

July 1996

JOB CORPS

Where Participants Are Recruited, Trained, and Placed in Jobs





United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

**Health, Education, and
Human Services Division**

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July 17, 1996

The Honorable William F. Goodling
Chairman, Committee on Economic
and Educational Opportunities
House of Representatives

The Honorable Christopher Shays
Chairman, Subcommittee on Human Resources
and Intergovernmental Relations
Committee on Government Reform
and Oversight
House of Representatives

Job Corps is a national employment training program administered by the Department of Labor that provides severely disadvantaged youth with a comprehensive array of services, generally in a residential setting. Labor receives about \$1 billion a year to serve about 66,000 Job Corps participants, and, through nine regional offices,¹ operates 112 Job Corps centers that it has established throughout the nation—including centers in 46 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.² Job Corps is one of about 163 programs or funding streams that make up the nation's federally funded workforce development system. The Congress is now deciding how best to streamline this fragmented system and how Job Corps would best operate within a reformed workforce development structure.³ In that regard, you asked us to provide information on whether Job Corps participants are assigned to the closest center. Specifically, you asked for information on (1) the locations of Job Corps centers and their capacity, by state; (2) the extent to which participants are trained and placed in jobs in the state in which they reside; and (3) the reasons why participants may be sent to centers outside their state of residence.

In carrying out our work, we performed analyses of the Job Corps program's Student Pay, Allotment and Management Information System

¹Although Labor operates 10 regional offices, the Job Corps program in regions VII and VIII is overseen by one regional director.

²Hereafter, the use of the term "states" will refer, collectively, to the states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. States without Job Corps centers in 1995 included Delaware, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Wyoming, and Connecticut. Connecticut opened a center in May 1996.

³See Multiple Employment Training Programs: Major Overhaul Needed to Reduce Costs, Streamline the Bureaucracy, and Improve Results (GAO/T-HEHS-95-53, Jan. 10, 1995).

(SPAMIS) data for program years⁴ 1993 and 1994 (the most current data available). This data system contains comprehensive information on each Job Corps participant who left the program during program years 1993 and 1994, including personal and demographic data; the center to which they were assigned and the courses they attended; the date when they left the program; and the job they obtained, if any. Our analyses included a comparison of the program's in-state capacity with in-state demand for services, using the number of program participants as a measure of demand. We also conducted a telephone survey with the directors from the program's nine regional offices and several outreach/screening contractors to obtain information on the factors influencing decisions to assign participants to centers outside the participants' state of residence. We did our work between October 1995 and May 1996 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. (App. I contains a more detailed discussion of our scope and methodology.)

Results in Brief

While 46 states have at least one center, Job Corps program capacity differs among the states because the number and size of Job Corps centers vary from state to state. For example, 19 states have one Job Corps center whereas 4 states have six or more centers. Furthermore, Job Corps program capacity in a state is not related to the number of state residents enrolled in Job Corps, and participants are not necessarily trained or assigned to a center in their home state.

Overall, we found that Job Corps had the capacity to serve 81 percent of program participants in their home states—52,000 of 64,000 participants from states with Job Corps centers could have been assigned to a center in their state of residence. About 59 percent of participants were assigned to centers in their home state;⁵ the remaining participants were sent to centers outside their home state and traveled an average of over 4 times as far as they would have if they had been assigned to the closest center in their state of residence. Regardless of where they were trained, however, about 83 percent of those participants who got jobs were employed in their home state.

⁴A program year begins on July 1 and ends on June 30 of the following year. Program years are designated by the year in which they start; thus, program year 1994 began July 1, 1994, and ended June 30, 1995.

⁵All analyses throughout the report are based on program year 1994 data. We performed the same analyses using program year 1993 data and obtained consistent results. See appendix II for information on program years 1993 and 1994.

Program officials told us that the predominant reasons participants were sent out of state were to (1) fully use Job Corps centers and (2) satisfy participants' preference to be assigned to a specific center. Officials also cited participants' preference for a specific vocational offering as important. While we were unable to determine if specific vocational training slots were available at the closest center when participants were enrolled, our analysis showed that over two-thirds of the participants assigned to centers in other states were either enrolled in vocational training courses commonly offered or never enrolled in vocational training at all.

Job Corps had sufficient capacity in 27 of the states to serve essentially all participants from those states in program year 1994. However, the program lacked the capacity to serve about 11,000 participants residing in 20 other states and another 1,400 participants residing in the 5 states that did not have a Job Corps center in program year 1994. Plans to add nine centers in the next 2 years and the 1996 opening of the Connecticut center are expected to partially address this shortfall, adding space for about 4,000 participants in those states with insufficient capacity and for about 300 in Connecticut.

Background

Job Corps was established as a national employment and training program in 1964 to provide severely disadvantaged youth with a wide range of services, including basic/remedial education, vocational training, and social skills instruction, usually at residential facilities. It remains one of the few federally run programs, unlike many other employment training programs⁶ that are federally funded but are operated by state or local governments. Job Corps centers are operated by public or private organizations under contract with Labor.

Recent legislative proposals to consolidate much of the nation's job training system into block grants to the states has produced debate on the relationship between Job Corps and the states, including whether responsibility for Job Corps should be delegated to the states. A 1995 Senate-passed bill retained Job Corps as a separate federally administered program;⁷ a 1995 House-passed bill was silent about the Job Corps' future

⁶Examples of such programs include titles IIB and IIC youth training programs under the Job Training Partnership Act (P.L. 97-300), which, although established as federal programs, are run by state and local agencies.

⁷The Workforce Development Act of 1995 (S. 143, 104th Cong., 1st sess.).

as a separate entity.⁸ A conference committee is currently attempting to resolve the differences between the two bills. The Senate bill proposes several changes to better integrate Job Corps with state and local workforce development initiatives, including requiring center operators to submit operating plans to Labor, through their state governors; requiring center operators to give nearby communities advance notice of any center changes that could affect them; and permitting the governor to recommend individuals to serve on panels to select center operators. Labor officials stated that the program is already playing a proactive role in ensuring that the National Job Corps program works more closely with state and local employment, education, and training programs.

According to Job Corps officials, the program has received funding to open nine additional centers—five in program year 1996 and four in program year 1997—all of which will be located in states with existing centers.

Job Corps' nine regional directors are responsible for the day-to-day administration of the program at the centers located within their geographic boundaries. Included among their responsibilities are the recruitment of youth for program participation and the assignment of enrollees to one of the program centers. Recruitment is typically carried out by private contractors, the centers, or state employment services under contract with the regional directors. The Job Corps legislation provides some broad guidance with respect to assigning enrollees to centers. It states that participants are to be assigned to the center closest to their residence, except for good cause. Exceptions can include avoiding undue delay in assigning participants to a center, meeting educational or training needs, or ensuring efficiency and economy in the operation of the program.

The program currently enrolls participants aged 16 to 24 who are severely disadvantaged, in need of additional education or training, and living in a disruptive environment. Our June 1995 report⁹ contained an analysis of characteristics of those terminating from Job Corps in program year 1993 showing that over two-thirds of the program's participants faced multiple barriers to employment.¹⁰ Enrollments are voluntary, and training

⁸The Workforce Development Act of 1995 (H.R. 1617, 104th Cong., 1st sess.).

⁹Job Corps: High Costs and Mixed Results Raise Questions About Program's Effectiveness (GAO/HEHS-95-180, June 30, 1995).

¹⁰The barriers included being a school dropout, being deficient in basic skills (reading and/or math skills below the eighth grade), receiving public assistance, and having limited English proficiency.

programs are open entry, open exit, and self-paced, allowing participants to enroll throughout the year and to progress at their own pace. On average, participants spend about 8 months in the program but can stay up to 2 years.

In addition to basic education and vocational training courses, each of the centers provides participants with a range of services including counseling, health care (including dental), room and board, and recreational activities. Skills training is offered in a variety of vocational areas, including business occupations, automotive repair, construction trades, and health occupations. These courses are taught by center staff, private contractors, or instructors provided under contracts with national labor and business organizations. In addition, Job Corps offers, at a limited number of centers, advanced training in various occupations including food service, clerical, and construction trades. This training is designed to provide additional instruction to participants from centers across the nation who have demonstrated the ability to perform at a higher skill level.

One feature that makes Job Corps different from other youth training programs is its residential component.¹¹ About 90 percent of the participants enrolled each year live at the centers, allowing services to be provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The premise for boarding participants is that most come from a disruptive environment and, therefore, can benefit from receiving education and training in a new setting where a variety of support services are available around the clock.

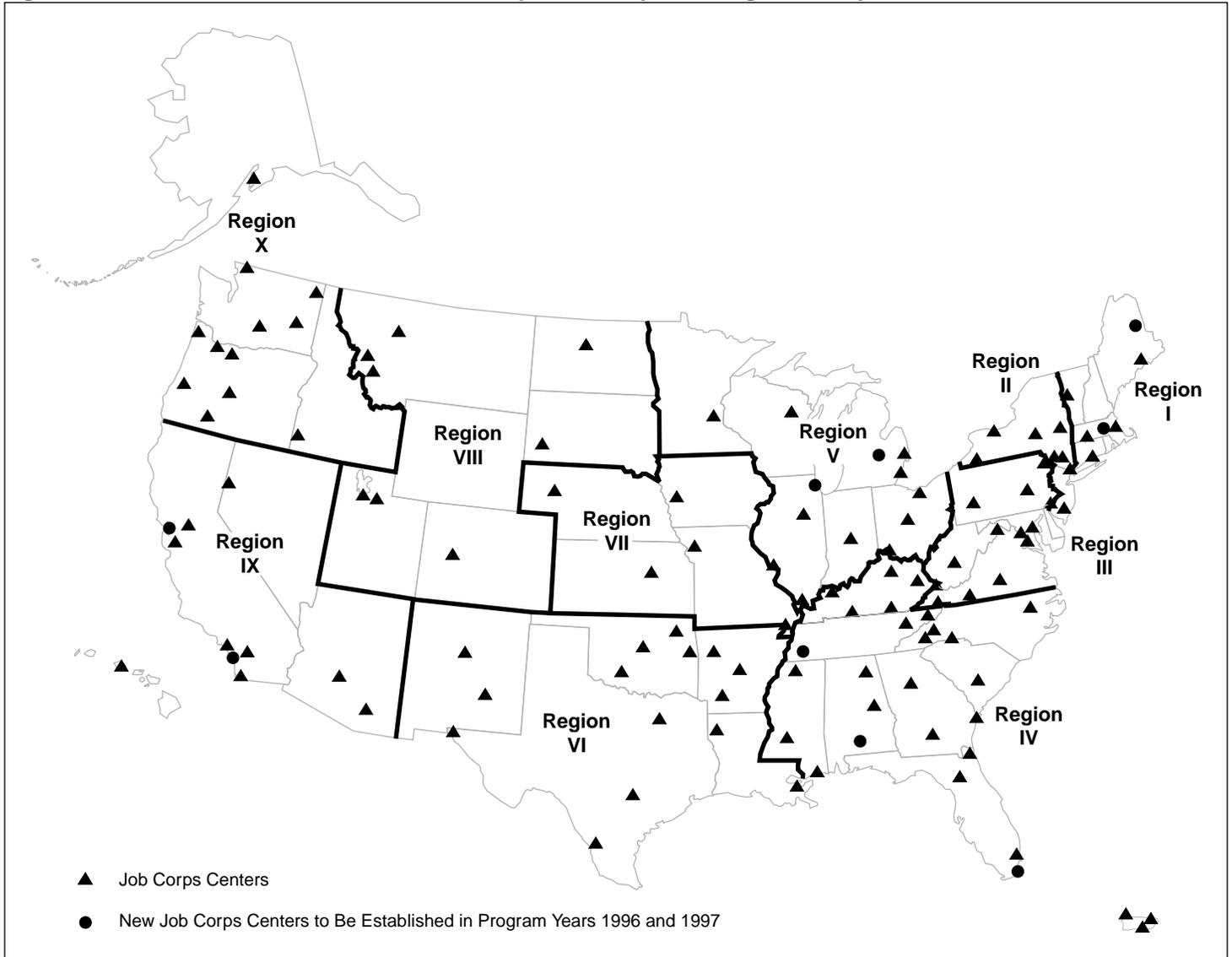
Participation in Job Corps can lead to placement in a job or enrollment in further training or education. It can also lead to educational achievements such as earning a high school diploma and gaining reading or math skills. However, the primary outcome for Job Corps participants is employment; about 64 percent of those leaving the program get jobs.

Number and Size of Job Corps Centers Determine State Capacity

Job Corps program capacity differs widely among the states because the number of centers in each state differs, and the size of individual centers within the states varies substantially. Job Corps centers are located in 46 states and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico (see fig. 1). Among states with centers, the number ranges from one center in each of 19 states; to six centers each in California, Kentucky, and Oregon; to seven in New York State.

¹¹See Job Corps: Comparison of Federal Program With State Youth Training Initiatives (GAO/HEHS-96-92, Mar. 28, 1996).

Figure 1: Current and Planned Distribution of Job Corps Centers by Labor Regions and by States

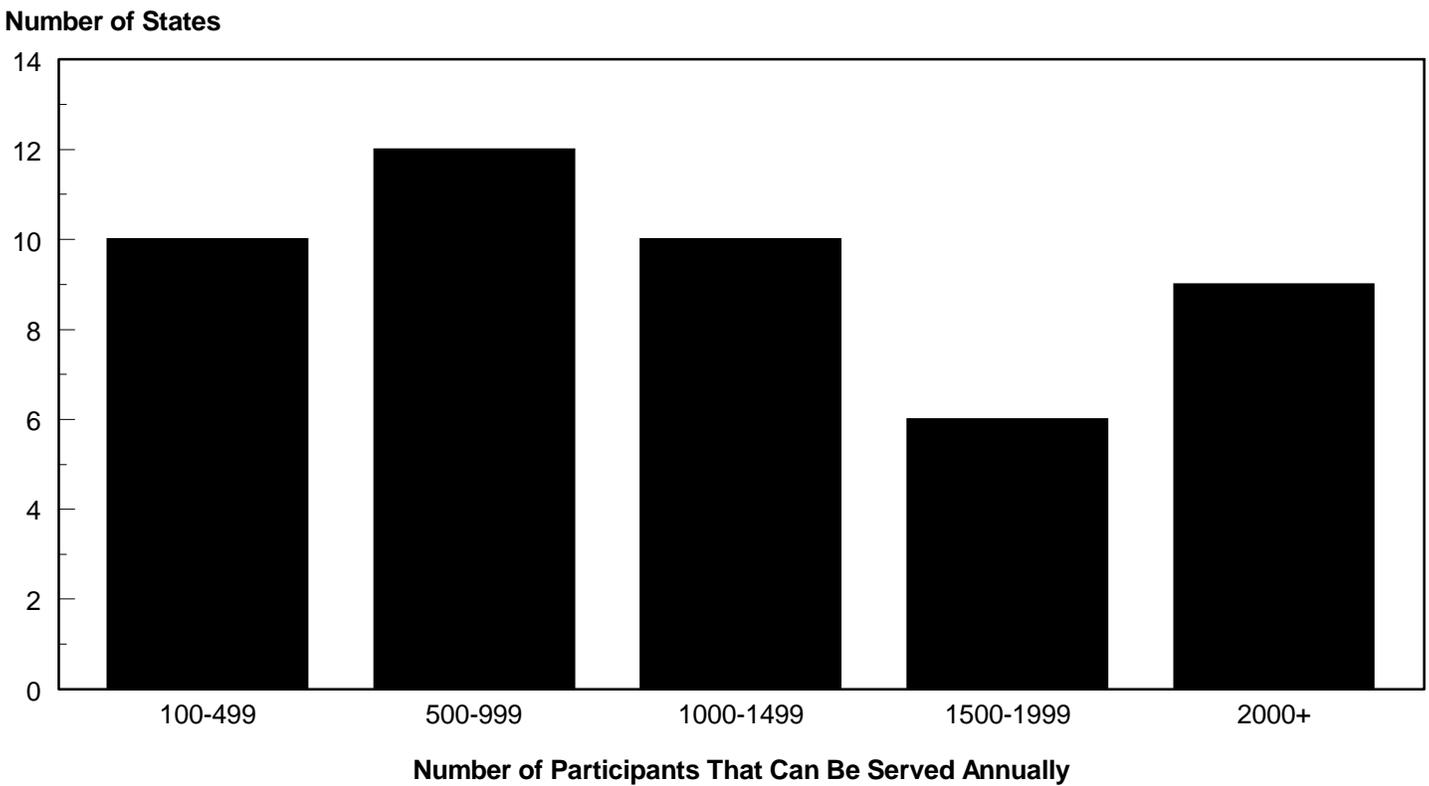


Note: App. III lists the states in each region.

In-state capacity differs according to the number of centers in each state, the size of individual centers, and the average time participants spend in the program. For example, Kentucky's centers can serve 6,373 participants annually, nearly double the number that can be served by centers in either

California (3,477) or New York (3,252); Idaho has only one center and a capacity of about 200. (See app. IV for a listing of the capacity within each state with a Job Corps center.) As shown in figure 2, Job Corps centers in 9 states had the capacity to serve over 2,000 Job Corps participants annually, whereas centers in 10 states could serve fewer than 500 participants annually.

Figure 2: State Job Corps Program Capacity, Program Year 1994



Job Corps Participants Were Assigned to Out-of-State Centers

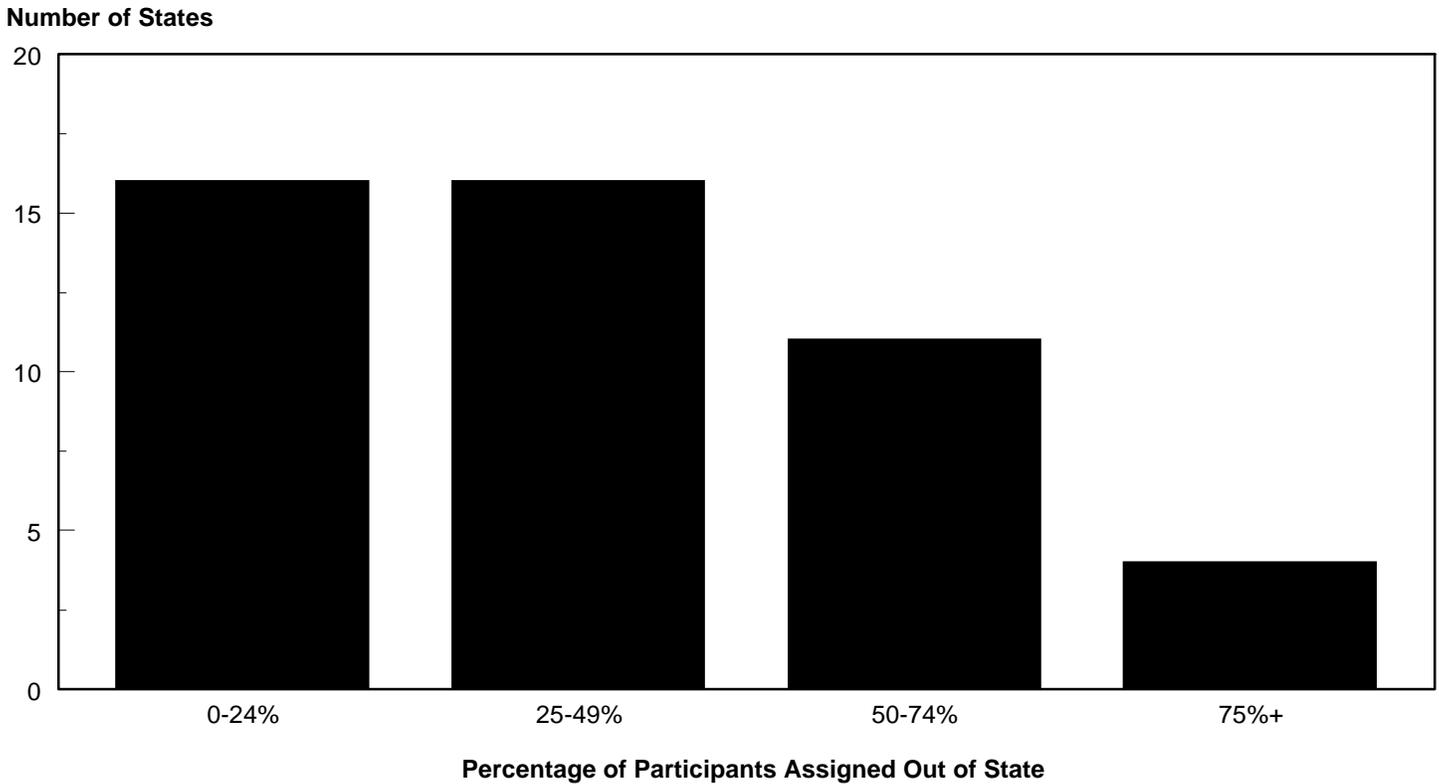
Nationwide, 41 percent of the approximately 64,000 program year 1994 Job Corps participants (about 44 percent in program year 1993) who lived in states with Job Corps centers were assigned to centers outside their home state. Openings at centers located in their states of residence were often filled by participants from other states. Those participants assigned out of state travel greater distances than those who are assigned to an in-state

center. Yet, even when assigned out of state, participants tend to stay within the Labor region in which they reside. Regardless of where they are assigned, participants tend to be employed in their state of residence.

**Extent of Out-of-State
Assignments Differed
Among States**

Considerable variation existed among the states in the extent to which Job Corps participants were assigned to out-of-state centers (see fig. 3). In program year 1994, the majority of Job Corps participants from 15 states were assigned to centers outside their home state. For example, more than three-quarters of the Job Corps participants from Colorado, Illinois, South Carolina, and Wisconsin were assigned to centers in states other than the one in which they lived. On the other hand, less than a quarter of the youths in 16 states were assigned to out-of-state Job Corps centers. For example, less than 15 percent of the Job Corps participants from Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, and New York were assigned to centers outside their home state. (App. V lists the states included in each of the percentage groupings shown in fig. 3.)

Figure 3: State Residents Assigned to Out-of-State Centers, Program Year 1994



While substantial numbers of participants are assigned to out-of-state centers, the vast majority of all participants are assigned to centers within the Job Corps regions in which they reside. Nearly 95 percent of program year 1994 participants (92 percent in program year 1993) were assigned to a Job Corps center that was located in the same region as their residence. In 7 of Labor's 10 regions, over 90 percent of Job Corps program participants were residents of the regions in which they were assigned, and in the remaining 3 regions, over 80 percent were regional residents. A portion of the remaining 5 percent who were transferred outside their region were assigned under agreements between regional directors to send participants to centers in other regions. For example, the director in region II said that he has an agreement to send approximately 150 youths to region I and 250 youths to region IV. The director in region IX assigns

400 to 600 youths to the Clearfield, Utah, center in region VIII and another 200 youths to region X.

**Out-of-State Assignments
Are Distant**

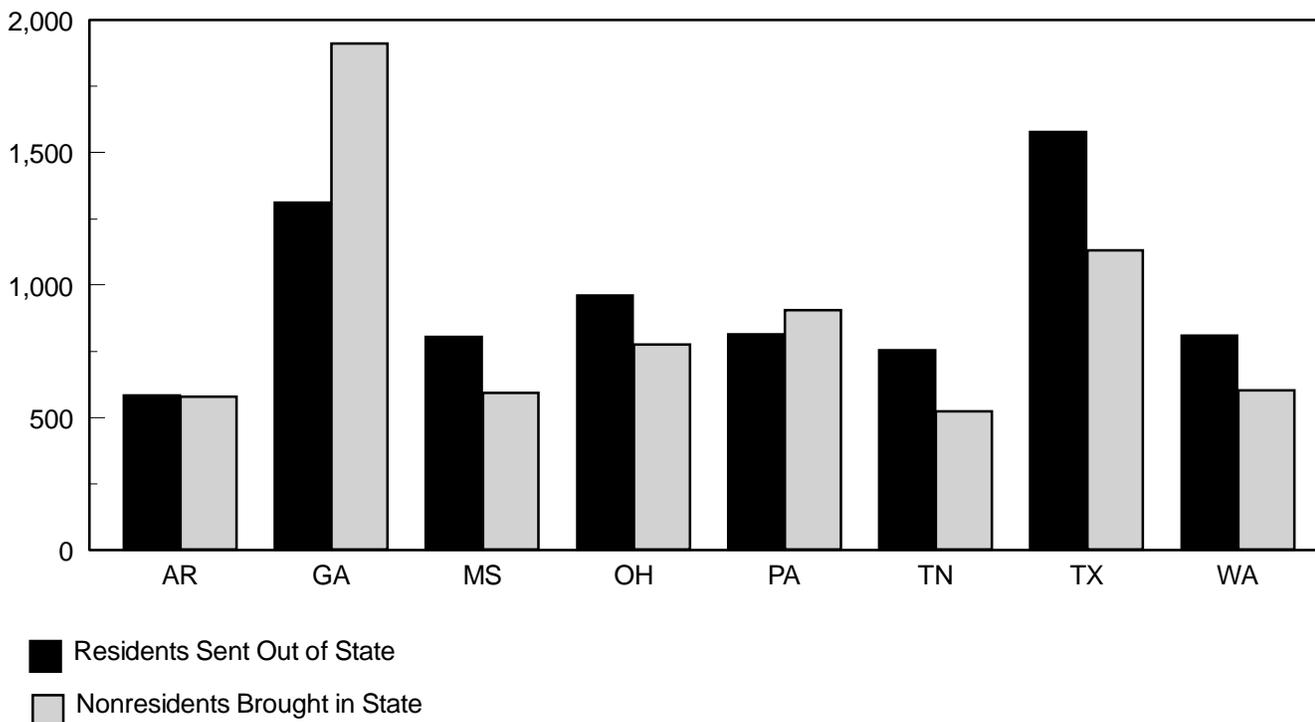
Job Corps participants assigned to centers outside their state of residence were sent to centers that were, on average, over 4 times as distant as the in-state center closest to a participant's residence. For the approximately 26,000 youths leaving the program in program year 1994 who were assigned to out-of-state Job Corps centers, we compared the distances from their home to (1) the center to which they were assigned and (2) the in-state center nearest their residence. In 92 percent of the cases where participants were assigned out of state, there was an in-state Job Corps center closer to the participant's home. On average, participants assigned to out-of-state centers traveled about 390 miles, whereas the closest in-state center was about 90 miles from their residence. For example, about 2,200 Florida residents were assigned to Job Corps centers in other states, traveling on average about 640 miles to attend those centers. In contrast, these participants would have traveled, on average, only about 70 miles had they been assigned to the nearest Florida center.

**Residents Sent Out of State
While Nonresidents Are
Brought In**

We noted that while residents in many states were being assigned to out-of-state centers, a substantial number of nonresidents were being brought in and enrolled at in-state centers. For example, in program year 1994, of the approximately 1,000 Arkansas residents in Job Corps, about 600 (or 60 percent) were assigned to out-of-state centers. Yet, about 600 nonresidents were brought in to centers in Arkansas from other states. Similarly, in Georgia, 1,300 residents from that state were assigned to Job Corps centers located elsewhere, whereas about 1,900 individuals residing in other states were brought in to centers located in Georgia. Figure 4 shows states with large numbers (500 or more) of residents sent to out-of-state centers while large numbers of nonresidents were brought in-state. (App. VI provides, for each state, the number of nonresidents brought in from other states, as well as the number of residents sent to out-of-state centers, for program years 1994 and 1993.)

Figure 4: States With Large Numbers of Residents Sent Out of State and Nonresidents Brought Into State, Program Year 1994

Number of Participants



Proportion of Nonresidents Varies Among Centers

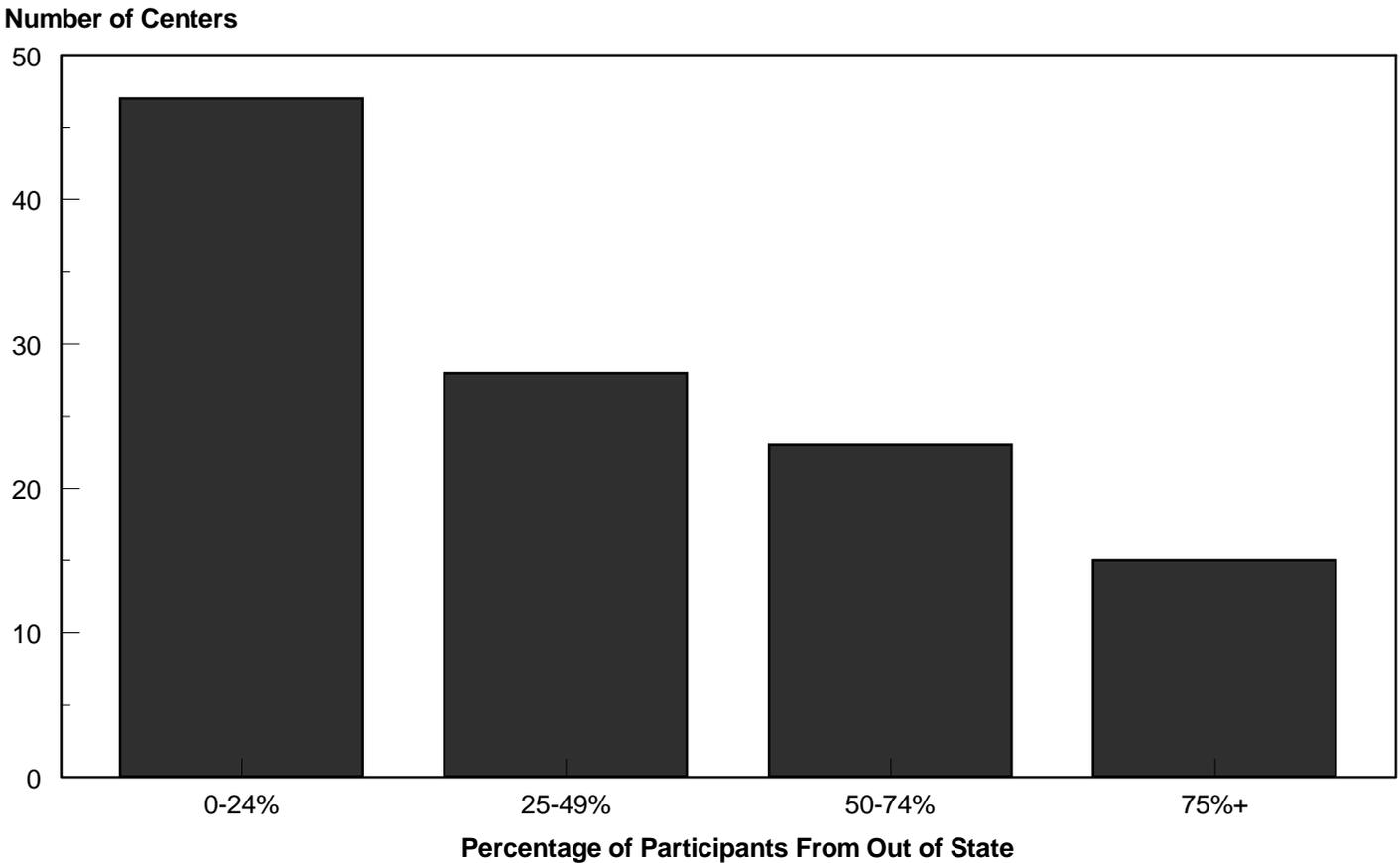
Assigning participants to Job Corps centers outside their state of residence resulted in wide variations in the number of nonresidents at individual Job Corps centers nationwide. The majority of participants served at about one-third of the centers were out-of-state residents.¹² Overall, we found that in 38 of the 113¹³ Job Corps centers operating in program year 1994, 50 percent or more of the participants resided outside the state in which the center was located (see fig. 5). Fifteen centers had 75 percent or more nonresidents enrolled during program year 1994, and the 9 centers with the most nonresidents (85 percent or more) were located in Kentucky (6 centers), California (1), Utah (1), and West Virginia (1). Because program

¹²We excluded those Job Corps participants residing in states without Job Corps centers.

¹³This number includes centers in Tuskegee, Alabama, and Knoxville, Tennessee, that were subsequently closed.

capacity in Kentucky, Utah, and West Virginia exceeded in-state demand, large numbers of nonresidents attended centers in these states. California, on the other hand, had insufficient capacity. Nonetheless, the number of nonresidents at the California center may have been high because it provided advanced training for participants who previously had completed some basic level of training at centers across the nation. Forty-seven centers had less than 25 percent nonresidents enrolled, including 30 centers with less than 10 percent of their program participants coming from out of state.

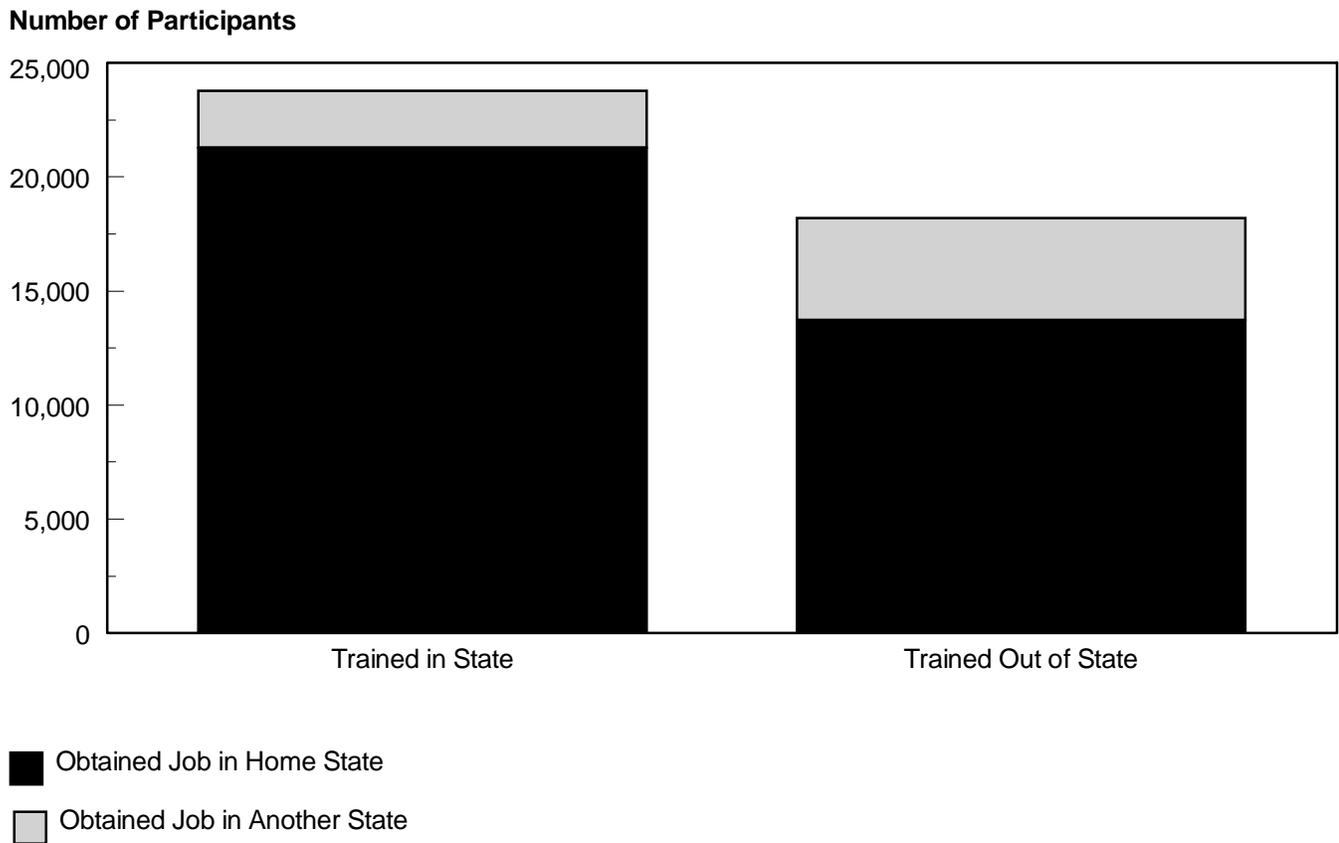
Figure 5: Percentage of Center Participants From Out of State, Program Year 1994



Participants Employed in State of Residence

Regardless of where Job Corps participants were assigned, those who found jobs usually did so in their home state. Of the approximately 42,000 Job Corps participants who obtained jobs after leaving the program in 1994, about 83 percent found jobs in their state of residence (85 percent in program year 1993). Even those participants who were assigned to Job Corps centers outside their state of residence generally returned to their home states for employment. Specifically, of the 18,200 participants obtaining jobs after being trained in centers outside their state of residence, about 13,700 (75 percent) obtained those jobs in their home state (see fig. 6).

Figure 6: Number of Participants Obtaining Jobs in State of Residence, Program Year 1994



Reasons for Assigning Participants Out of State

Regional officials stated that substantial numbers of participants were assigned to centers out of state due, in part, to Labor's desire to fully utilize centers. The other principal reason given was to satisfy participant preferences either to be assigned to a specific center or to be enrolled in a specific occupational training course.

According to Labor officials, full utilization of Job Corps centers was one of the principal reasons for assigning participants out of state. The Job Corps program does not routinely collect the reasons for out-of-state assignments and, therefore, we were unable to document the specific factors behind these decisions. However, we contacted Labor officials, including each of its nine regional directors—who are ultimately responsible for center assignments—as well as contractors responsible for 15 outreach/screening contracts, to determine what factors contributed to out-of-state assignments. For the most part, these officials stated that one of the reasons for not assigning participants to the center closest to their residence and, instead, to out-of-state centers was to ensure that centers were fully utilized. For example, they pointed out that many residents from Florida were assigned to centers in Kentucky; otherwise, centers in Kentucky would remain underutilized. A similar situation was cited with respect to participants from California assigned to a center in Utah that would otherwise be underutilized. In addition, Labor officials noted that participants were assigned to out-of-state centers to fill openings that occurred throughout the year because participants continuously leave the program due to the program's open-entry, open-exit, self-paced format. Moreover, at any point, there may not be any state residents ready to enroll in the program.

Maintaining full capacity in Job Corps centers is one measurement Labor uses in evaluating regional director performance; Labor data indicate that, except for a portion of program year 1994,¹⁴ the program has operated near full capacity during the previous 3 program years. Vacancies can frequently occur at Job Corps centers because of the uneven distribution of program capacity in relation to demand for services, the continuous turnover of participants at individual centers, and the irregular flow of participants into the program. Labor officials said that in program year 1994, Job Corps had an average occupancy rate of about 91 percent programwide. Average occupancy rates at the regional level, in program year 1994, ranged from about 83 percent to 97 percent.

¹⁴According to Labor officials, a temporary decline in occupancy occurred because of the implementation of a new zero tolerance policy against drugs and violence, along with the need to place about 7 percent of accepted new applicants into a control group for a longitudinal study of the program.

We found less evidence to support the other principal reason cited for assigning participants to distant centers—the need to satisfy participant preferences, either to attend a particular center or to receive training in a particular occupation. While the Job Corps data system does not provide information on the extent to which such preferences are considered when making assignments, we were able to gain some insight into the degree to which specific vocational offerings might explain out-of-state assignments. We analyzed the occupational training courses in which out-of-state participants were enrolled. We found that over two-thirds of these individuals were either enrolled in occupational courses commonly offered throughout the national network of Job Corps centers or were never enrolled in an occupational course at all. For example, about 13 percent of the participants sent to out-of-state centers were being trained in clerical positions (available at 91 centers), about 8 percent in food service (available at 94 centers), and 8 percent in health occupations (available at 72 centers). In addition, about 11 percent received no specific vocational offering after being assigned to an out-of-state center (see table 1). Thus, specialized training or uncommon occupational offerings do not appear to explain these out-of-state assignments. We were, however, unable to determine whether a training slot in the requested vocational area was available at the closest center when participants were assigned out of state.

Table 1: Examples of Vocational Training Received by Job Corps Participants Assigned to Out-of-State Centers, Program Year 1994

Vocational course	Number of centers offering course	Percentage of out-of-state participants enrolled in course
Clerical	91	13.5
Food service	94	8.4
Health occupations ^a	72	8.1
Welding	68	6.9
Building and apartment maintenance	88	6.0
Bricklaying/cement masonry	66	5.7
Carpentry	84	5.0
Painting	62	4.1
No vocational course		10.7
Total		68.4

^aHealth occupations include licensed practical nurse, nurse's aide, and home health aide training.

Recent Emphasis on In-State Assignments

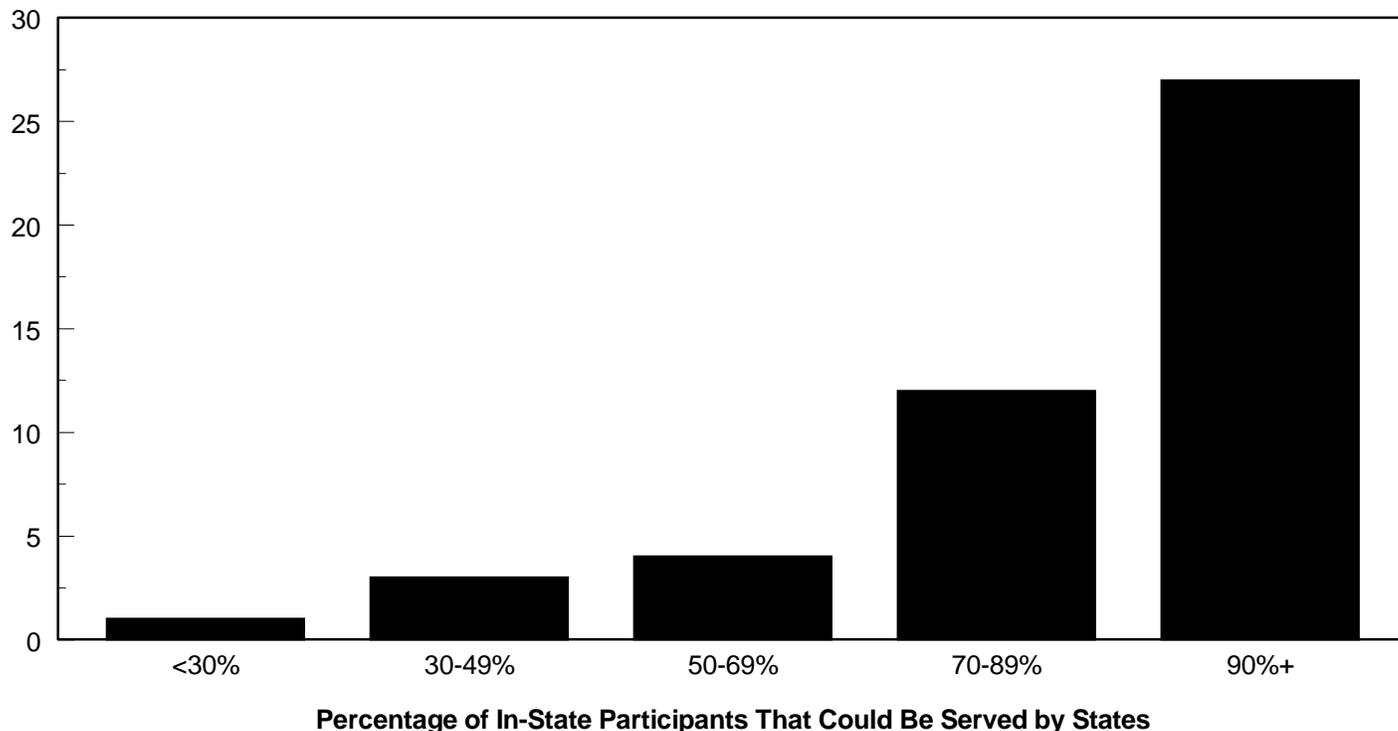
During our discussions with regional Job Corps officials, some said that they have recently begun to focus more on assigning participants to Job Corps centers that are located in the same state in which they reside. Region III¹⁵ officials incorporate in-state assignment goals into their outreach and screening contracts, and a March 1995 regional field instruction states that the region's center assignment plan "now places greater emphasis on the assignment of youth to centers within their own state, or to centers within a closer geographical area." Similarly, other regional officials told us that they are now placing greater emphasis on in-state assignment of youth because of increased congressional interest in having greater state involvement in the program.

Many States Have Sufficient Capacity to Meet In-State Demand for Job Corps Training

During program year 1994, the majority of states with Job Corps centers had sufficient capacity to handle virtually all the in-state demand (at least 90 percent of in-state participants) for Job Corps training, but this ability varied substantially among the states. We compared the demand for Job Corps services within each state with the total capacity of the centers located therein. We measured state demand in terms of the number of residents who participated in Job Corps, regardless of whether they attended a center within their state of residence or out of state.

Nationwide, 52,000 of the 64,000 Job Corps participants—81 percent (86 percent in program year 1993)—either were or could have been trained in centers in their home state. As shown in figure 7, a total of 27 states had sufficient capacity in their Job Corps centers to accommodate virtually all the program participants from those states, and another 12 states could meet at least 70 percent of the demand. (App. VII lists the states in each of the percentage groupings shown in fig. 7.)

¹⁵Includes Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

Figure 7: States' Capacity to Serve Residents Enrolled in Job Corps Training, Program Year 1994
Number of States

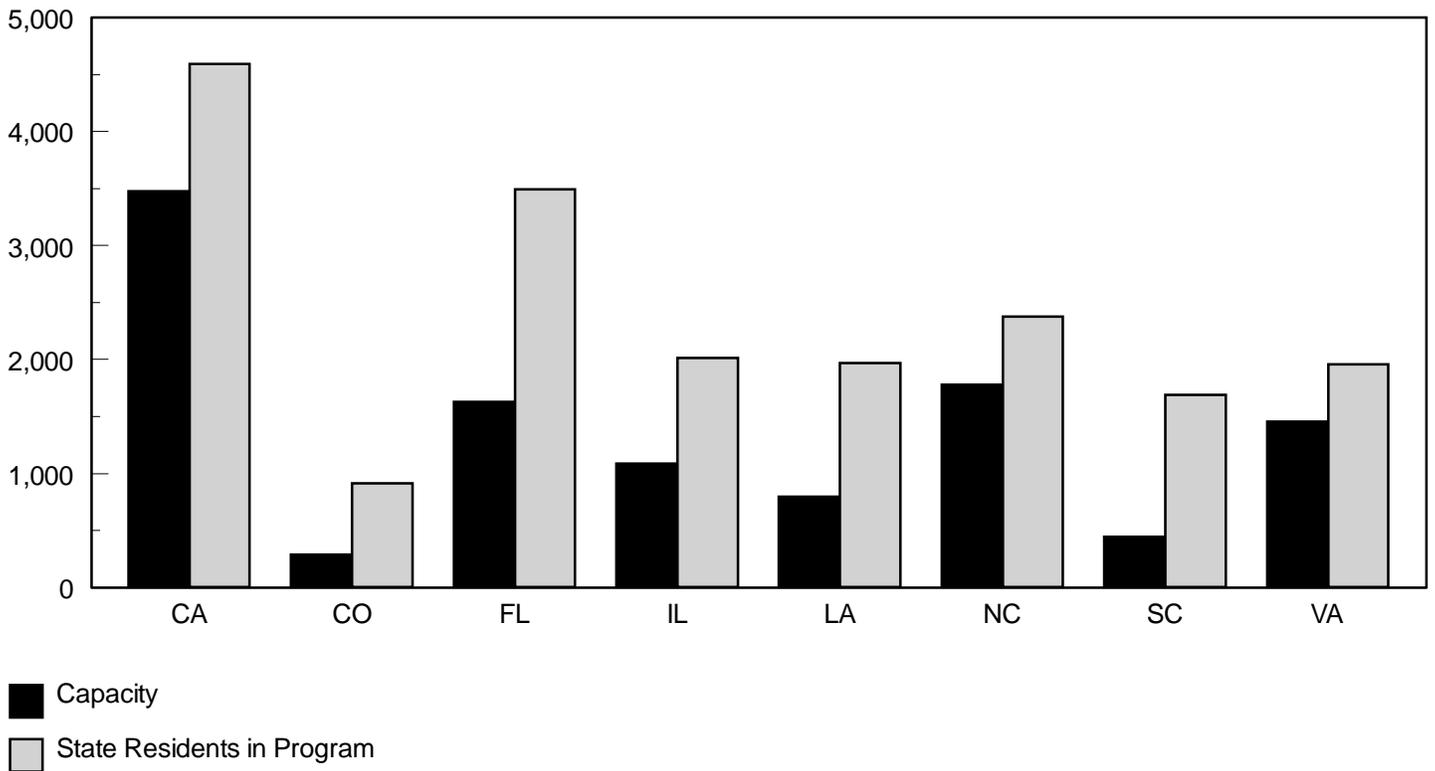
We found substantial differences among states in the capacity of in-state centers to serve Job Corps participants from their state. For example, South Carolina had over 1,600 residents participating in Job Corps, but the centers in that state had the capacity to serve only about 440 participants. On the other hand, Kentucky had 485 residents in Job Corps, but had the capacity (6,373) to serve about 13 times that number of participants.

Although 81 percent of Job Corps participants in program year 1994 either were or could have been served in their state of residence, the remaining 19 percent (over 11,000 youths) lived in states whose centers lacked the capacity to serve all state residents enrolled in Job Corps. For example, centers in California, Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina each would have been unable to serve over 1,000 Job Corps participants in program

year 1994 in their existing centers. Figure 8 shows (for those states where demand was higher than in-state capacity) the states with Job Corps centers that had a demand that exceeded capacity by 500 or more participants.

Figure 8: States Where Demand Exceeded Program Capacity by at Least 500 Participants, Program Year 1994

Number of Participants

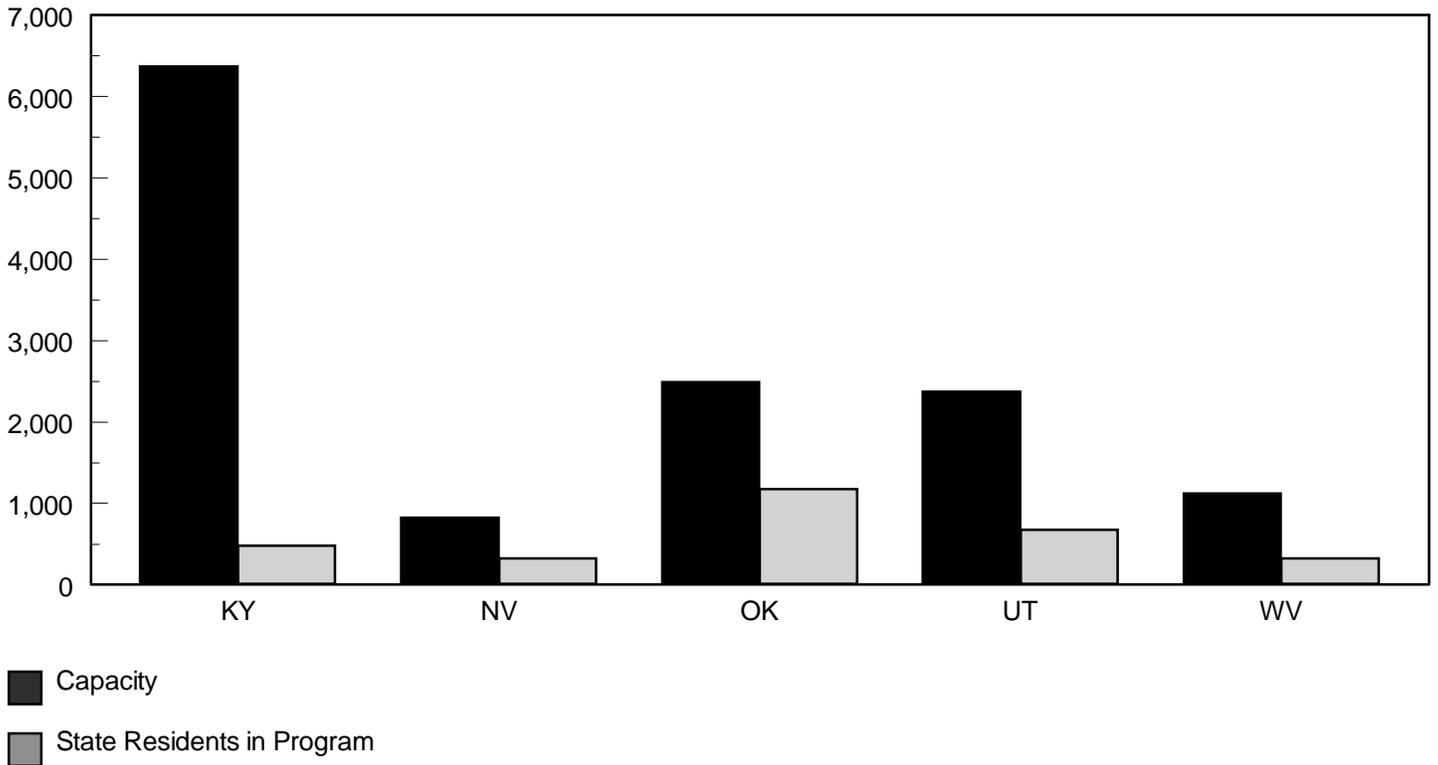


In addition, five states (Connecticut, Delaware, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Wyoming) did not have a Job Corps center in program year 1994. These states accounted for about another 1,400 participants who could not be served in their home state. On the other hand, the capacity in eight states was more than double the number of youths from their states in Job Corps. For example, Utah’s two centers could accommodate about

2,400 youths, but only about 700 state residents were in the program. Similarly, West Virginia's centers had a capacity for about 1,100 youths, yet only about 300 West Virginia youths enrolled in Job Corps (see fig. 9).

Figure 9: States With Twice as Much Capacity in Relation to Number of Residents Enrolled in Job Corps, Program Year 1994

Number of Participants



Planned Expansion Will Increase Capacity in Some States

The Job Corps program's plan to establish nine new centers over the next 2 years will provide some additional capacity that is needed in states with existing centers, but will increase capacity in three other states to about twice the in-state demand. In addition, a center opened in Connecticut (which had been without a Job Corps center) in May 1996 that will serve about 300 annually. Overall, this expansion will enable the program to

serve an additional 4,000 youths in those states that had insufficient capacity. For example, planned centers in Alabama, California, Florida, Illinois, and Tennessee will help those states address the shortage of available training opportunities for in-state residents, reducing the shortfall in those states from about 4,700 to 700. However, Job Corps is also planning to add centers in Maine, Massachusetts, and Michigan, providing these states with the capacity to serve nearly twice the number of state residents participating in Job Corps.

Agency Comments

In commenting on a draft of this report, Labor expressed some concerns with our presentation of certain information that it believed needed greater emphasis and with what it believed were factors we should have considered in carrying out our analysis.

For example, Labor said that our characterization of in-state demand was misleading. Furthermore, it said that we did not recognize the limited availability of advanced training and its impact when calculating distance for participants assigned out of state. We have clarified our definition of demand as used in this report and recalculated distance, excluding advanced training participants, which had no impact on our finding.

Labor also pointed out recent changes in program emphasis and provided some technical clarification. Labor's comments, along with our responses, are printed in appendix IX.

We are sending copies of this report to the Secretary of Labor; the Director, Office of Management and Budget; relevant congressional committees; and other interested parties. Copies will be made available to others on request.

If you or your staff have any questions concerning this report, please call me at (202) 512-7014 or Sigurd Nilsen at (202) 512-7003. Major contributors to this report include Dianne Murphy Blank, Jeremiah Donoghue, Thomas Medvetz, Arthur Merriam, and Wayne Sylvia.



Carlotta C. Joyner
Director, Education and
Employment Issues

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Abbreviations

SPAMIS Student Pay, Allotment and Management Information System

Scope and Methodology

We designed our study to gather information on how Job Corps is currently operating in terms of where participants are recruited, trained, and placed. To do so, we analyzed Labor's Job Corps participant data file and interviewed Job Corps officials and recruiting contractors.

Data Analysis

To analyze where Job Corps participants are recruited from, assigned for training, and placed in jobs, we used Labor's Student Pay, Allotment and Management Information System (SPAMIS). Among other things, the database contains information on the placement and screening contractor for each participant. We analyzed data on Job Corps participants who left the program during program year 1994 (July 1, 1994, through June 30, 1995), the most recent full year for which data were available. To help determine whether program year 1994 was a unique year with regard to participant assignment, we performed similar analyses on comparable data for program year 1993. Unless otherwise stated, however, all numbers cited in the report reflect program year 1994 data.

Our basic population consisted of all participants who left the program during program year 1994 from 113 Job Corps centers. There were 66,022 participants included in this population. Two Job Corps centers have since closed, but participants from these centers were included in our analysis. This basic population was used for the analysis of capacity and average length of stay. We eliminated participant files with missing information or for participants who resided in Puerto Rico or outside the United States. We also eliminated from our analyses those participants from states without Job Corps centers. This brought our analytic population to 64,060. Certain analyses dealt with subpopulations of the basic population. For example, for the analysis of where participants obtained jobs, only those 41,975 cases where the file indicated a job placement were used. For program year 1993, the file indicated that 35,116 participants obtained jobs.

To determine how far participants traveled when attending out-of-state centers, we calculated the straight-line distance from the participant's residence to the last assigned out-of-state center. The distance was calculated using the centroid—or center—for the zip code of the participants' residence at entry and for the Job Corps center attended. The 5-Digit Zip Code Inventory File—part of the Statistical Analysis System library—provided the centroid's latitude and longitude. These latitude and

longitude measures became the basis for the distance computations.¹⁶ To determine whether an in-state center was closer, we calculated the straight-line distance from the participant's residence to the nearest Job Corps center located in the participant's state of residence. We then compared this distance with the distance to the Job Corps center of assignment.

Our distance analysis was dependent upon having consistent address and zip code information for the participants' residences and Job Corps centers, and the related longitude and latitude for those zip codes. Longitude and latitude data for locations outside the 50 states were not available. Thus, 989 program year 1994 participants from Puerto Rico were not included in the analysis. Another 680 participants were excluded from the analysis because either their zip code was not consistent with the state of residence information or they were missing state or zip code information. Because our focus for this analysis was on participants who lived in a state with a Job Corps center, we also excluded 1,434 participants who came from states that did not have Job Corps centers; these participants had to be assigned to out-of-state centers. This brought the total of the population for this analysis to 62,391 in program year 1994. This includes all participants regardless of the type of training program in which they participated. Table I.1 presents a summary of the subgroup sizes for analyses performed on program years 1994 and 1993 data.

¹⁶This calculation is consistent with that used by MapInfo Corporation's software reference manual (Troy, N.Y.: MapInfo Corporation, 1994).

Table I.1: Number of Cases Analyzed, Program Years 1994 and 1993

Population analytic subgroup	Number of cases in analysis	
	Program year 1994	Program year 1993
Total terminees in file	66,022	62,454
Excluded participant files for missing information	(61)	(337)
Excluded participants not residing in United States, District of Columbia, or Puerto Rico	(467)	(444)
Total terminees in our population	65,494	61,673
Total terminees in states without Job Corps centers	(1,434)	(1,670)
Total terminees in states with Job Corps centers	64,060	60,003
Distance analysis		
Excluded participant files with longitude and latitude data unavailable	(989)	(940)
Excluded participant files with inconsistent or missing zip code data	(680)	(422)
Total number of participants in distance analysis	62,391	58,641

To calculate the program year 1994 capacity of each Job Corps center, we used Labor’s listing of residential and nonresidential capacity at any one time (slots) for each Job Corps center and multiplied it by the average number of days in a year (365.25 days). We then divided that number by the average length of stay of program year 1994 terminees at that center. For example, the Carl D. Perkins Job Corps Center in Prestonsburg, Kentucky, had a stated capacity of 245 slots and a program year 1994 average length of stay of 236.56 days. We calculated the yearly capacity of the Perkins’ Center at 378 participants (245 times 365.25 divided by 236.56). On this basis, we performed center-by-center calculations and aggregated them to the state level to estimate a yearly capacity by state. To estimate in-state demand, we used all program participants from that state, regardless of where they were assigned, as a proxy measure. We recognize that this does not reflect total program demand, which would also include those who are eligible and interested in Job Corps but had not yet enrolled in the program.

Interviews With Officials

To obtain information on the process the Job Corps program uses to assign participants to centers, we interviewed Labor officials in the nine regional offices, as well as at headquarters. Using a semistructured

interview protocol, we asked questions related to how participants are assigned to Job Corps centers, including the program's policies and procedures for participant assignments, the responsibilities and documentation requirements for each level of oversight, and the assignment patterns for participants within the regions. Additionally, we asked questions based on the analysis of program year 1993 assignment information (because program year 1994 data were not yet available at the time) that showed the extent to which participants were assigned out of state and out of region. Each official was also asked to comment on the current assignment patterns for participants within their regions.

To obtain additional information on the Job Corps participant assignment process, we interviewed a sample of contractors responsible for 15 recruiting contracts. Using the program year 1993 assignment data contained in SPAMIS, we selected the top 16 large-scale recruiting contracts—defined as those that assigned over 300 participants to Job Corps centers—with the highest proportion of participants who were sent out of state. For contrast, we also chose three other recruiting contracts from the same locations that had relatively few out-of-state assignments. Each contractor was interviewed by telephone using a semistructured interview protocol that included questions relating to the Job Corps' participant assignment process. Specifically, we asked about the status of their recruiting contract(s) and their responsibilities and reporting requirements. We also asked the recruiting contractors to identify those factors that had the most impact on their decision on where to assign a participant. Some of the contractors were no longer under contract, and others could not be reached. As a result, we interviewed contractors responsible for 13 contracts that had a large proportion of participants recruited for out-of-state centers and 2 contracts that had relatively fewer participants going out of state. While our questions were based on the analysis of program year 1993 assignment information, we also asked each recruiting contractor to comment on his or her current student assignment patterns.

Limitations

We selected recruiting contractors to interview on the basis of their assignment of participants to centers outside participants' states of residence. This selection process was not random and, therefore, the results reported cannot be generalized to recruiting contractors overall.

Our distance analysis was based upon zip code centroid and is intended to provide a gross measure of distance. Actual travel distances may vary. The

average length of stay of participants at Job Corps centers can show some variation from year to year, as would the estimated center capacity when calculated from this number. To illustrate these variations, we have presented program year 1993 data alongside data for program year 1994 (see app. II). While we did not verify the accuracy of the SPAMIS data provided by Labor, we did check the consistency of participants' zip code and state of residence data and eliminated those files with inconsistent information. We also compared the results from our analyses of program year 1994 data with those from program year 1993 for consistency at the national, regional, and state levels.

Comparison of Key Data for Program Years 1994 and 1993

	Program year 1994	Program year 1993
Assignment of state residents		
Percentage assigned to centers in home state	59.0	56.4
Percentage sent to centers in other states	41.0	43.6
Percentage of state residents assigned to out-of-state centers		
Number of states assigning 0-24 percent of state residents out of state	16	12
Number of states assigning 25-49 percent of state residents out of state	16	15
Number of states assigning 50-74 percent of state residents out of state	11	15
Number of states assigning 75%+ state residents out of state	4	3
Percentage of Job Corps participants assigned to centers in same region as residence	95	92
Distances traveled		
Average distance traveled (in miles) by participants assigned to out-of-state centers	392	338
Average distance (in miles) to nearest in-state center for those participants assigned to out-of-state centers	93	77
Percentage of center participants from out of state		
Number of centers having 0-24 percent of participants from out of state	47	43
Number of centers having 25-49 percent of participants from out of state	28	28
Number of centers having 50-74 percent of participants from out of state	23	25
Number of centers having 75+ percent participants from out of state	15	16
Job placement		
Number of participants obtaining jobs	41,975	35,116
Number of participants obtaining jobs in home state	34,971	29,935
Percentage obtaining jobs in home state	83.3	85.3
In-state capacity and demand		
Number of participants that were or could have been trained in state	52,199	51,752

(continued)

Appendix II
Comparison of Key Data for Program Years
1994 and 1993

	Program year 1994	Program year 1993
Percentage of participants that were or could have been trained in state	81.5	86.0
Number of participants unable to be served in state	11,861	8,410

States Within Job Corps Regions, Program Year 1994

<p>Region I</p> <p>Connecticut Maine Massachusetts New Hampshire Rhode Island Vermont</p>	<p>Region II</p> <p>New Jersey New York Puerto Rico</p>
<p>Region III</p> <p>Delaware Maryland Pennsylvania Virginia West Virginia District of Columbia</p>	<p>Region IV</p> <p>Alabama Florida Georgia Kentucky Mississippi North Carolina South Carolina Tennessee</p>
<p>Region V</p> <p>Illinois Indiana Michigan Minnesota Ohio Wisconsin</p>	<p>Region VI</p> <p>Arkansas Louisiana New Mexico Oklahoma Texas</p>
<p>Region VII</p> <p>Iowa Kansas Missouri Nebraska</p>	<p>Region VIII</p> <p>Colorado Montana North Dakota South Dakota Utah Wyoming</p>
<p>Region IX</p> <p>Arizona California Hawaii Nevada</p>	<p>Region X</p> <p>Alaska Idaho Oregon Washington</p>

Comparison of State Program Capacity With In-State Demand, Program Year 1994

State	Capacity ^a	In-state	Capacity	
			Excess	Insufficient
Alaska	552	420	132	
Alabama	1,018	1,499		481
Arkansas	1,143	999	144	
Arizona	927	1,193		266
California	3,477	4,591		1,114
Colorado	289	914		625
District of Columbia	824	618	206	
Florida	1,630	3,492		1,862
Georgia	2,915	2,711	204	
Hawaii	300	148	152	
Iowa	517	525		8
Idaho	199	379		180
Illinois	1,089	2,012		923
Indiana	1,138	788	350	
Kansas	425	580		155
Kentucky	6,373	485	5,888	
Louisiana	799	1,967		1,168
Massachusetts	1,479	889	590	
Maryland	1,212	1,535		323
Maine	569	458	111	
Michigan	1,428	1,057	371	
Minnesota	469	462	7	
Missouri	2,291	2,527		236
Mississippi	1,930	2,240		310
Montana	1,090	568	522	
North Carolina	1,776	2,375		599
North Dakota	882	347	535	
Nebraska	328	474		146
New Jersey	899	1,026		127
New Mexico	1,053	825	228	
Nevada	824	324	500	
New York	3,252	3,278		26
Ohio	1,557	2,056		499
Oklahoma	2,487	1,177	1,310	
Oregon	1,973	1,486	487	
Pennsylvania	2,963	2,779	184	
Puerto Rico	923	989		66

(continued)

Appendix IV
Comparison of State Program Capacity With
In-State Demand, Program Year 1994

State	Capacity ^a	In-state	Capacity	
			Excess	Insufficient
South Carolina	442	1,691		1,249
South Dakota	325	435		110
Tennessee	925	1,206		281
Texas	4,936	5,313		377
Utah	2,378	681	1,697	
Vermont	510	158	352	
Virginia	1,456	1,960		504
Washington	1,515	1,741		226
West Virginia	1,124	329	795	
Wisconsin	398	353	45	
Total	67,009	64,060	14,810	11,861

Note: In program year 1994, Connecticut, Delaware, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Wyoming had no centers.

^aWe calculated capacity by dividing the number of beds at each Job Corps center by the average length of stay at each center. We then aggregated center capacity to the state level to estimate a yearly capacity by state.

Percentage of Participants Assigned Out of State, Program Years 1994 and 1993

Percentage of Participants Assigned Out of State, Program Year 1994

0 to 24 Percent: Arizona, California, Hawaii, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Utah, Vermont

25 to 49 Percent: Alaska, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Washington

50 to 74 Percent: Alabama, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia

75+ Percent: Colorado, Illinois, South Carolina, Wisconsin

Percentage of Participants Assigned Out of State, Program Year 1993

0 to 24 Percent: Arizona, California, Hawaii, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New York, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, Utah

25 to 49 Percent: Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont, Washington

50 to 74 Percent: Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia

75+ Percent: Illinois, South Carolina, Wisconsin

Number of Nonresidents Brought Into States Compared With Number of Residents Sent Out of State, Program Years 1994 and 1993

Table VI.1: Participants Assigned Out of State Compared With Nonresidents Brought In, Program Year 1994

State ^a	Number of participants who were	
	Brought in from other states	Assigned to out-of-state centers
Alaska	1	159
Alabama	369	954
Arkansas	580	584
Arizona	35	267
California	170	1,076
Colorado	32	689
District of Columbia	589	390
Florida	298	2,241
Georgia	1,912	1,311
Hawaii	1	8
Iowa	143	120
Idaho	118	255
Illinois	523	1,526
Indiana	916	376
Kansas	56	189
Kentucky	4,858	117
Louisiana	76	1,284
Massachusetts	155	190
Maryland	573	986
Maine	85	100
Michigan	489	251
Minnesota	70	51
Missouri	355	432
Mississippi	593	805
Montana	685	214
North Carolina	765	1,474
North Dakota	11	142
Nebraska	29	187
New Jersey	13	138
New Mexico	563	265
Nevada	531	23
New York	98	372
Ohio	775	962
Oklahoma	1,492	335
Oregon	1,037	490
Pennsylvania	906	813

(continued)

Appendix VI
Number of Nonresidents Brought Into States
Compared With Number of Residents Sent
Out of State, Program Years 1994 and 1993

State ^a	Number of participants who were	
	Brought in from other states	Assigned to out-of-state centers
Puerto Rico	2	12
South Carolina	80	1,332
South Dakota	64	193
Tennessee	524	755
Texas	1,131	1,577
Utah	1,994	165
Virginia	564	1,164
Vermont	172	30
Washington	603	810
Wisconsin	333	269
West Virginia	905	191

^aOnly states with Job Corps centers are included.

Table VI.2: Participants Assigned Out of State Compared With Nonresidents Brought In, Program Year 1993

State ^a	Number of participants who were	
	Brought in from other states	Assigned to out-of-state centers
Alaska	^b	^b
Alabama	234	888
Arkansas	564	628
Arizona	40	248
California	236	994
Colorado	28	501
District of Columbia	506	489
Florida	215	2,075
Georgia	1,694	1,279
Hawaii	3	11
Iowa	150	116
Idaho	138	204
Illinois	683	1,473
Indiana	824	472
Kansas	38	233
Kentucky	4,752	165
Louisiana	165	1,222
Massachusetts	189	185
Maryland	728	1,180

(continued)

Appendix VI
Number of Nonresidents Brought Into States
Compared With Number of Residents Sent
Out of State, Program Years 1994 and 1993

State ^a	Number of participants who were	
	Brought in from other states	Assigned to out-of-state centers
Maine	120	106
Michigan	308	436
Minnesota	61	75
Missouri	337	406
Mississippi	396	959
Montana	469	155
North Carolina	612	1,420
North Dakota	^b	^b
Nebraska	35	117
New Jersey	37	368
New Mexico	423	235
Nevada	456	52
New York	175	371
Ohio	851	987
Oklahoma	1,417	267
Oregon	893	485
Pennsylvania	889	1,133
Puerto Rico	4	7
South Carolina	34	1,294
South Dakota	37	149
Tennessee	416	688
Texas	1,093	1,415
Utah	1,611	137
Virginia	522	1,224
Vermont	122	39
Washington	524	826
Wisconsin	295	291
West Virginia	2,850	169

^aOnly states with Job Corps centers are included.

^bThe centers in Alaska and North Dakota (one in each state) were not fully operational in program year 1993.

Percentage of In-State Participants That Could Be Served by States, Program Years 1994 and 1993

Percentage of In-State Participants That Could Be Served, Program Year 1994

Less Than 30 Percent: South Carolina

30 to 49 Percent: Colorado, Florida, Louisiana

50 to 69 Percent: Alabama, Idaho, Illinois, Nebraska

70 to 89 Percent: Arizona, California, Kansas, Maryland, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington

90+ Percent: Alaska, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Texas, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, Wisconsin

Percentage of In-State Participants That Could Be Served, Program Year 1993

Less Than 30 Percent: None

30 to 49 Percent: Colorado, Louisiana, South Carolina

50 to 69 Percent: Florida, Idaho, Illinois

70 to 89 Percent: Alabama, Arizona, California, Kansas, Maryland, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia

90+ Percent: Arkansas, District of Columbia, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin

Tables Supporting Bar Graphs in Report Text

Table VIII.1: Program Capacity of States—Data for Figure 2

Number of participants that can be served annually	Number of states
100-499	10
500-999	12
1,000-1,499	10
1,500-1,999	6
2,000+	9

Table VIII.2: State Residents Assigned to Out-of-State Centers—Data for Figure 3

Percentage of participants assigned out-of-state	Number of states
0-24	16
25-49	16
50-74	11
75+	4

Table VIII.3: Examples of States With Large Numbers of Residents Sent Out of State and Nonresidents Brought Into State—Data for Figure 4

State	Number of residents sent out of state	Number of nonresidents brought in state
Arkansas	584	580
Georgia	1,311	1,912
Mississippi	805	593
Ohio	962	775
Pennsylvania	813	906
Tennessee	755	524
Texas	1,577	1,131
Washington	810	603

Table VIII.4: Percentage of Center Participants From Out of State—Data for Figure 5

Percentage of participants from out of state	Number of centers
0-24	47
25-49	28
50-75	23
75+	15

Table VIII.5: Number of Participants Obtaining Jobs in State of Residence—Data for Figure 6

Location of Job Corps training	Number of participants obtaining jobs in home state	Number of participants obtaining jobs in another state
Trained in state	21,272	2,500
Trained out of state	13,699	4,504

Appendix VIII
Tables Supporting Bar Graphs in Report
Text

Table VIII.6: States' Capacity to Serve Residents Enrolled in Job Corps Training—Data for Figure 7

Percentage of in state participants that could be served by states	Number of states
<30	1
30-49	3
50-69	4
70-89	12
90+	27

Table VIII.7: States Where Demand Exceeded Program Capacity by at Least 500 Participants—Data for Figure 8

State	Capacity	State residents in program
California	3,477	4,591
Colorado	289	914
Florida	1,630	3,492
Illinois	1,089	2,012
Louisiana	799	1,967
North Carolina	1,776	2,375
South Carolina	442	1,691
Virginia	1,456	1,960

Table VIII.8: States With Twice as Much Capacity in Relation to Number of Residents Enrolled in Job Corps—Data for Figure 9

State	Capacity	State residents in program
Kentucky	6,373	485
Nevada	824	324
Oklahoma	2,487	1,177
Utah	2,378	681
West Virginia	1,124	329

Comments From the Department of Labor

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.

U.S. Department of Labor

Assistant Secretary for
Employment and Training
Washington, D.C. 20210



JUN 3 - 1996

Carlotta C. Joyner
Director, Education and Employment Issues
Health, Education, and Human Services Division
U.S. General Accounting Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Ms. Joyner:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft report, "Job Corps: Where Participants are Recruited, Trained, and Placed in Jobs." The following response addresses the concerns we expressed during our meeting held on May 30, 1996:

Background Page 5

Job Corps' recruitment policies are consistent with legislative language specifically found in the Job Training Partnership Act (public law 102-367), Sec. 426.(c) that states:

"After the Secretary has determined that an enrollee is to be assigned to a Job Corps center, the enrollee shall be assigned to the center which is closest to the enrollee's home, except that the Secretary may waive this requirement for good cause, including to ensure an equitable opportunity for youth from various sections of the Nation to participate in the program, to prevent undue delays in assignment, to adequately meet the educational or other needs of an enrollee, and for efficiency and economy in the operation of the program."

RESPONSE:

It would seem appropriate that the draft document should clearly display this language in the "Results in Brief" section of page 2. It is important that this be highlighted so that readers understand the current direction under which we operate.

Background Page 4 & Page 5

"Administered by Labor through its 10 regional offices....."
"Job Corps' ten regional directors are responsible for...."

RESPONSE:

Job Corps has 9 Regional Offices administered by 9 regional directors. Regions 7 & 8 are combined.

Now on p. 4.

See comment 1.

Now on p. 4.

See comment 2.

-2-

Out-of-State Assignments are Distant Page 11

"On average, participants assigned to out-of-state centers travelled about 390 miles, whereas the closest in-state center was about 90 miles from their residence."

Response:

It is our understanding that the method used to calculate the average miles travelled for out of state trainees was to determine the distance from a students' last assigned out-of-state center to their residence. It appears that no consideration was given to the fact that many students participate in advanced training programs. These National training programs are designed to provide intensive high skilled training. To participate, students in all likelihood will travel significant distance from their original center which may have been in their home state. Not adjusting for this factor will overstate the actual miles travelled.

The draft report uses Florida as an example of a state that has a high number of participants going out of state to receive training. Appendix IV of the report indicates that Job Corps in Florida has the capacity to serve 1,630 youth while the in-state demand is 3,492. This means that to receive Job Corps benefits 1,862 youth must be assigned out-of-state. The "in-state-demand" calculation was apparently comprised only of those youth that enrolled in the Job Corps program. It does not take into account the large number of youth that are Job Corps eligible and have yet to enroll or are on waiting lists.

Participants Employed in State of Residence Page 13

"Of the approximately 42,000 Job Corps participants who obtained jobs after leaving the program in 1994, about 83 percent obtained jobs in their state of residence (85 percent in program year 1993). Even those participants who were assigned to Job Corps centers outside their state of residence generally returned to their home states for employment."

RESPONSE:

This is considered clear evidence that the vast majority of youth trained outside their state of residence ultimately contribute to the workforce in their home state. Most Job Corps enrollees on entrance have never had a full time job and have other multiple barriers to employment. Participating in Job Corps training, then returning to their residence as a worker is a positive outcome. This fact seems understated in the draft report.

-3-

Now on p. 11.

Proportion of Nonresidents Varies Among Centers Page 13

"and the 9 centers with the most nonresidents were located in.....California....."

See comment 6.

RESPONSE:

The program referred to in California is the Treasure Island advanced culinary arts center. It is, as are other advanced training programs, designed to receive youth from centers throughout the Nation for intensive high skilled training. Advanced programs are not representative of the basic program enrollment and should not be included in the in-state\out of state calculations. It is recommended that at a minimum this be clarified in the final report.

Now on pp. 13-15.

Reasons For Assigning Participants Out-Of-State Page 14 & Page 16

Discussion on these two pages refer to student center assignments and infer that satisfying participant preferences is a major factor for determining the center a student is sent to.

See comment 7.

RESPONSE:

As previously discussed, center assignments are made after consideration of numerous factors that include:

- Slot Availability
- Vocational Preference
- Vocational Availability Including Waiting Lists at Centers
- Cost Efficiency of Filling Centers
- Need for ESL Programs
- Handicaps
- Special Educational Needs
- Family Needs
- Residential/Non-Residential
- Need for re-location due to environmental factors
- Transportation limitations, reduced bus routes and fluctuating air costs

As stated in the draft report the Job Corps does operate as an open entry program. When a potential participant declares an interest in enrollment it is our responsibility to assist them in making a well informed decision. Experience has taught us that Job Corps eligible youth typically have needs that must be met quickly if we are to assist them. Experienced Job Corps recruitment counselors have to determine not only the above assignment factors but the appropriate center size and setting. These important factors were understated in the draft report.

-4-

Now on p. 15.

Reasons for Assigning Participants Out-Of-State Page 16

"We were, however, unable to determine whether a training slot in the requested vocational area was available at the closest center when participants were assigned out of state."

RESPONSE:

The discussion of the reviewers' inability to determine vocational availability at the closest center when participants are assigned out of state would be better placed in the "Results in Brief" section, since it provides context for much of the information presented.

Vocational training availability has always been a major factor in determining center assignment. It is not uncommon for popular training programs to have significant waiting lists. This also applies to programs that have a limited number of training slots. Without this information it is not possible to accurately determine a participant's motivation for center selection or a recruitment counselors reason for referral. Typically the most common programs are the most popular and require waiting periods.

See comment 8.

Now on p. 15.

Recent Emphasis on In-State Assignment Page 18

"Similarly, other regional officials told us that they are now placing greater emphasis on in-state assignment of youth because of increased congressional interest."

RESPONSE:

Job Corps is playing a proactive role in ensuring that the National Job Corps program works more closely with state and local employment, education and training programs. The proposed Work Force Development Act requires increased involvement with state programs. Regions have been instructed to consider local and state participation when conducting new center procurements and increased linkages with programs designed to serve youth similar to the Job Corps population.

See comment 9.

Now on p. 19.

Planned Expansion Will Increase Capacity in Some States Page 21

"The Job Corps program's plan to establish nine new centers over the next two years will provide some additional capacity that is needed in states with existing centers, but will increase capacity in three other states to about twice the in-state demand."

-5-

RESPONSE:

The method for determining "in-state-demand" is somewhat misleading. The draft report indicates that state demands were measured in terms of the number of residents who participated in Job Corps regardless of whether they attended a center within their state of residence or out of state. While this approach will identify the number of youth enrolled in Job Corps it is in no way an indicator of actual demand or need. National census data indicates that less than 1.2% of the Job Corps eligible population are currently being serviced by Job Corps.

We appreciate your efforts in preparing this report. If you have any questions, please contact Mary Silva, National Director of Job Corps on 219-8550.

Sincerely,



Timothy M. Barnicle

See comment 4.

The following are GAO's comments on the Department of Labor's letter dated June 3, 1996.

GAO Comments

1. The legislative language relating to the assignment of enrollees to Job Corps centers is included in the Background section of the report.
2. We have modified our report to note that the Job Corps regional operations are carried out under the direction of nine regional managers.
3. We agree that participants transferring into advanced training may be required to travel additional miles to attend this training. To respond to Labor's comments, we attempted to identify all the participants included in our analysis who transferred into advanced training courses. We were able to identify all participants who transferred from the original center to which they were assigned, regardless of the reason for transfer, but the information was not available to identify those specifically transferring to advanced training programs. Nonetheless, eliminating from our analysis the over 1,800 participants who transferred between centers did not change our findings. The average distance traveled by participants assigned to out-of-state centers was 375 miles, compared with about 390 miles when including the over 1,800; the distance to the nearest in-state center remained the same—93 miles. Thus, our finding—that participants assigned to centers outside their state of residence were sent to centers that were, on average, over 4 times as far as the closest in-state center—is unchanged.
4. We have modified our report, where appropriate, to indicate that our use of the term "demand" is limited to only those enrolling in Job Corps and that it does not include those who are eligible and interested in the program but have not yet enrolled.
5. Our report provides a separate section with a caption that highlights that program participants are employed in their state of residence.
6. We have clarified our report to recognize that the high number of nonresidents in the California center cited may have been due to the nature of the training offered, that is, the center provided advanced training to participants from across the nation.
7. The reasons for assigning participants to out-of-state centers cited in our report are based on comments by those involved in deciding where

enrollees are actually assigned—the nine regional directors and several outreach/screening contractors. The principal reasons cited were to fully use available space at the centers and to satisfy participants' preferences either to attend a specific center or to enroll in a specific occupational training course.

8. As suggested, we have included a statement in the Results in Brief section that recognizes our inability to determine whether specific vocational training slots were available at the closest center when participants were enrolled.

9. We have included a statement on page 4 of our report to recognize Job Corps' proactive role in ensuring that the program works more closely with state and local agencies.

Appendix IX
Comments From the Department of Labor

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Related GAO Products

Job Corps: Comparison of Federal Program With State Youth Training Initiatives (GAO/HEHS-96-92, Mar. 28, 1996).

Job Corps Program (GAO/HEHS-96-61R, Nov. 9, 1995).

Job Corps: High Costs and Mixed Results Raise Questions About Program's Effectiveness (GAO/HEHS-95-180, June 30, 1995).

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