

OVERVIEW

THE AUDITOR
STATE OF HAWAII

Audit of the Department of Human Services' JOBS, Food Stamp Employment and Training, and General Assistance Work Program

Summary

The Legislature requested this audit of the job opportunities and basic skills (JOBS) program, the food stamp employment and training program, and the general assistance (GA) work program to better understand the effectiveness of these work programs.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is responsible for administering work programs for AFDC, Food Stamps, and GA recipients. JOBS is the federally mandated work program for AFDC recipients. These programs seek to make welfare recipients self-sufficient and exit from welfare dependency.

The Self-Sufficiency and Support Services Division (SSSSD) of DHS has emphasized long term education and training to assist welfare recipients achieve self-sufficiency. It has expended considerable resources on JOBS multi-disciplinary case management teams. The department plans to use JOBS as a model for the other welfare-to-work programs.

We found that the department has implemented an expensive program that has led to a long waiting list with only a few successful exits from the program. In FY1993-94, JOBS served 4,123 participants, but only 134 obtained self-sufficient employment and exited welfare. At the end of FY1993-94, there were 8,467 eligible participants on the JOBS waiting list.

The department's comprehensive multi-disciplinary team approach to employment and training is inefficient, expensive, wasteful, and focuses neither on reducing welfare costs nor increasing employability. SSSSD has not emphasized linkages to employment.

In addition, SSSSD has not instituted the management controls needed to properly implement the work programs. Contract management is weak and has led to waste. SSSSD does not analyze the effectiveness of its work programs, nor the programs' impacts on welfare expenditures.



Recommendations and Response

We recommend that DHS adopt a more balanced, work-oriented approach: streamline its assessment and conciliation processes; institute proper management controls; and develop, establish, and monitor program outcomes.

The Department of Human Services generally agreed with our recommendations. The department agreed to give careful attention to the cost-effectiveness of using multi-disciplinary teams to assess barriers and determine which barriers warrant corrective action under the work program. The department also agreed to ensure that there is a direct relationship between education and training assistance and linkages to jobs with private sector employers. The department agreed to examine time limits for program participation and conciliation. In addition, the department agreed to prepare policies and procedures for contract management, PRIDE, Food Stamps employment and training and the General Assistance work programs. The department is emphasizing operationalizing the ALEX computer system at all units.

However, the department disagreed with our recommendation to pursue revisions to the JOBS program design to allow working clients to leave the program. The department believes that such changes would violate federal law. However, according to federal officials, the Family Support Act gives states the flexibility to design their JOBS program to best serve their population within available state resources. For example, Riverside County's program, which strongly emphasizes linkage with employers allows working clients to exit its JOBS program. In light of the 8,467 people on Hawaii's waiting list, our JOBS' resources should not be wasted on supervising participants who obtain employment.

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