



Highlights of [GAO-09-470](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Established in 1964, Job Corps is the nation's largest residential, educational, and career training program for economically disadvantaged youths. Administered by the Department of Labor (Labor), Job Corps received about \$1.6 billion in program year 2007 and served about 60,000 students. Some have expressed concern that Job Corps centers are not meeting planned enrollment goals, particularly for women. To address these concerns, GAO reviewed the (1) extent to which Job Corps centers are operating at or near capacity for residential students; (2) major factors that affect the recruitment and retention of residential students, particularly females; and (3) steps, if any, Labor has taken to address the recruitment and retention of residential students. To address these objectives, GAO analyzed Labor's enrollment data, surveyed Job Corps recruiters and center directors, and visited seven Job Corps centers.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Labor review career training nationwide, take steps to ensure that potential students are provided with complete and accurate information, and explore the feasibility of having virtual tours for each center. Labor generally agreed with the recommendations and noted efforts it has under way. However, GAO believes Labor's efforts do not fully address the recommendations and stress the need for additional action.

View [GAO-09-470](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact Kay E. Brown at (202) 512-7215 or brownke@gao.gov.

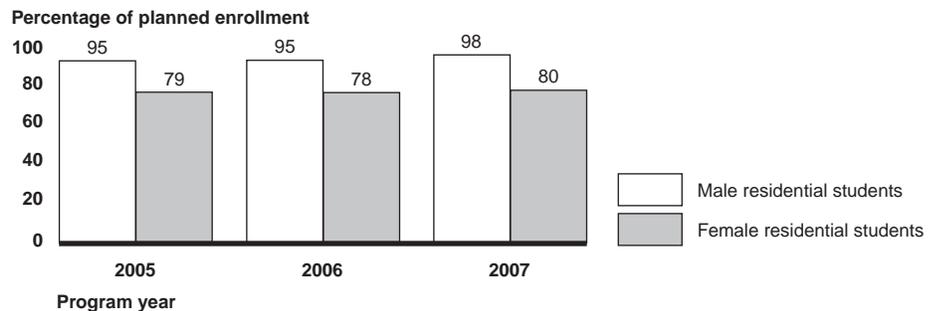
JOB CORPS

Better Targeted Career Training and Improved Preenrollment Information Could Enhance Female Residential Student Recruitment and Retention

What GAO Found

Overall, the Job Corps program has been operating at or near capacity for male residential students, but under capacity for female residential students during program years 2005 through 2007. During each of those years, Job Corps achieved between 95 and 98 percent of the planned enrollment for male residential students nationwide, but about 80 percent or less for female residential students (see below). In fact, about one-half of the centers that enrolled female residential students in program year 2007 were below 80 percent of their planned enrollment for that group.

Percentage of Planned Enrollment for Male and Female Residential Students, Program Years 2005 through 2007



Source: Department of Labor data.

Three key factors affect Job Corps' ability to recruit and retain residential students, particularly female residential students—availability of career training options, complete and accurate preenrollment information, and quality of center life. The selection and availability of career training offerings in occupations of interest to students play a major role in Job Corps' ability to recruit students, particularly female residential students, according to officials that we surveyed. A key factor affecting both recruitment and retention is ensuring that students have accurate preenrollment information about Job Corps. Officials noted that having realistic expectations of life at a center is especially important for female students. Finally, center officials said that the quality of life at the centers, including the living conditions and the sense of safety, affects students' willingness to stay in the program.

Labor has begun making improvements in career training offerings, preenrollment information, and quality of center life in an effort to address issues related to the recruitment and retention of residential students. While Labor has gradually made more training opportunities available that are likely to appeal to female students, these are typically at a center's request and not part of an overall strategy. In addition, Labor has taken some steps to ensure that students receive detailed preenrollment information, but has not yet expanded these efforts nationally. Finally, Labor has several efforts under way to improve the quality of center life for students, including ensuring a drug-free environment and providing child care facilities for single parents.