

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 Washington	Colorado Idaho New Mexico	California Connecticut New York	Maryland Ohio 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 rolls 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 examin-

ing 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

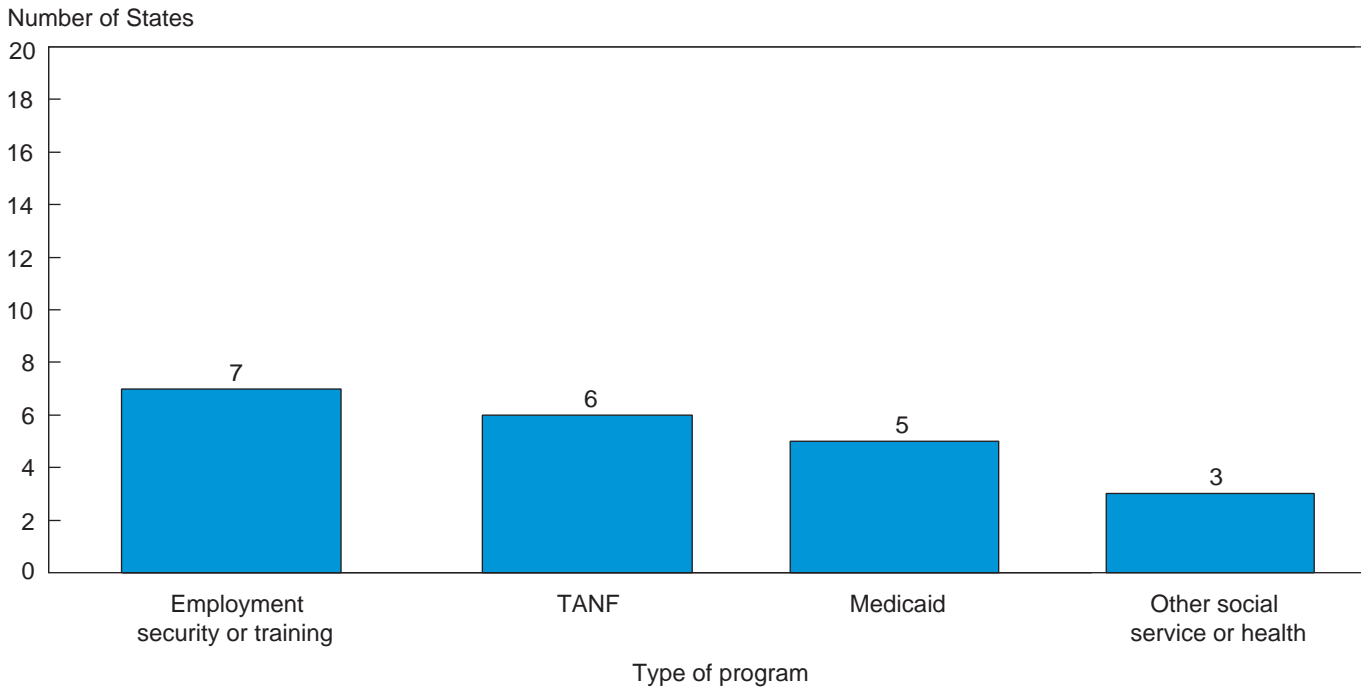
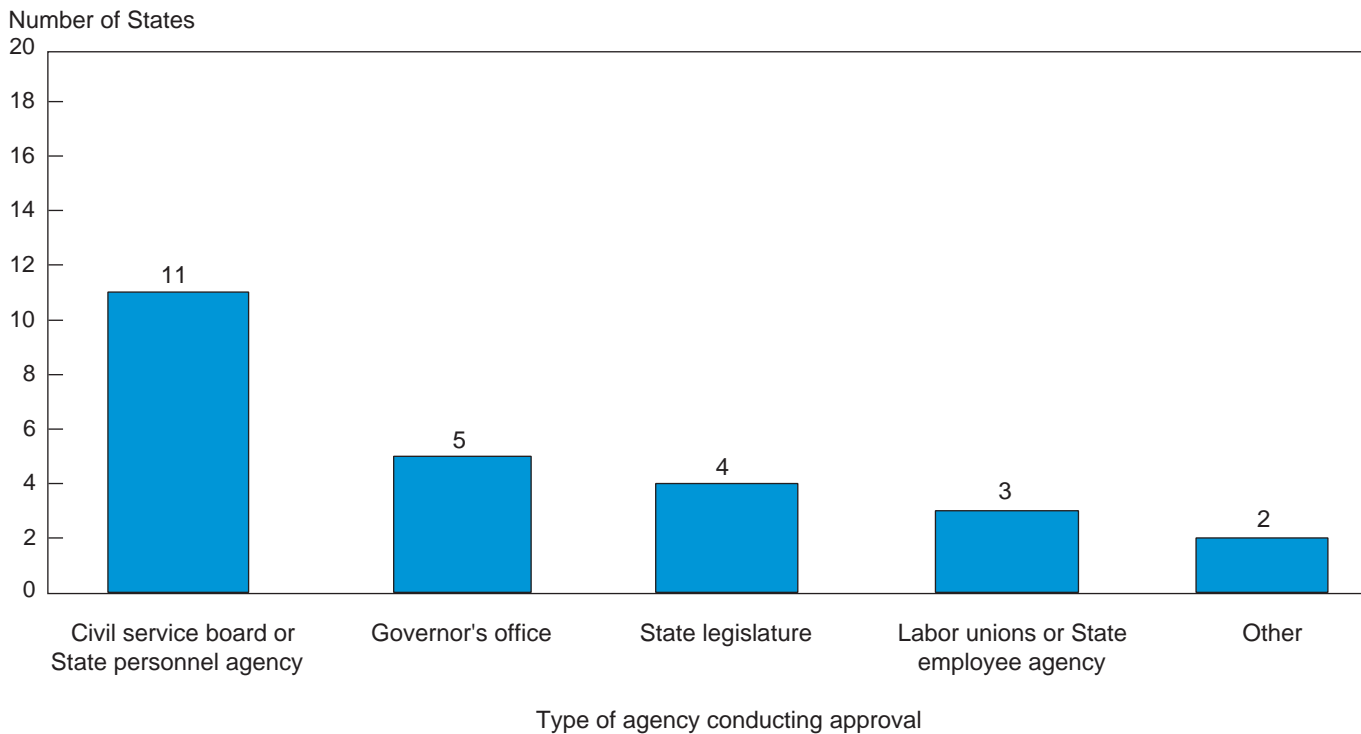


Figure 15

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-suffi-

ciency. 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

Number of States

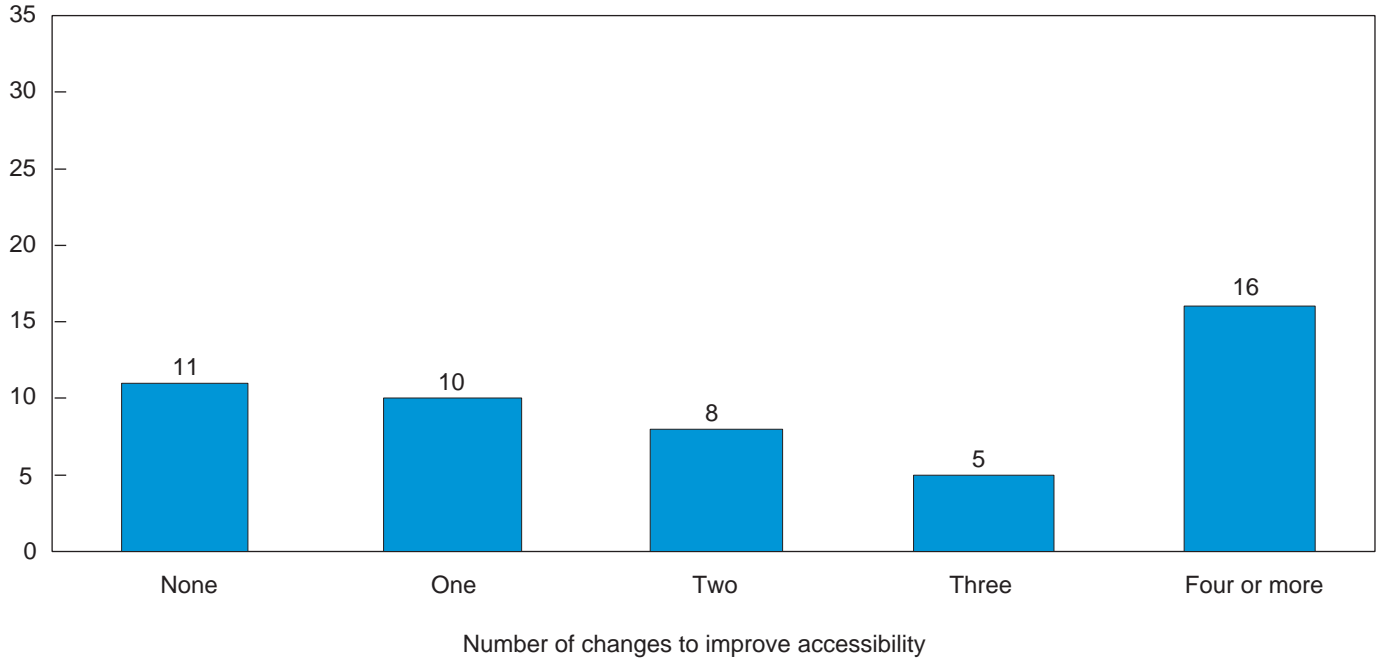
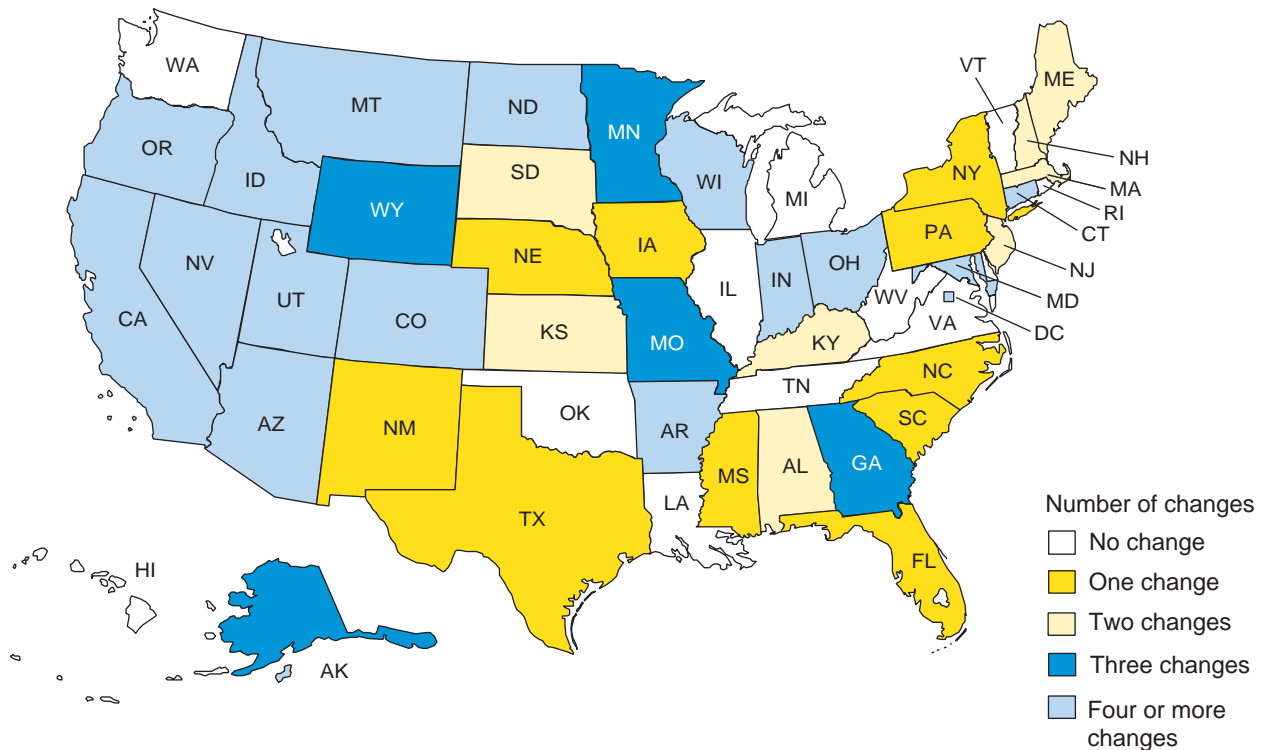


Figure 17

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

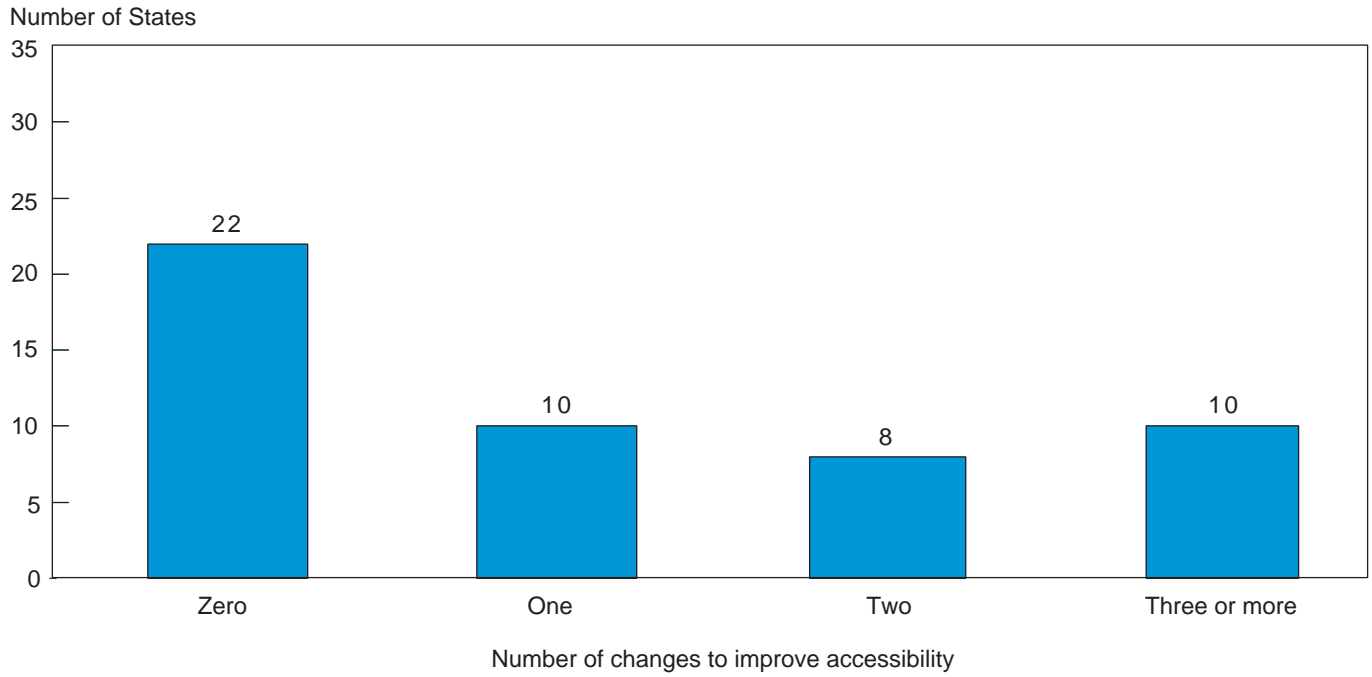
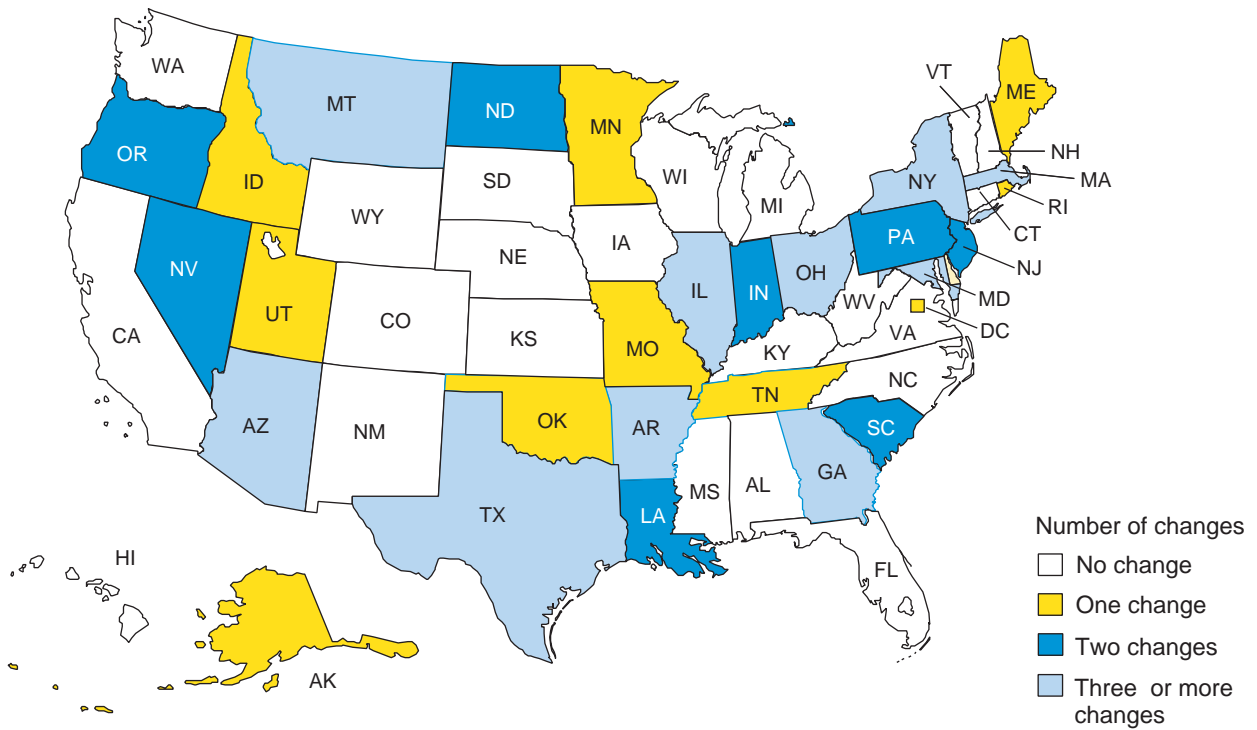


Figure 19

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.

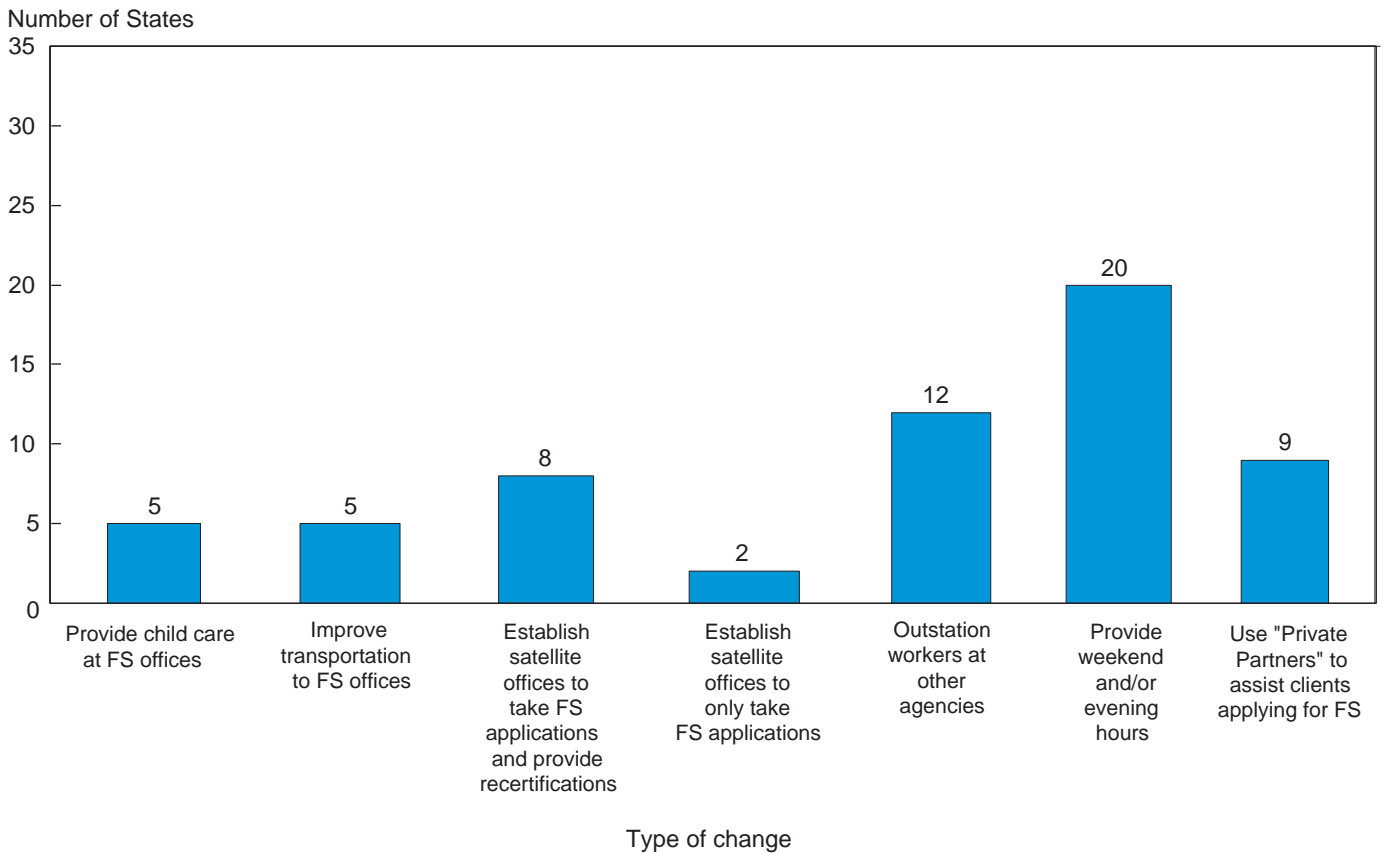
As can be seen, the most frequent change was extending the hours of operation of local offices by adding or expanding weekend and evening hours to allow clients more convenient times to apply for food stamp benefits. Nine States involved private partners in their efforts to increase accessibility to 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 Arizona District of Columbia Georgia Idaho Indiana Kentucky Maine Nebraska New York Oregon Utah Wyoming	Alaska California Colorado Maryland Montana Nevada North Dakota

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

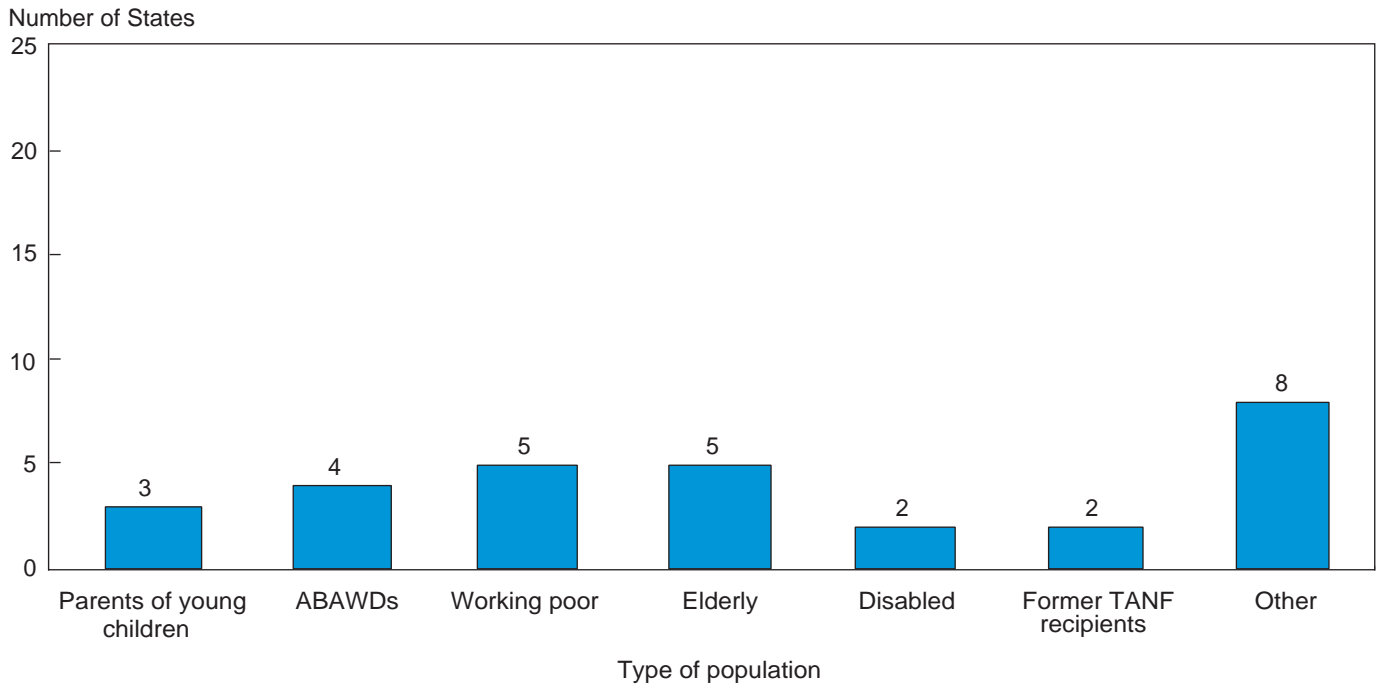


Figure 22

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

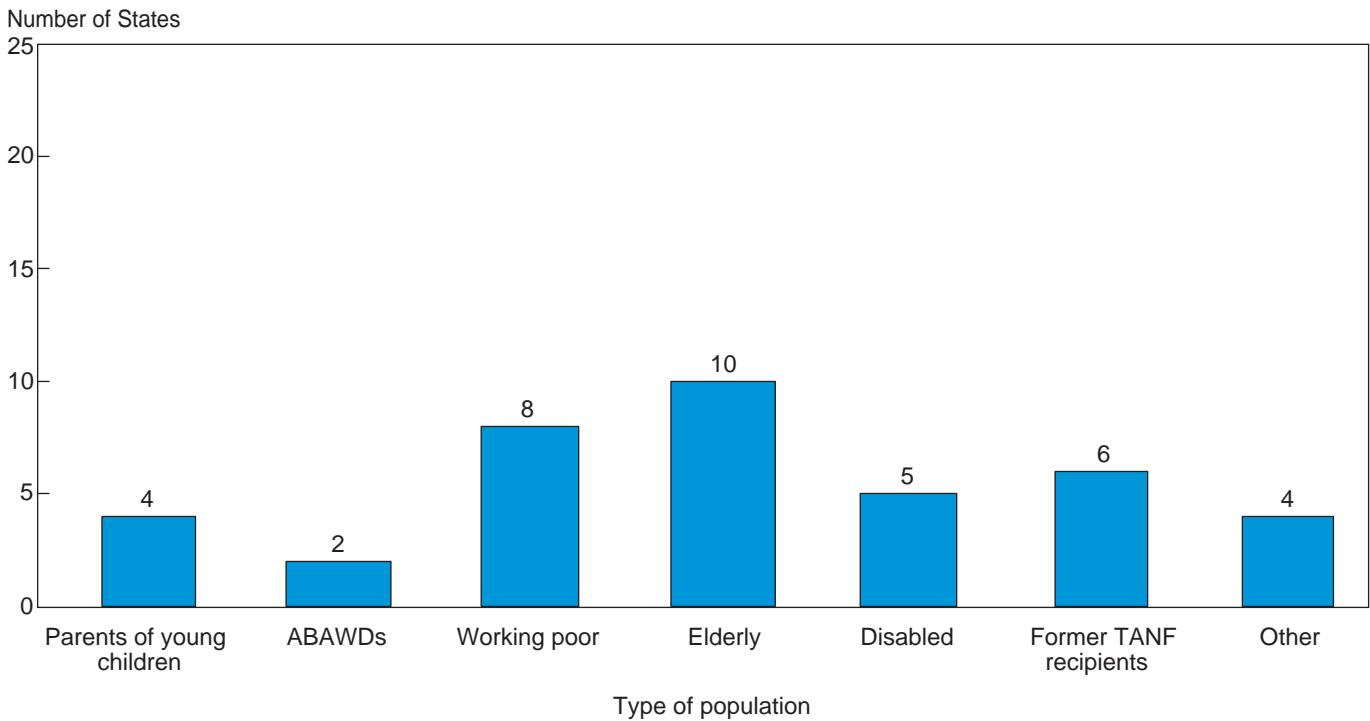


Table 3—States making changes to improve accessibility based on differing needs for urban and rural areas by type of change

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

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

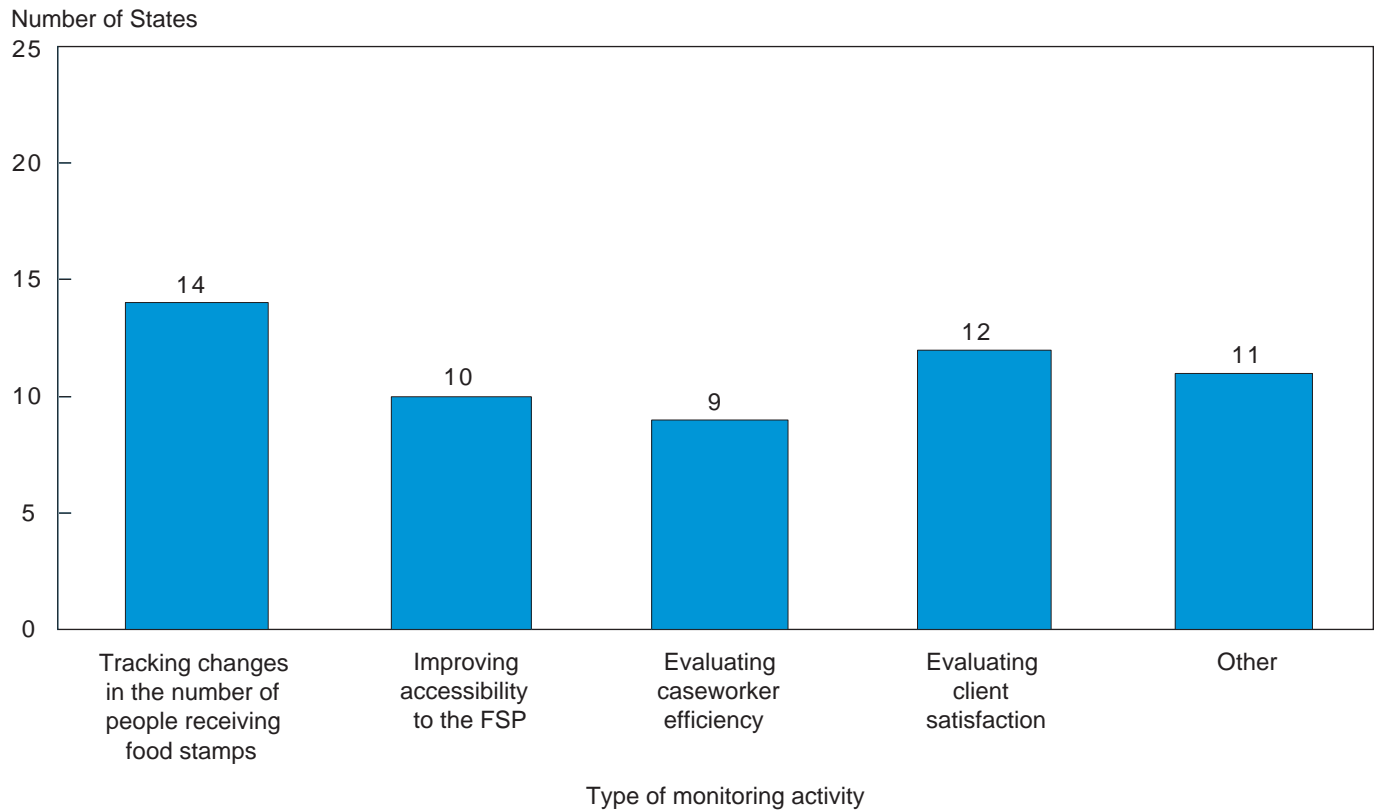


Table 4—States reporting program monitoring activities by type of activity

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			

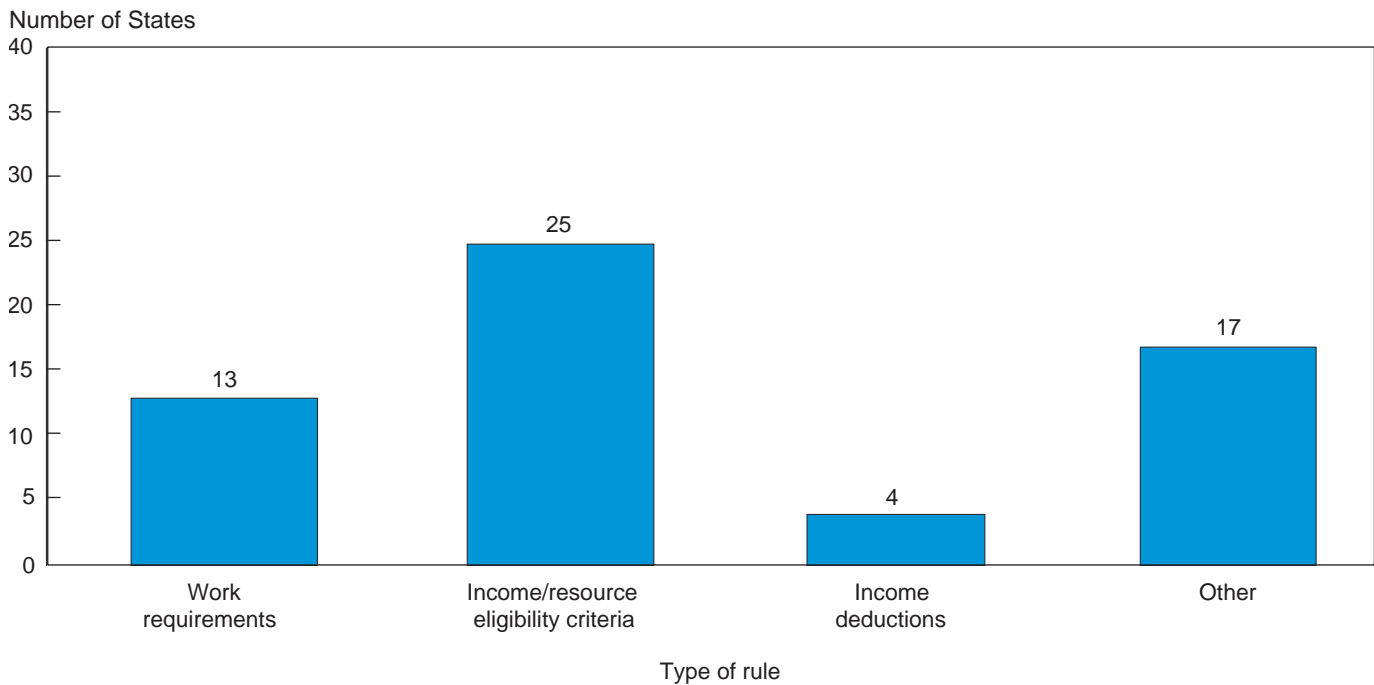
to better coordinate caseworker activities at the local level, and to increase case management activities that promote client self-sufficiency.

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.