandated rules and encouraging local control. The State must continue to improve communication between headquarters and the regions, including providing data to the regions for program improvement. It was noted that there has been some movement back towards centralization, especially with respect to the FSP, in order to reduce certification error rates.

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Appendix Tables

Appendix table 1—Method of data collection by State

State	Phone survey only	Phone survey and State documents received in the mail
Alabama		✔
Alaska	✔	
Arizona		✔
Arkansas		✔
California		✔
Colorado	✔	
Connecticut	✔	
District of Columbia	✔	
Florida		✔
Georgia		✔
Hawaii		✔
Idaho	✔	
Illinois		✔
Indiana		✔
Iowa	✔	
Kansas		✔
Kentucky	✔	
Louisiana	✔	
Maine	✔	
Maryland		✔
Massachusetts		✔
Michigan	✔	
Minnesota		✔
Mississippi	✔	
Missouri		✔
Montana		✔
Nebraska		✔

—Continued

Appendix table 1—Method of data collection by State—Continued

State	Phone survey only	Phone survey and State documents received in the mail
Nevada		✔
New Hampshire		✔
New Jersey	✔	
New Mexico		✔
New York	✔	
North Carolina	✔	
North Dakota	✔	
Ohio	✔	
Oklahoma	✔	
Oregon		✔
Pennsylvania		✔
Rhode Island	✔	
South Carolina	✔	
South Dakota	✔	
Tennessee	✔	
Texas		✔
Utah	✔	
Vermont	✔	
Virginia	✔	
Washington	✔	
West Virginia	✔	
Wisconsin		✔
Wyoming		✔

Appendix table 2—State re-engineering efforts that occurred as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by category of change

State	Changes in organizational structures	Changes in the role of the case worker	Program accessibility and changes in certification systems	Changes in client tracking and accountability systems	Conforming the State food stamp program and TANF program	Increased program monitoring and evaluation
Alabama			✔	✔	✔	
Alaska		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Arizona		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Arkansas			✔		✔	
California	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔
Colorado	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔
Connecticut	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
District of Columbia			✔	✔	✔	
Florida			✔	✔	✔	✔
Georgia			✔	✔	✔	
Hawaii		✔		✔		
Idaho	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Illinois				✔	✔	
Indiana			✔	✔		
Iowa			✔	✔	✔	✔
Kansas		✔	✔		✔	✔
Kentucky			✔		✔	
Louisiana		✔		✔	✔	
Maine			✔	✔	✔	✔
Maryland	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔
Massachusetts			✔			✔
Michigan		✔			✔	
Minnesota			✔		✔	
Mississippi		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Missouri			✔	✔		✔
Montana			✔	✔	✔	
Nebraska			✔	✔	✔	
Nevada			✔	✔	✔	
New Hampshire			✔	✔	✔	
New Jersey			✔	✔	✔	✔
New Mexico	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔

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Appendix table 2—State re-engineering efforts that occurred as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by category of change—Continued

State	Changes in organizational structures	Changes in the role of the case worker	Program accessibility and changes in certification systems	Changes in client tracking and accountability systems	Conforming the State food stamp program and TANF program	Increased program monitoring and evaluation
New York				✔	✔	✔
North Carolina			✔		✔	✔
North Dakota			✔	✔		
Ohio	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔
Oklahoma				✔	✔	
Oregon			✔	✔		✔
Pennsylvania			✔	✔		✔
Rhode Island				✔		
South Carolina		✔	✔		✔	
South Dakota		✔	✔	✔	✔	
Tennessee		✔		✔		
Texas			✔	✔	✔	✔
Utah			✔	✔		✔
Vermont				✔		
Virginia	✔	✔			✔	
Washington	✔					✔
West Virginia		✔		✔	✔	
Wisconsin	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔
Wyoming			✔	✔		✔

Appendix table 3—State re-engineering efforts that occurred during FY 2000 by category of change

State	Changes in organizational structures	Changes in the role of the case worker	Program accessibility and changes in certification systems	Changes in client tracking and accountability systems	Conforming the State food stamp program and TANF program	Increased program monitoring and evaluation
Alabama						
Alaska		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Arizona			✔			✔
Arkansas	✔		✔			
California				✔		✔
Colorado						
Connecticut				✔		
District of Columbia			✔			
Florida				✔		
Georgia		✔	✔	✔		
Hawaii						
Idaho			✔			✔
Illinois			✔	✔		
Indiana			✔			✔
Iowa						✔
Kansas						
Kentucky				✔		
Louisiana			✔	✔		
Maine			✔		✔	
Maryland			✔			
Massachusetts			✔			
Michigan						
Minnesota			✔			
Mississippi						
Missouri			✔			✔
Montana			✔	✔		✔
Nebraska						
Nevada			✔			
New Hampshire						✔
New Jersey			✔			✔
New Mexico					✔	

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Appendix table 3—State re-engineering efforts that occurred during FY 2000 by category of change—Continued

State	Changes in organizational structures	Changes in the role of the case worker	Program accessibility and changes in certification systems	Changes in client tracking and accountability systems	Conforming the State food stamp program and TANF program	Increased program monitoring and evaluation
New York			✔	✔		✔
North Carolina				✔		
North Dakota		✔	✔			
Ohio			✔		✔	✔
Oklahoma			✔	✔		
Oregon			✔	✔		✔
Pennsylvania			✔	✔		
Rhode Island			✔		✔	
South Carolina		✔	✔		✔	
South Dakota				✔	✔	
Tennessee			✔			
Texas			✔			
Utah			✔	✔		
Vermont				✔		
Virginia				✔		✔
Washington						
West Virginia						
Wisconsin						✔
Wyoming						

Appendix table 4—States by size of food stamp caseload

State	Size of food stamp caseload		
	Small	Medium	Large
Alabama		✔	
Alaska	✔		
Arizona		✔	
Arkansas		✔	
California			✔
Colorado		✔	
Connecticut		✔	
District of Columbia	✔		
Florida			✔
Georgia			✔
Hawaii		✔	
Idaho	✔		
Illinois			✔
Indiana		✔	
Iowa		✔	
Kansas		✔	
Kentucky		✔	
Louisiana			✔
Maine		✔	
Maryland		✔	
Massachusetts		✔	
Michigan			✔
Minnesota		✔	
Mississippi		✔	
Missouri		✔	
Montana	✔		
Nebraska	✔		
Nevada	✔		
New Hampshire	✔		
New Jersey		✔	
New Mexico		✔	
New York			✔
North Carolina			✔

—Continued

Appendix table 4—States by size of food stamp caseload—Continued

State	Size of food stamp caseload		
	Small	Medium	Large
North Dakota	✔		
Ohio			✔
Oklahoma		✔	
Oregon		✔	
Pennsylvania			✔
Rhode Island	✔		
South Carolina		✔	
South Dakota	✔		
Tennessee			✔
Texas			✔
Utah	✔		
Vermont	✔		
Virginia		✔	
Washington		✔	
West Virginia		✔	
Wisconsin		✔	
Wyoming	✔		

Appendix table 5—States making changes to the role of the caseworker as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by goal

State	Goal of re-engineering change				
	Increase coordination between FSP and TANF program	Reduce fragmentation in the provision of services	Increase efficiency in the operation of FSP	Increase coordination between FSP and programs other than TANF	Other
Alaska		✔			
Arizona	✔		✔	✔	
Connecticut					✔
Hawaii		✔	✔		
Idaho	✔		✔		
Kansas		✔			
Louisiana					✔
Maryland	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Michigan	✔	✔			✔
Mississippi	✔			✔	✔
New Mexico	✔				
New York	✔				
South Carolina	✔	✔		✔	
South Dakota					✔
Tennessee					✔
Virginia	✔	✔	✔		✔
West Virginia	✔	✔			✔
Wisconsin	✔	✔	✔		

Appendix table 6—States making changes to the role of the caseworker as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by required level of approval

State	Level of approval				
	Civil Service Board or State personnel agency	Governor's office	State legislature	Labor unions or State employee agency	Other
Alaska					✔
Arizona	✔				
Connecticut	✔				
Idaho					✔
Kansas					
Louisiana	✔				
Maryland	✔	✔	✔		
Michigan	✔	✔	✔	✔	
Mississippi	✔				
New Mexico	✔				
New York	✔			✔	
South Carolina	✔	✔			
South Dakota		✔			
Virginia	✔			✔	
West Virginia	✔		✔		
Wisconsin		✔	✔		

Appendix table 7—States increasing access to their Food Stamp Program as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by type of change

State	Type of change		
	Certification process	Local office practices	Increasing outreach
Alabama	✔		
Alaska	✔		
Arizona	✔	✔	✔
Arkansas		✔	✔
California	✔	✔	✔
Colorado	✔	✔	✔
Connecticut	✔	✔	✔
District of Columbia	✔	✔	✔
Florida			✔
Georgia	✔	✔	✔
Idaho	✔	✔	✔
Indiana	✔	✔	✔
Iowa			✔
Kansas		✔	✔
Kentucky	✔		
Maine	✔		
Maryland	✔	✔	✔
Massachusetts		✔	✔
Minnesota		✔	✔
Mississippi			✔
Missouri		✔	
Montana	✔	✔	
Nebraska	✔		
Nevada	✔	✔	✔
New Hampshire		✔	
New Jersey		✔	✔
New Mexico			✔

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Appendix table 7—States increasing access to their Food Stamp Program as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by type of change—Continued

State	Type of change		
	Certification process	Local office practices	Increasing outreach
New York	✔		
North Carolina		✔	
North Dakota	✔		
Ohio		✔	✔
Oregon	✔	✔	✔
Pennsylvania		✔	
South Carolina		✔	
South Dakota		✔	✔
Texas		✔	
Utah	✔	✔	✔
Wisconsin		✔	✔
Wyoming	✔	✔	

Appendix table 8—States changing local office practices as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by type of change

State	Type of change						
	Provide child care at FS offices	Improve transportation to FS offices	Establish satellite offices to take FS applications and provide re-certifications	Establish satellite offices to only take FS applications	Outstation workers at other agencies	Provide weekend and/or evening hours	Use "private partners" to assist clients applying for FS
Arizona		✔			✔	✔	✔
Arkansas			✔		✔	✔	✔
California						✔	✔
Colorado		✔				✔	
Connecticut	✔		✔				✔
District of Columbia					✔		✔
Georgia						✔	
Idaho		✔		✔	✔	✔	
Indiana			✔				
Kansas						✔	
Maryland		✔				✔	
Massachusetts							✔
Minnesota				✔	✔		
Missouri			✔		✔		✔
Montana			✔		✔	✔	

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Appendix table 8—States changing local office practices as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by type of change—Continued

State	Type of change						
	Provide child care at FS offices	Improve transportation to FS offices	Establish satellite offices to take FS applications and provide re-certifications	Establish satellite offices to only take FS applications	Outstation workers at other agencies	Provide weekend and/or evening hours	Use "private partners" to assist clients applying for FS
Nevada	✔		✔		✔	✔	
New Hampshire						✔	✔
New Jersey						✔	
North Carolina						✔	
Ohio	✔		✔		✔	✔	
Oregon			✔		✔	✔	
Pennsylvania						✔	
South Carolina						✔	
South Dakota						✔	
Texas					✔		
Utah	✔					✔	
Wisconsin	✔	✔			✔		✔
Wyoming						✔	

Appendix table 9—States planning to change local office practices during FY 2000 by type of a change

State	Type of change						
	Provide child care at FS offices	Improve transportation to FS offices	Establish satellite offices to take FS applications and provide re-certifications	Establish satellite offices to only take FS applications	Outstation workers at other agencies	Provide weekend and/or evening hours	Use "private partners" to assist clients applying for FS
Arizona						✔	
Arkansas					✔	✔	✔
Indiana						✔	
Maryland		✔				✔	
Massachusetts						✔	
Montana	✔		✔		✔		
Nevada		✔					
New York		✔	✔			✔	✔
Ohio		✔	✔		✔		✔
South Carolina		✔					
Texas						✔	✔

Appendix table 10—States making changes to improve outreach as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by method of outreach

State	Method of outreach				
	Distribute printed materials	PSAs or notices on TV or radio	Referrals from other social service programs	Distribute food stamp applications	Other
Arizona	✔				
Arkansas	✔				
California	✔				
Colorado		✔	✔		
Connecticut					✔
District of Columbia	✔	✔			
Florida					✔
Georgia					✔
Idaho		✔	✔	✔	
Indiana				✔	
Iowa					✔
Kansas	✔				
Maryland					✔
Massachusetts	✔				
Minnesota					✔
Mississippi	✔				
Nevada	✔			✔	
New Jersey	✔		✔		
New Mexico	✔				
Ohio		✔	✔		
Oregon	✔				
South Dakota	✔				
Utah	✔		✔		
Wisconsin		✔			

Appendix table 11—States increasing their use of databases for client record matching as a result of welfare reform prior to FY 2000 by type of database

State	Type of Database		
	New hire	Criminal records	Social Security Administration
Alabama	✔		
Arizona	✔	✔	
Colorado	✔	✔	✔
Connecticut	✔		
Georgia	✔	✔	
Illinois	✔		
Indiana	✔	✔	
Louisiana		✔	
Maryland	✔		
Mississippi			✔
Montana	✔		✔
New Hampshire	✔	✔	✔
New Jersey	✔	✔	
New Mexico	✔	✔	✔
North Dakota		✔	✔
Ohio		✔	
Oklahoma	✔		
Pennsylvania		✔	✔
Tennessee		✔	✔
Texas		✔	
Utah	✔		
Vermont	✔		
Wisconsin	✔		
Wyoming	✔		