
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.