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Highlights

Highlights of GAO-07-1096, a report to the Chairman, Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In 1998, Congress passed the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), requiring states and localities to bring together employment and training programs into a single workforce system, the one-stop system. States have flexibility in how they provide these services—colocated within the one-stop—through electronic linkage or referral. WIA did not provide funds to pay for the infrastructure costs, but programs must share the costs of operating one-stop centers. As Congress considers reauthorization of WIA, GAO assessed (1) the current composition of states' one-stop systems and how this has changed, (2) what funds are primarily used to support states' one-stop system infrastructure and how this has changed, and (3) the extent to which states are monitoring customer satisfaction. Our work was primarily based on a 50-state survey of state workforce officials, updating work we previously did in 2000 and 2001.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that Labor step up action to ensure that all stand-alone offices be affiliated with the one-stop system. In its comments, Labor stated that the report would be useful, but disagreed with the findings and recommendation regarding stand-alone offices, asserting that all Employment Service offices are in compliance. Our results are based on verified survey data; we stand by our findings and recommendation.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-1096.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Cynthia M. Fagnoni at (202) 512-7215 or fagnonic@gao.gov.

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WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT

One-Stop System Infrastructure Continues to Evolve, but Labor Should Take Action to Require That All Employment Service Offices Are Part of the System

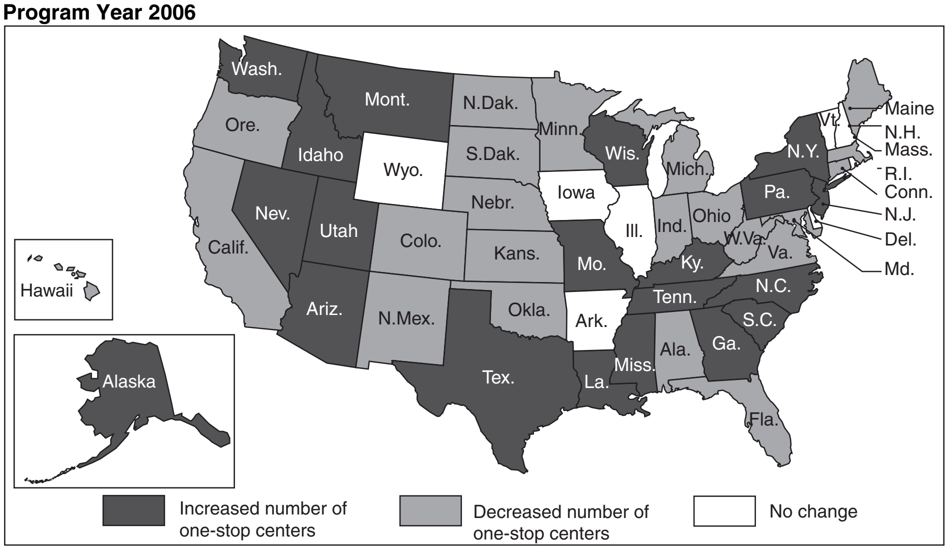
What GAO Found

Over the last 4 years, 19 states reported a decrease in one-stop centers, often citing a decrease in funds as one of the primary reasons. At the same time, 10 states reported an increase, citing an increase in demand for services and an increase in on-site programs. In our 2007 survey, states reported that 13 of the 16 mandatory programs were available at the majority of one-stop centers. States reported they were providing Wagner-Peyser-funded Employment Service on-site at one-stop centers, but some states also provided services through stand-alone Employment Service offices—facilities that focus primarily on job search and placement assistance. While states are required to maintain these offices within the one-stop delivery system, 9 states reported operating at least one stand-alone office unaffiliated with the one-stop system. While Labor has taken steps to encourage states to provide all employment services through the one-stop system, states have made only modest progress in bringing these systems together.

WIA and Employment Service were the largest funding sources for states to support the infrastructure—the nonpersonnel costs—of their one-stop centers. Of the two programs, states reported that a greater percentage of Employment Service funds than WIA funds were used for infrastructure costs. States also reported less reliance on other programs to support the infrastructure costs than in the past.

Nearly all states reported that they submitted customer satisfaction data to Labor for program year 2005. In addition, 12 states reported that they have established additional customer satisfaction measures beyond those required by Labor.

Changes in Comprehensive One-Stop Centers for States between Program Year 2001 and Program Year 2006



Source: GAO surveys of states in 2001 and 2007.