

April 2003

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT

Issues Related to Allocation Formulas for Youth, Adults, and Dislocated Workers



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	Abbreviations ASU Area of Substantial Unemployment	

- JTPA Job Training Partnership Act of 1982
- WIA Workforce Investment Act

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United States General Accounting Office Washington, DC 20548

April 25, 2003

The Honorable Judd Gregg Chairman The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy Ranking Minority Member Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions United States Senate

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 required states to streamline employment and training services and established three separate funding streams for serving youth, adults, and dislocated workers, for which about \$3.3 billion was appropriated for fiscal year 2003. The formulas for distributing these funds to the states were left largely unchanged from those used to distribute funds under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) of 1982, which served a different set of target populations. In anticipation of the upcoming debates on WIA's reauthorization, you asked us to review these formulas in the context of current program goals. Specifically, you asked us to assess the formulas used to distribute funds to the states, identifying any mismatches that might exist between the formulas and WIA's program goals and populations served and identifying where the formulas are most vulnerable to wide fluctuations in funding levels from year to year.

To identify issues associated with the current formulas, we: (1) summarized relevant provisions of the WIA statute and compared formula factors with target populations for each program, (2) analyzed the U.S. Department of Labor's formula calculations and states' historical allocations to identify factors that contribute to fluctuations in yearly funding levels, and (3) interviewed key experts and program stakeholders and reviewed relevant literature on federal workforce training policy and federal funding formulas. We conducted our work from December 2002 to February 2003 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

On February 28, 2003, we briefed your offices on the results of our work. This report conveys the information provided during that briefing.

We identified issues associated with the current formulas in three areas: misalignment between some of the formula factors used to allocate funds and the target populations for these programs, time lags in the data used to determine these allocations, and excessive funding volatility associated with the Dislocated Worker Program unrelated to fluctuations in the target populations. As a result, states' funding levels may not always be consistent with their underlying need for services.

The first issue we identified is that some of the factors used in the formulas to allocate funds are not clearly aligned with the programs' modified target populations. This may limit the ability to achieve a key goal of federal allocation formulas, which is to distribute program funds to areas based on their relative shares of people eligible to receive services. Specifically, the Youth program now serves a more specific group of lowincome youth with certain barriers to employment.¹ However, two-thirds of its funds are distributed based on two factors that measure general unemployment rather than youth unemployment.² The remaining third is distributed according to the number of low-income youth in states, but even this factor does not measure low-income youth who face barriers to employment. The target population and formula for the WIA Adult program also are misaligned. The Adult program under WIA is targeted to a broader population than was targeted under JTPA—WIA is open to all adults regardless of income for basic services, while low-income adults and public assistance recipients have priority for training and other more intensive services. However, the WIA Adult allocation formula is more narrowly focused on states' relative shares of excess unemployment, unemployment in Areas of Substantial Unemployment (ASUs), and lowincome adults. Finally, the Dislocated Worker Program is targeted to several specific categories of individuals, including those eligible for unemployment insurance and workers affected by mass layoffs. The factors used to distribute Dislocated Worker funds are not, however, specifically related to these populations. Two-thirds of program funds are distributed according to factors that measure general unemployment.³ One-third is distributed according to the number of long-term unemployed, a group that is no longer automatically eligible for the program.

¹Barriers to employment include being a school dropout; deficient in basic literacy skills; homeless, runaway, or in foster care; pregnant or a parent; an offender; or requiring help completing an educational program or securing and holding a job. Up to 5 percent of youth may be non low-income if they have barriers to school completion or employment.

²These two factors are unemployment in ASUs (contiguous areas with populations of 10,000 or more and unemployment greater than 6.5 percent) and excess unemployment (unemployment greater than 4.5 percent either statewide or in ASUs).

³These two factors are total unemployment and excess unemployment.

The second issue is that there are time lags between when the data are collected and when the allocations are available to states, so that the allocations may not reflect current labor market conditions. The oldest data are those used in the Youth and Adult program formulas to measure the relative numbers of low-income individuals in the states. The decennial Census is the source for these data, and allocations under this factor through 2002⁴ are based on data from the 1990 Census.⁵ The data used to measure two of three factors for both the Youth and Adult programs are more recent, but are still as much as 12 months out of date.⁶ The time lags for the data used to calculate Dislocated Worker allocations range from 9 months to 18 months. To the extent that they are available, more current data may reflect more accurately the nationwide shifts in unemployment and poverty that may affect states' workloads for these programs.

The third issue we identified is excessive volatility in funding for the Dislocated Worker Program.⁷ That funding was significantly more volatile—as much as 3 times more so—than funding for either the Youth or Adult program. Some states have reported that this volatility makes program planning difficult. While some degree of change in funding is to be expected due to changing dislocations in the workforce, changes in funding do not necessarily correspond to these changes. For example, changes in the numbers of workers affected by mass layoffs from year to year—one measure of dislocation activity—ran counter to changes in Dislocated Worker allocations in several states we examined. Several aspects of the Dislocated Worker formula contribute to funding volatility and to the seeming lack of consistency between dislocation and funding. The excess unemployment factor has a "threshold" effect—states may or may not qualify for the one-third of funds allocated under this factor in a given year, based on whether or not they meet the threshold condition of

⁵Data collected for the 1990 Census reflect income levels in calendar year 1989.

⁶These factors are excess unemployment and unemployment in ASUs.

⁷We initially identified this problem in an earlier report: U.S. General Accounting Office, *Workforce Investment Act: Better Guidance and Revised Funding Formula Would Enhance Dislocated Worker Program*, GAO-02-274 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 11, 2002).

⁴Data from the 2000 Census will be used to calculate this factor for the 2003 program year. However, under current procedures, these data will not be updated for successive program years until the 2010 Census data become available.

having at least 4.5 percent unemployment statewide.⁸ As a result, small changes in unemployment can cause large changes in funding, and when the economy is strong and few states have unemployment over 4.5 percent, the states that do qualify for this pot of funds may experience large funding increases even if their unemployment falls. In addition, the Dislocated Worker formula is not subject to the additional statutory provisions that mitigate volatility in Youth and Adult program funding. These provisions include "hold harmless" and "stop gain" constraints that limit changes in funding to within 90 and 130 percent of each state's prior year allocation and also "small state minimums" that ensure that each state receives at least 0.25 percent of the total national allocation. While these provisions that may not as closely track changes in the program target populations.⁹

Developing alternative funding formulas to address the issues we have identified is an important but challenging task. This task is complicated by the need to strike an appropriate balance among various objectives, such as using formula factors that are best aligned with program target populations and reducing time lags in data sources, while also using available data sources to measure these factors as accurately as possible. In addition, there have been proposals for reauthorizing WIA that would substantially modify the program target populations and funding streams, which in turn would have consequences for revising the funding formulas.

We provided a draft of this report to the Department of Labor for technical review and made changes as appropriate.

We are sending copies of the report to the Secretary of Labor and other interested parties. We will also make copies available to others upon

⁸In contrast, the threshold condition for excess unemployment in the Youth and Adult programs can be met either by having at least 4.5 percent unemployment statewide or 4.5 percent unemployment in one or more ASUs. However, the use of ASU unemployment levels has been criticized by experts as introducing an element of inconsistency in the formulas for the Youth and Adult programs arising from states' ability to draw their own ASU boundaries.

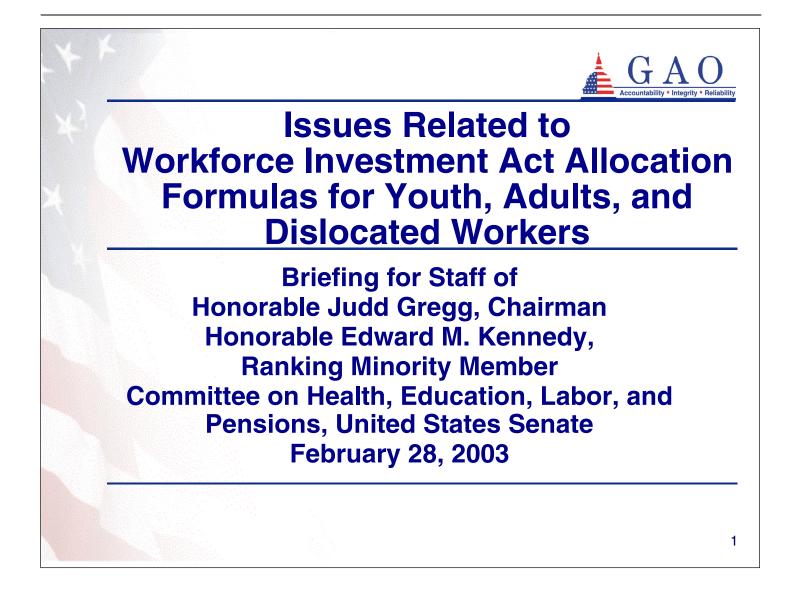
⁹These additional provisions have a significant effect on states' final allocations for the Youth and Adult programs, compared to what states would have received in the absence of these provisions. In 2002, these provisions resulted in allocation adjustments for the Youth program ranging from an 18-percent reduction to a 379-percent increase; for the Adult program, adjustments ranged from a 15-percent reduction to a 255-percent increase.

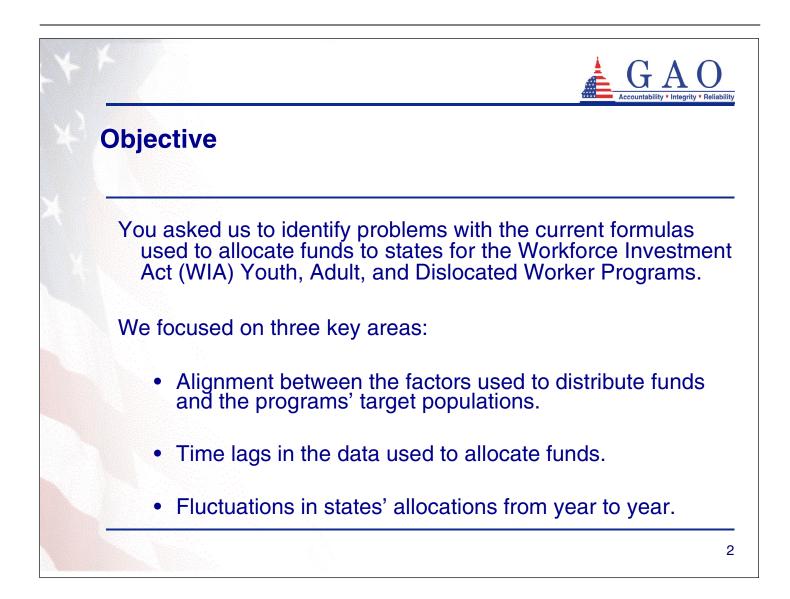
request. The report is also available at no charge on GAO's Web site at www.gao.gov. If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me or Andrew Sherrill at (202) 512-7215. Regina Santucci and Lorin Obler also made key contributions to this report.

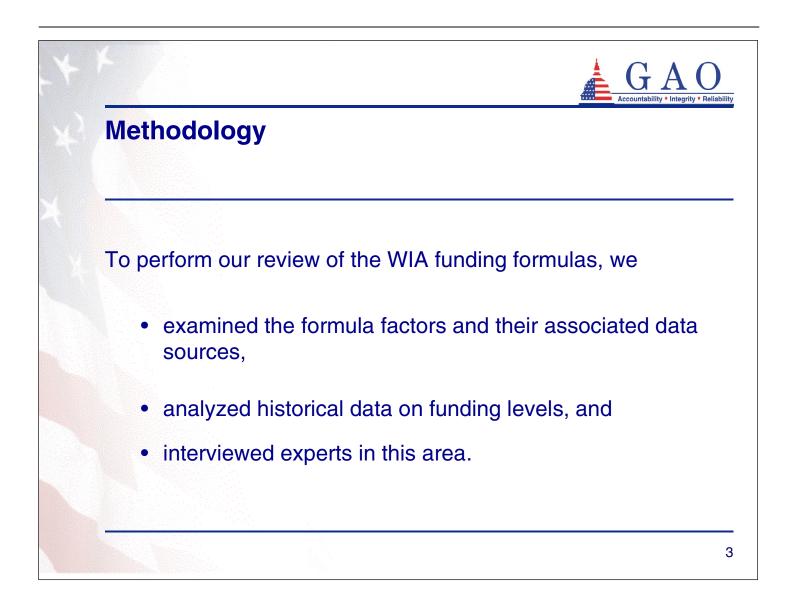
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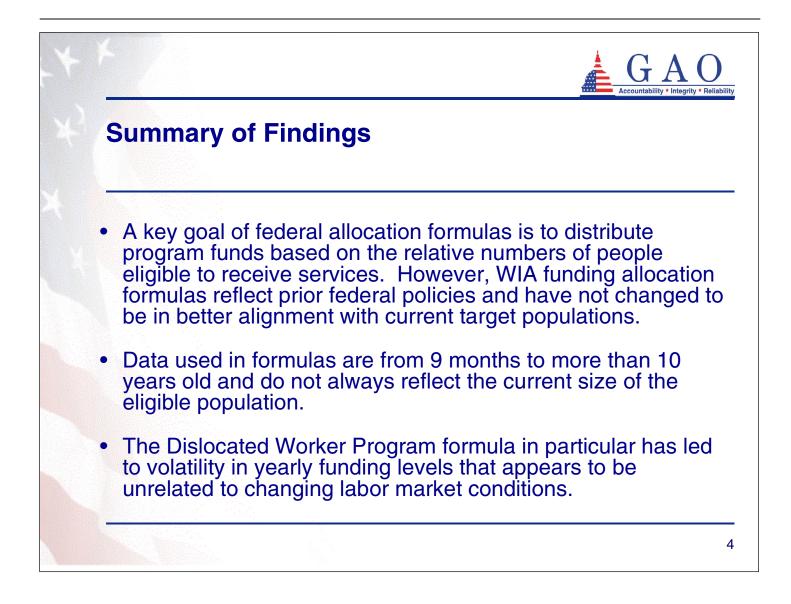
Sigurd R. Nilsen, Director Education, Workforce, and Income Security Issues

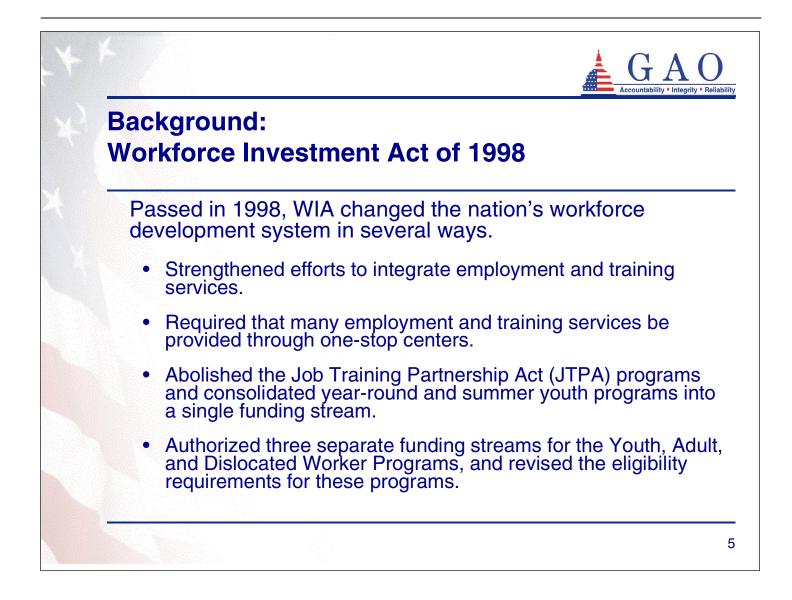
Appendix I: Workforce Investment Act Allocation Formulas



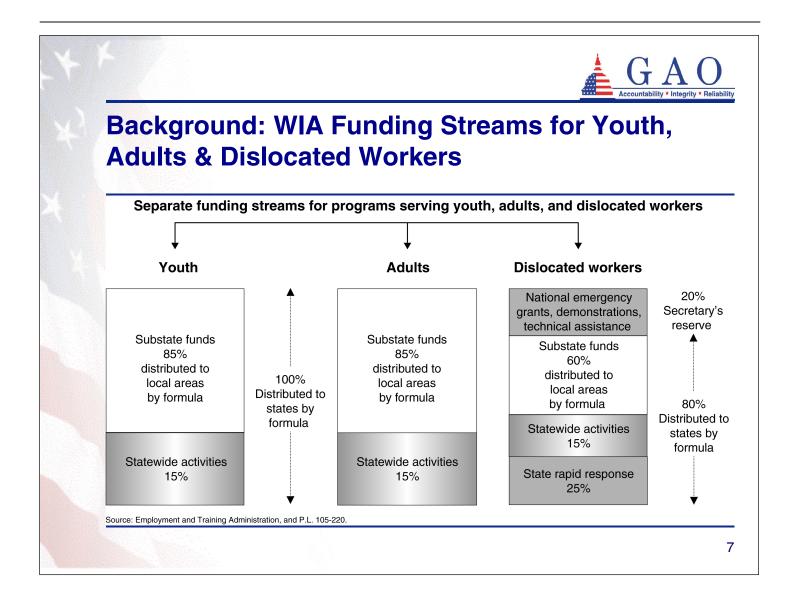


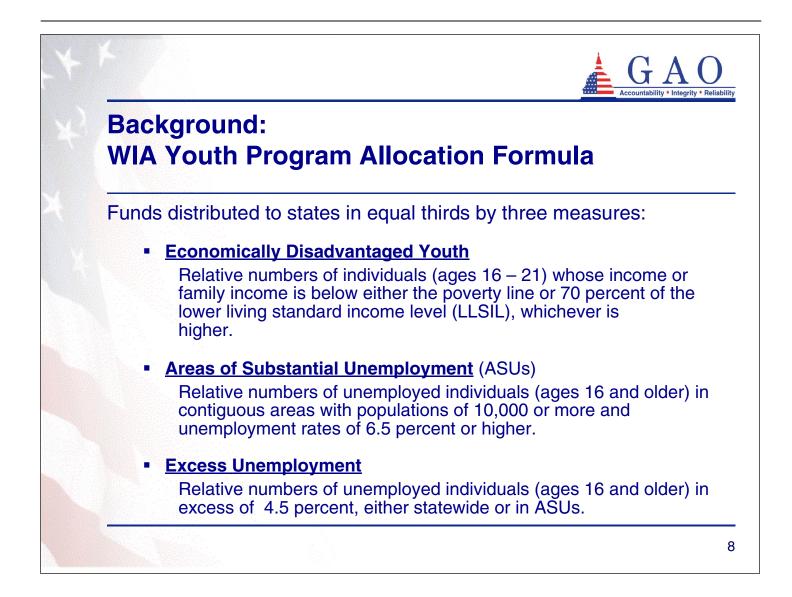


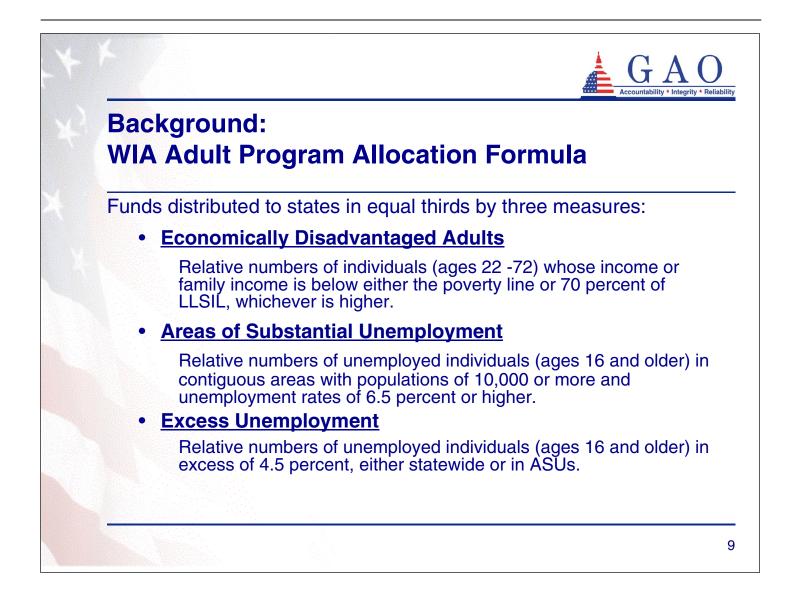


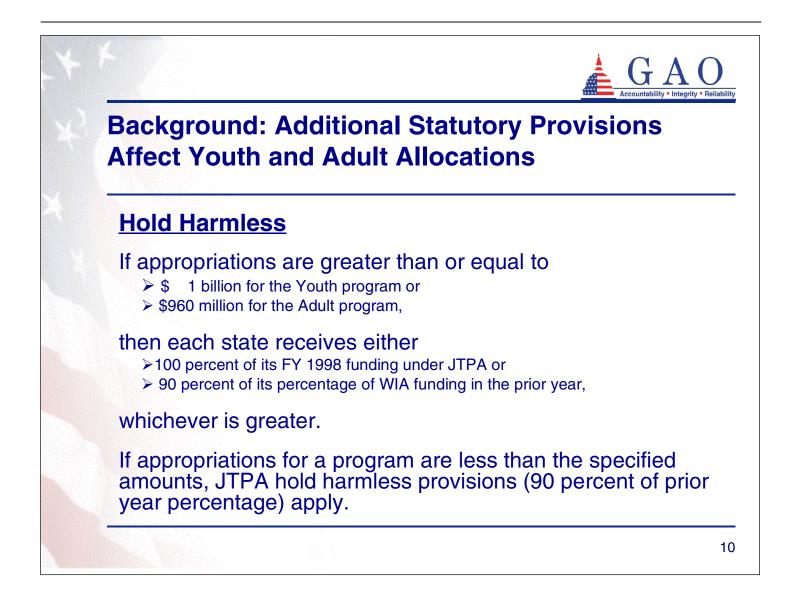


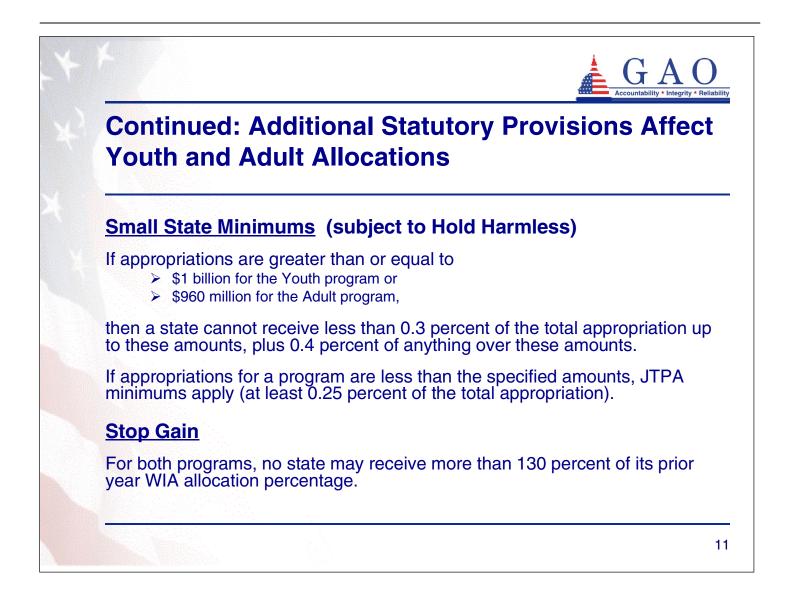
Background Funds Appro		r WIA		
Category	FY 2000 ^a	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2
Youth	\$1.3 billion	\$1.4 billion	\$ 1.4 billion	\$1.0 bi
Adult	950 million	950 million	950 million	899 mi
Dislocated Worker	1.6 billion	1.4 billion	1.5 billion	1.4 b
Total ^a First year of full WIA implem completed by July 1, 2000, th			\$3.9 billion , 1999, and was to hav	
^a First year of full WIA implem	nentation. Transition from ne effective date for the re	JTPA began on July 1 epeal of JTPA.	, 1999, and was to hav	

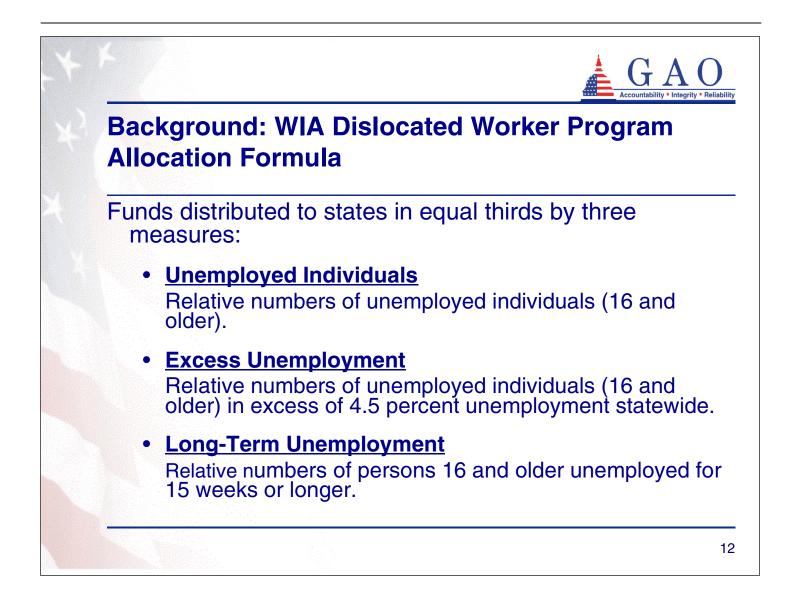


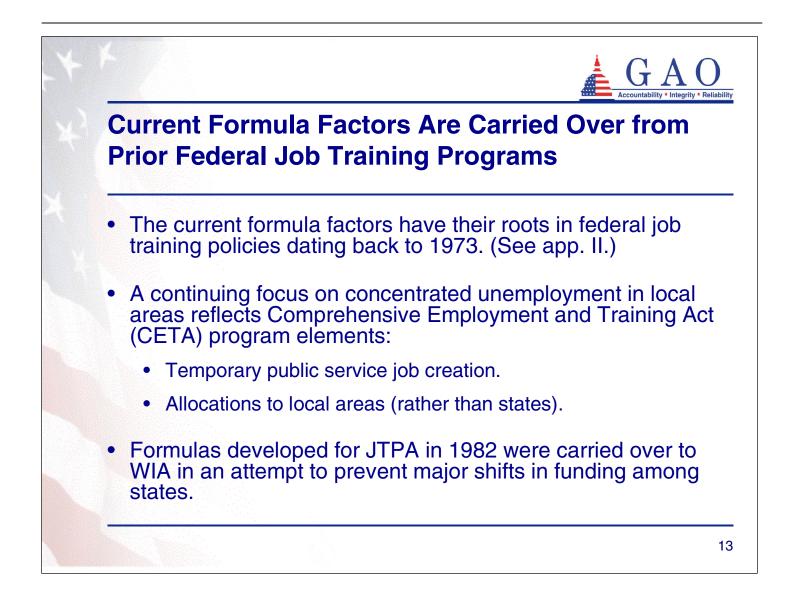


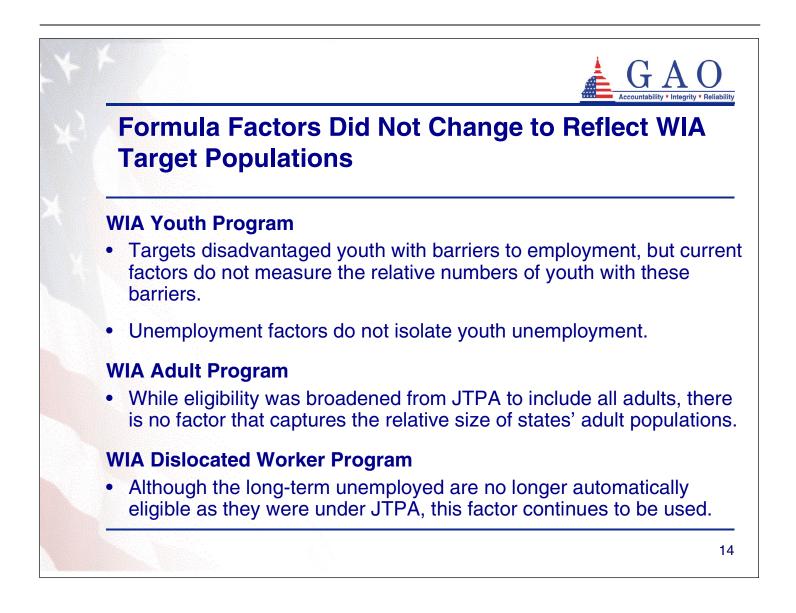




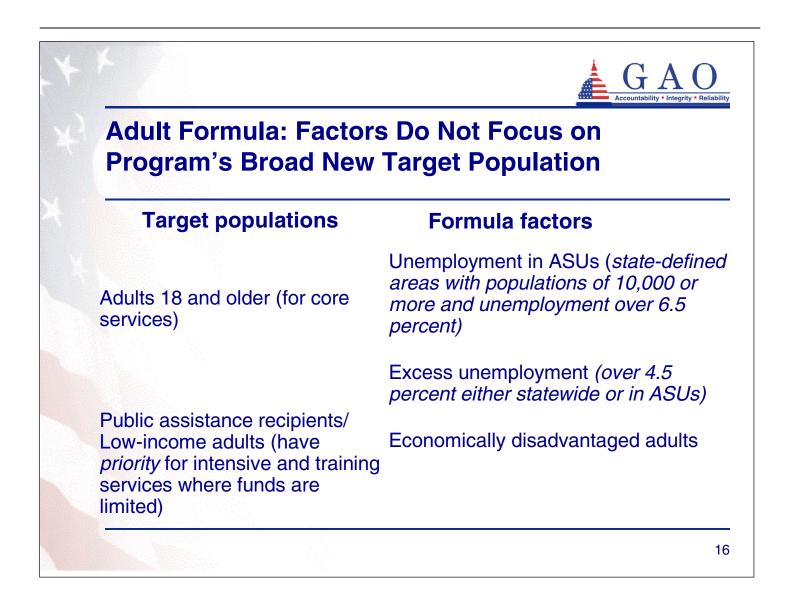


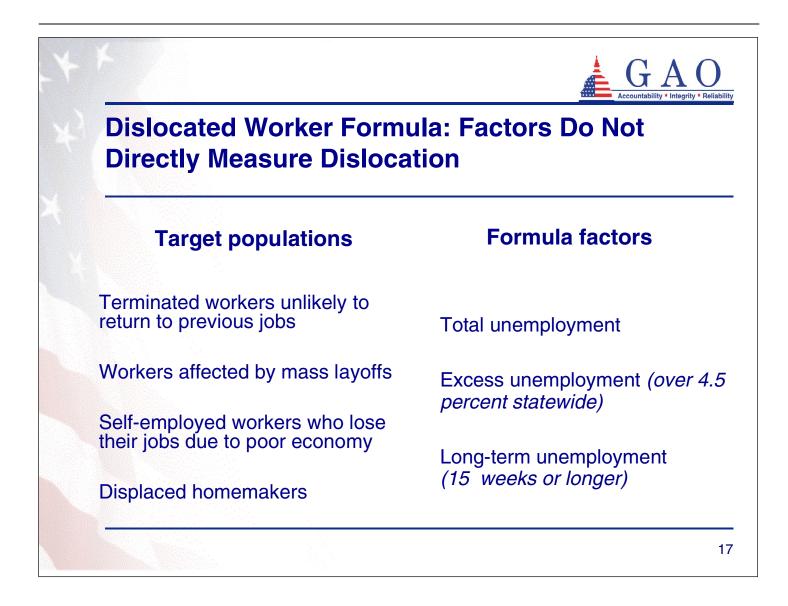


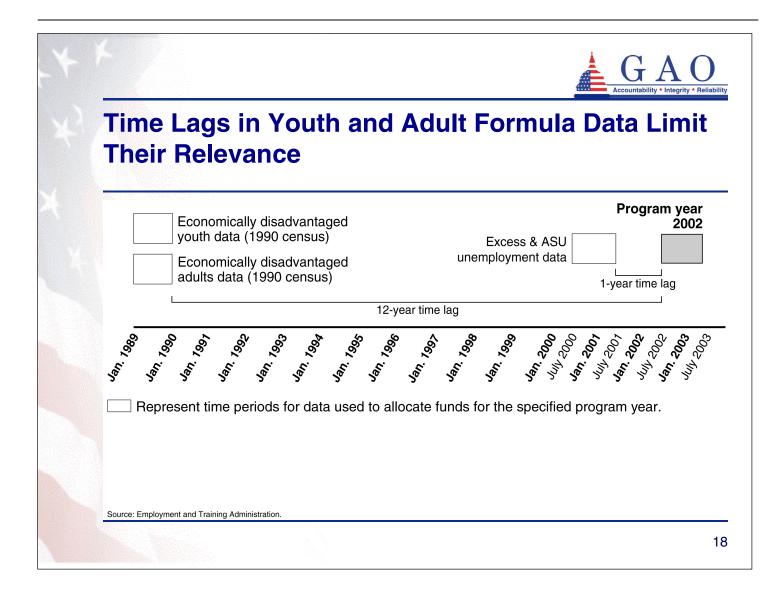


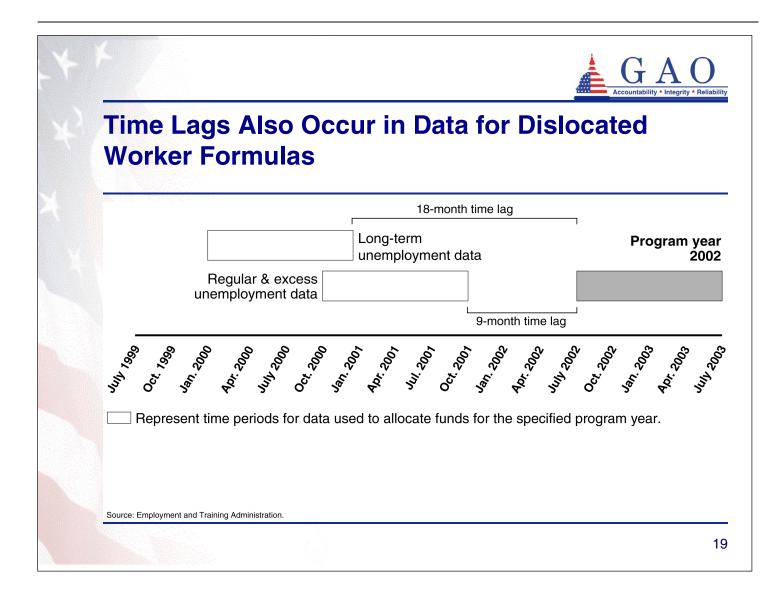


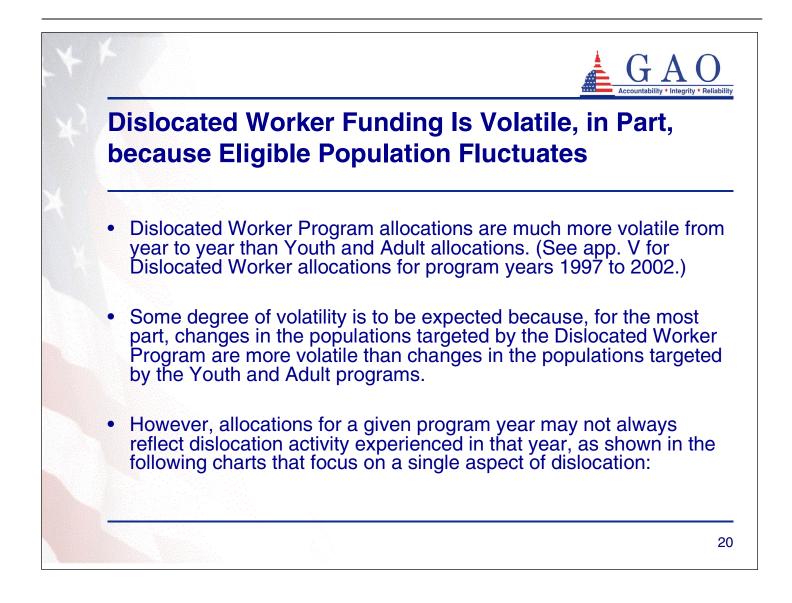
Youth Formula: Two Factors Are Not Specific to Youth Population		
Target populations	Formula factors	
Low-income youth with barriers to employment	Economically disadvantaged youth	
Non low-income youth with barrier(s) to employment or to school completion	Unemployment in ASUs ^a (state- defined areas with populations of 10,000 or more and unemployment over 6.5 percent)	
Out-of-school youth ^a Unemployment of individuals 16 and older.	Excess unemployment ^a (over 4.5 percent either statewide or in ASUs)	

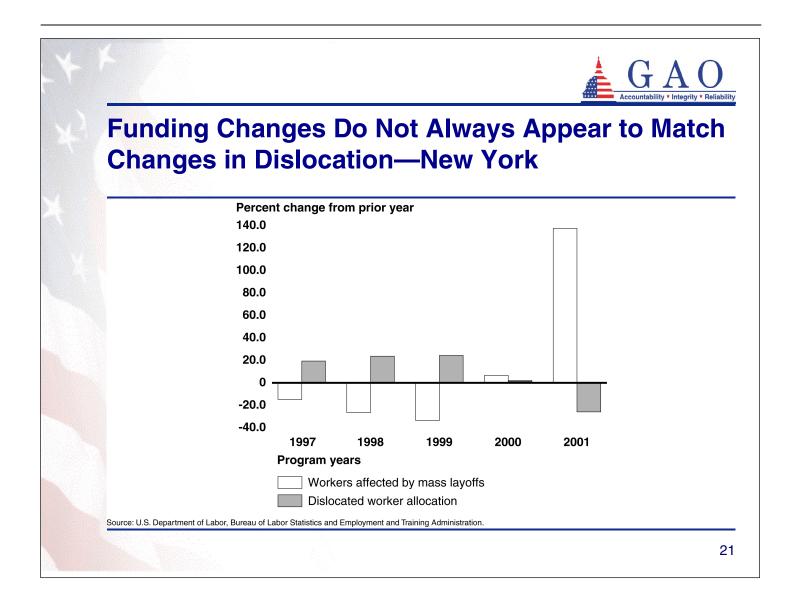


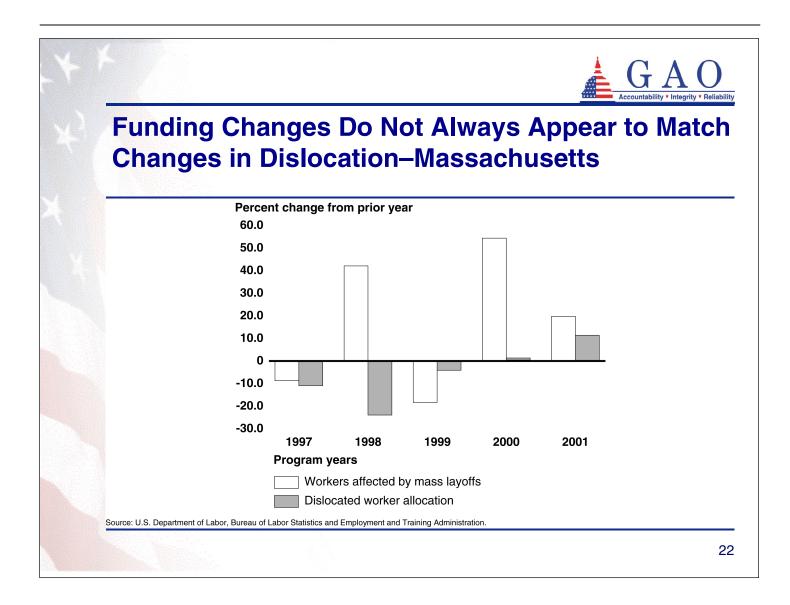


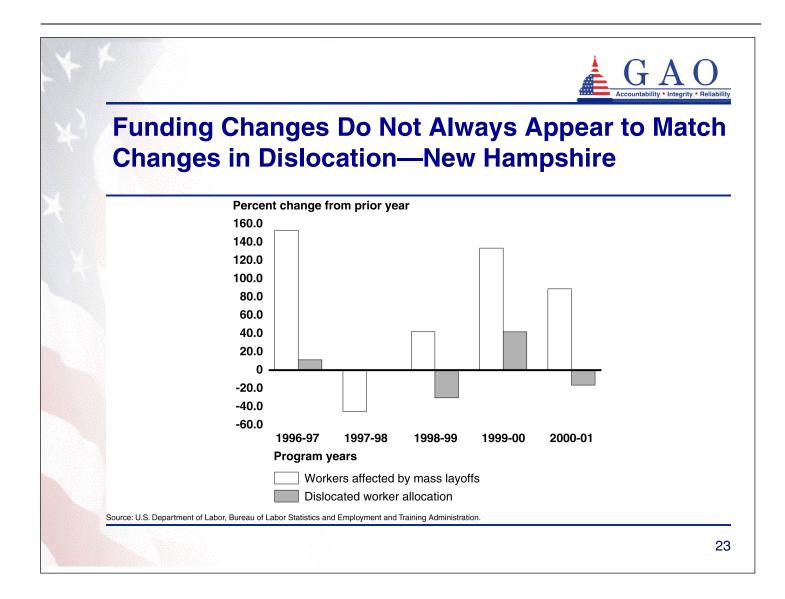


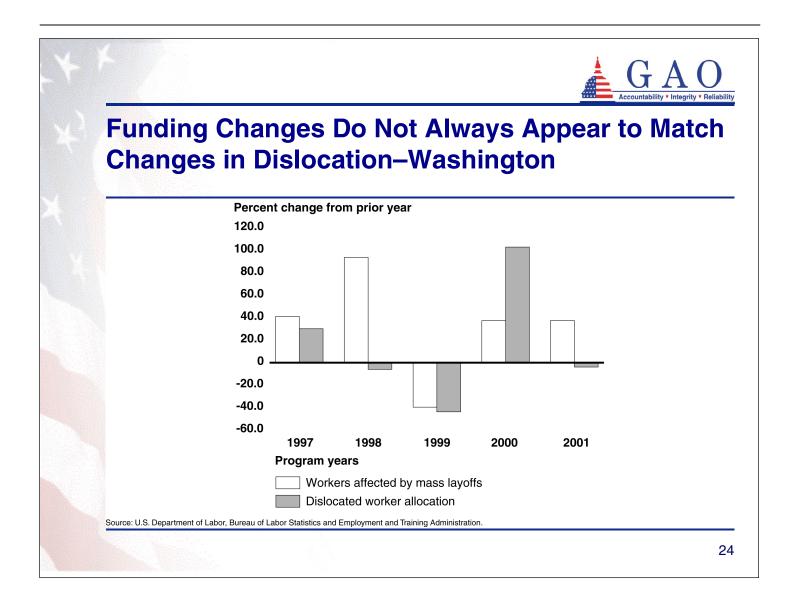


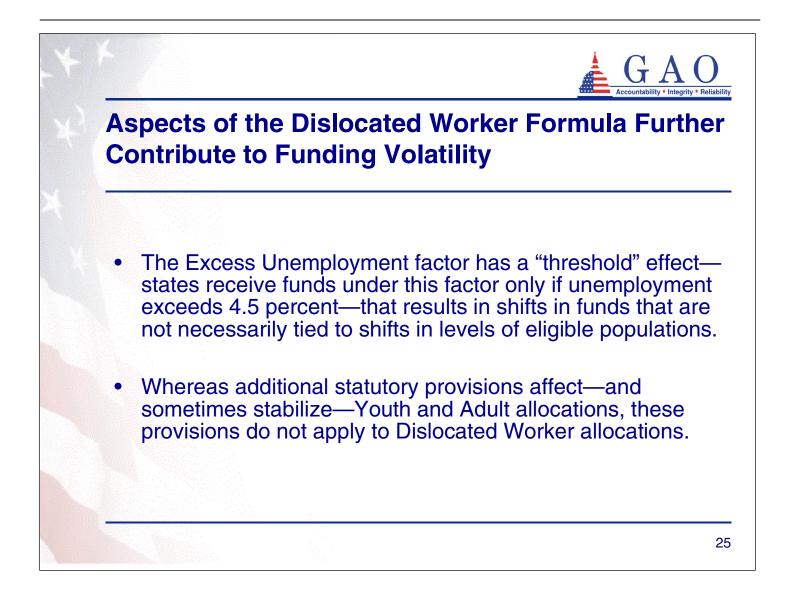


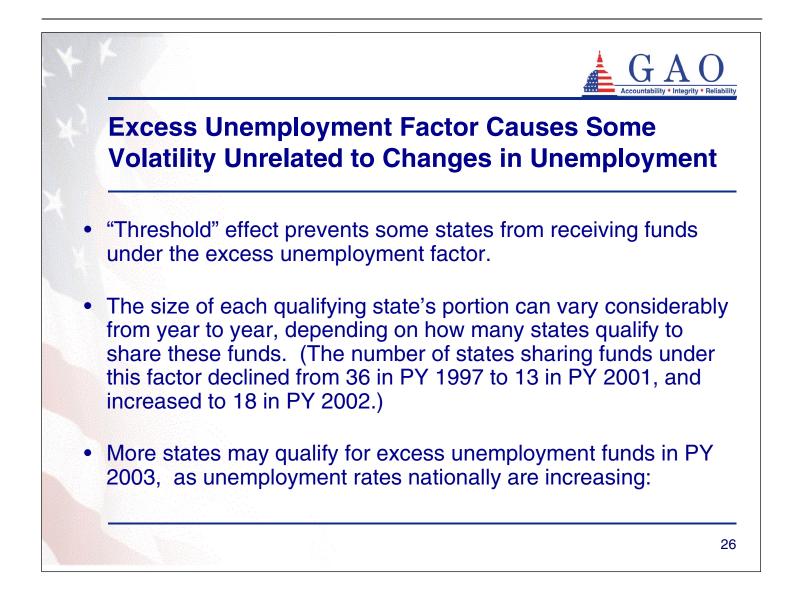


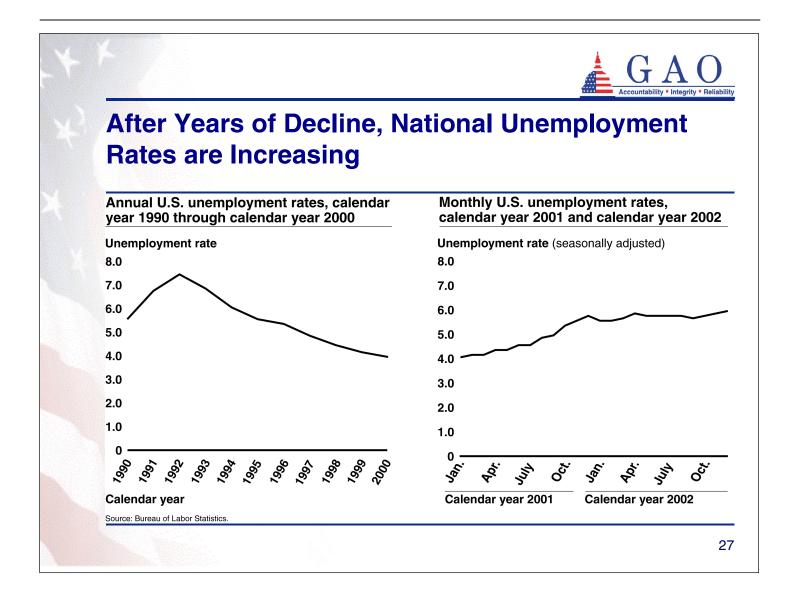


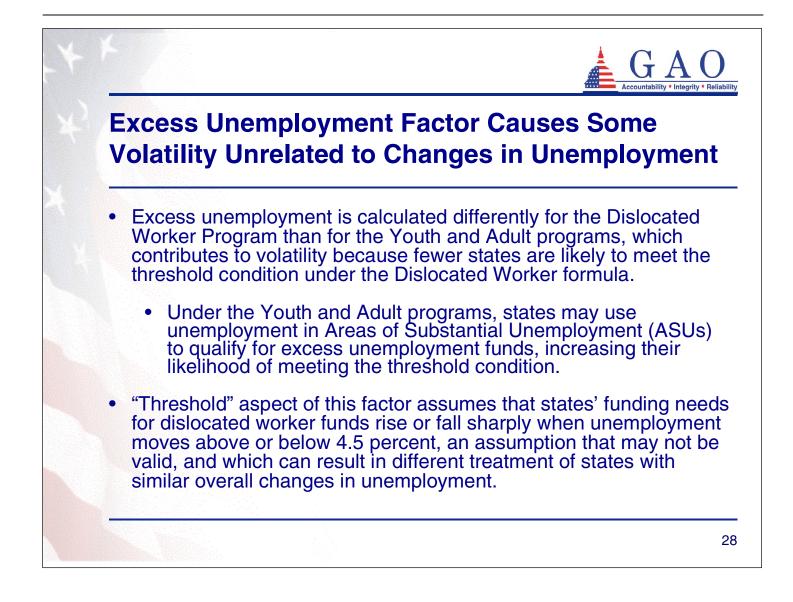


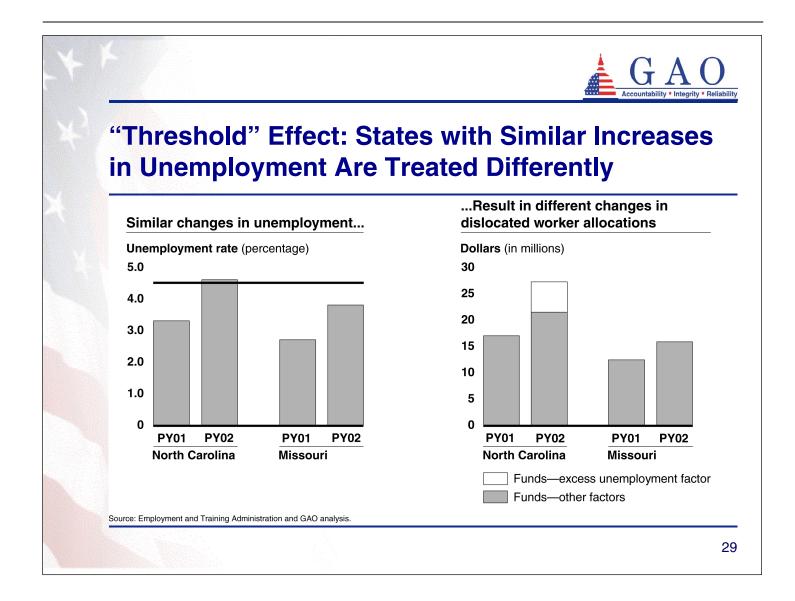


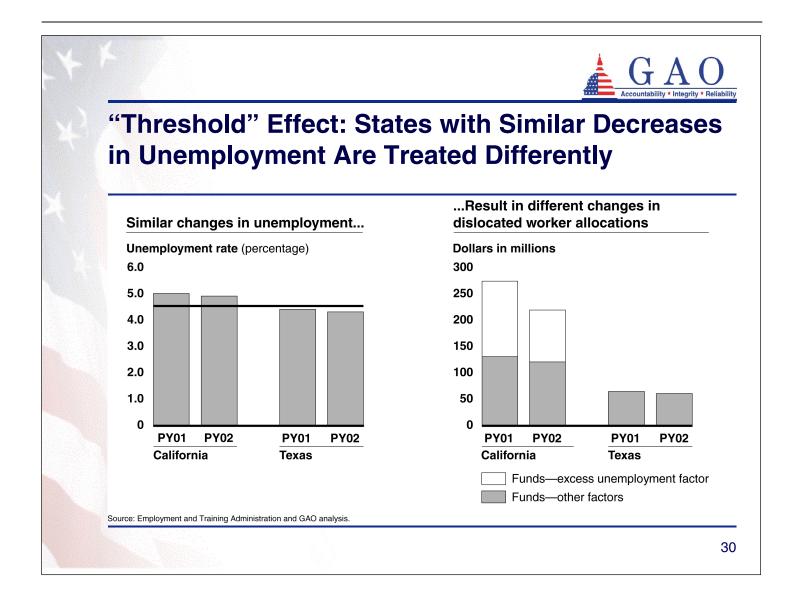


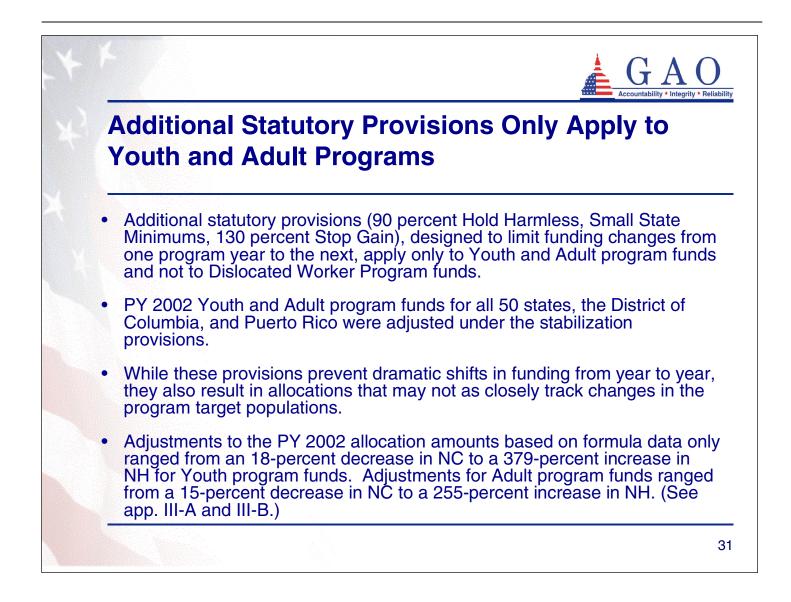


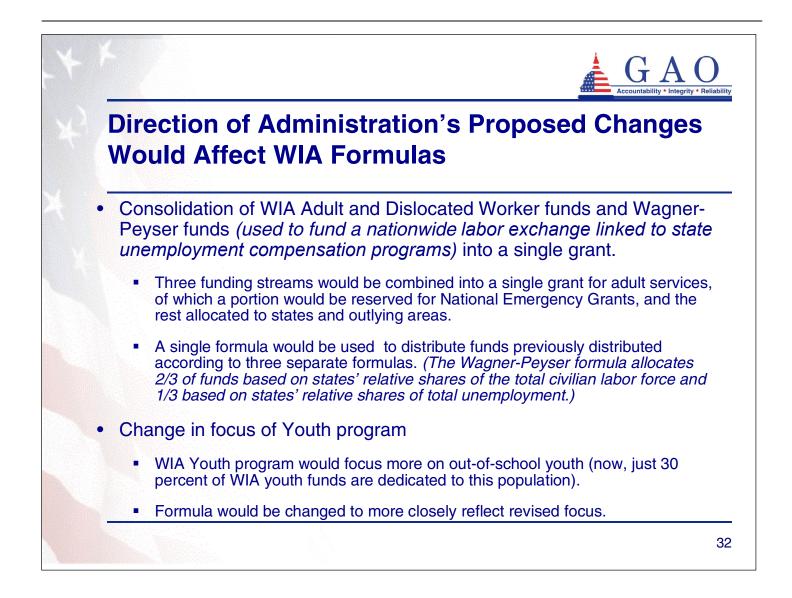




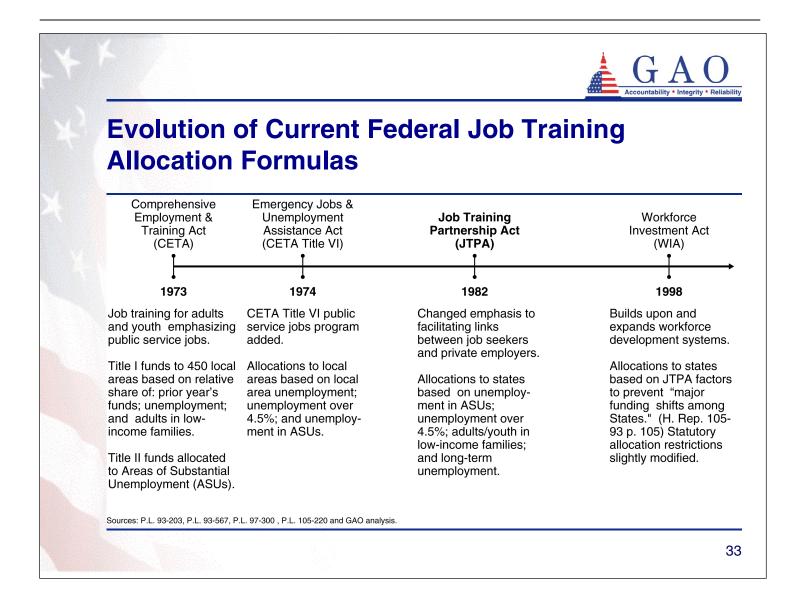




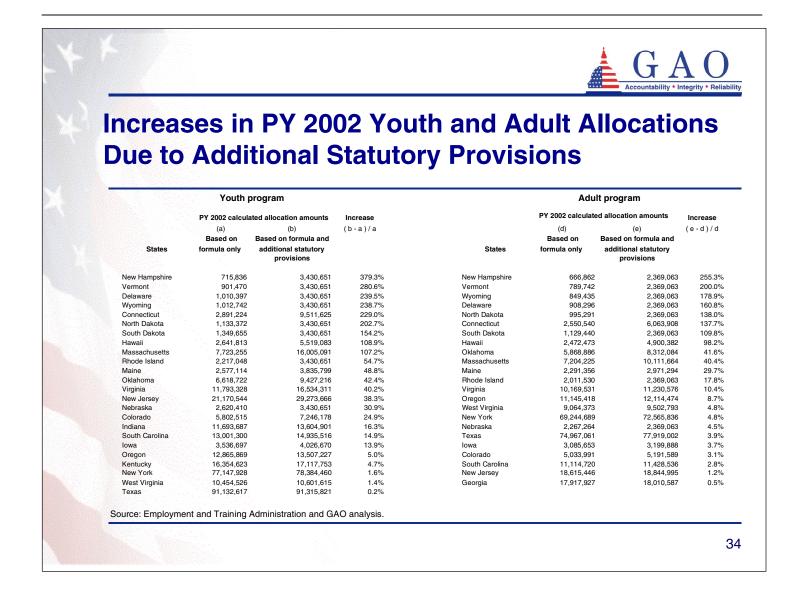


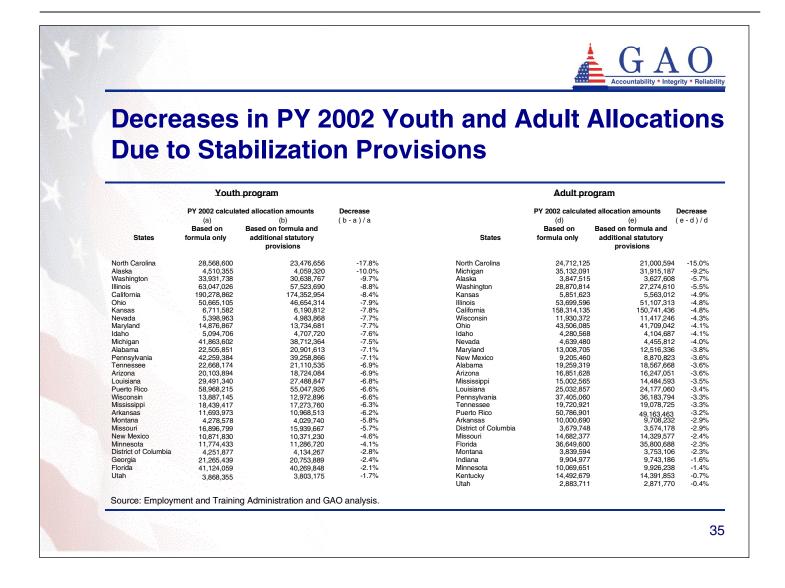


Appendix II: Current Federal Job Training Allocation Formulas

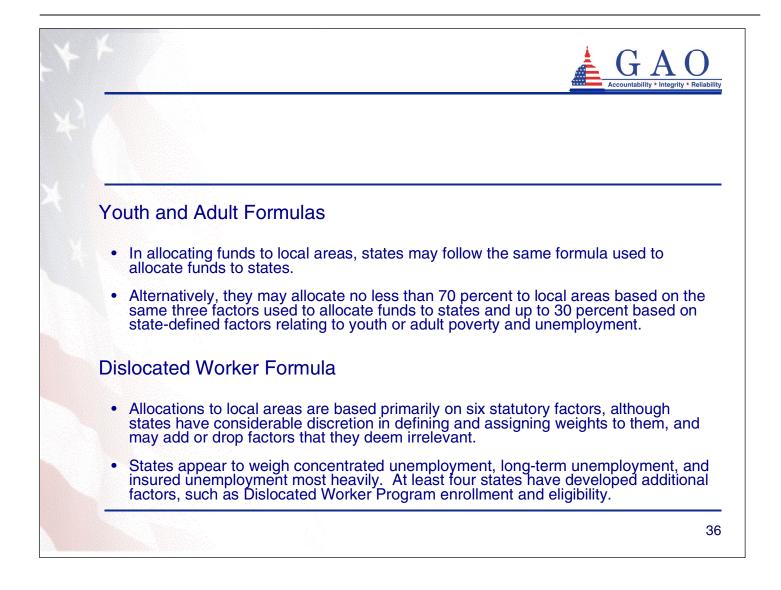


Appendix III: Program Year 2002 Youth and Adult Allocations (Increases and Decreases)

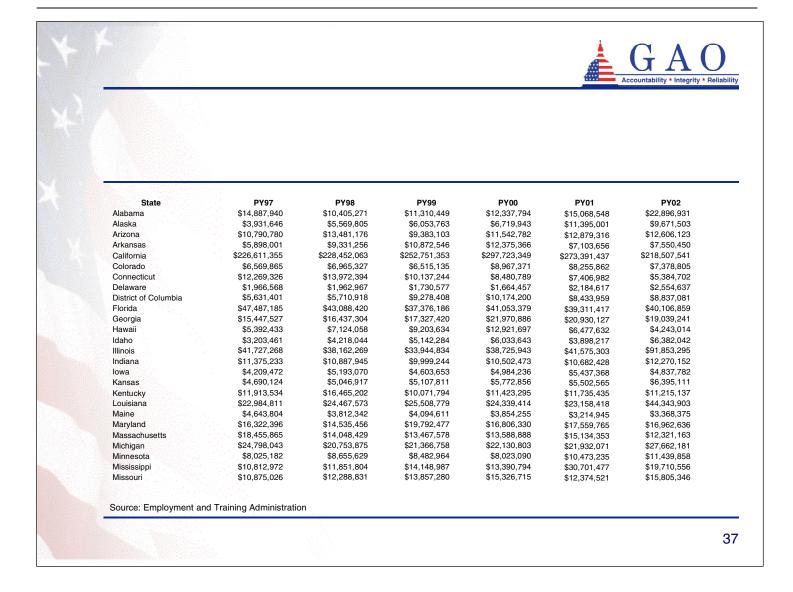




Appendix IV: States Have Some Discretion in Substate Allocation Formulas



Appendix V: State Dislocated Worker Allocations, PY 1997—PY 2002



Nebraska \$1,594,122 \$1,965,472 \$1,997,095 \$2,388,261 \$2,997,707 Nevada \$4,632,379 \$4,648,561 \$3,910,433 \$5,076,189 \$5,334,057 New Hampshire \$2,260,095 \$2,272,311 \$1,583,448 \$2,247,442 \$1,877,882 New Jersey \$44,679,005 \$43,261,829 \$36,304,389 \$30,833,430 \$30,498,439 \$\$ New Jersey \$44,679,005 \$43,261,829 \$36,304,389 \$30,833,430 \$30,498,439 \$\$ New Mexico \$8,607,771 \$12,173,813 \$14,447,813 \$20,907,033 \$21,923,521 \$\$ New York \$91,917,963 \$113,707,688 \$141,469,827 \$142,360,726 \$105,559,534 \$\$ North Carolina \$13,056,615 \$13,313,849 \$14,354,831 \$16,906,622 \$16,959,265 \$\$ Ohio \$30,158,145 \$30,143,462 \$28,150,483 \$30,844,022 \$34,309,127 \$\$ Oklahoma \$6,134,591 \$5,531,341 \$6,881,200 \$8,085,953 \$6,561,865 Oregon <th></th> <th></th> <th></th> <th></th> <th></th> <th></th>						
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Puerto Rico \$39,306,758 \$49,534,488 \$82,314,462 \$108,278,443 \$166,101,676 \$1 Rhode Island \$4,450,933 \$3,588,822 \$3,851,636 \$2,924,830 \$2,885,714 South Carolina \$13,502,936 \$16,723,308 \$81,63,435 \$9,726,336 \$11,936,257 \$ South Carolina \$815,418 \$890,691 \$986,630 \$1,477,871 \$1,283,809 Tennessee \$15,412,716 \$18,581,291 \$14,120,459 \$14,194,628 \$12,771,543 \$ Texas \$813,82,699 \$81,009,852 \$74,819,227 \$74,756,662 \$63,747,179 \$ Utah \$2,503,785 \$2,446,846 \$3,229,390 \$4,343,544 \$4,430,131 Vermont \$1,060,691 \$1,298,100 \$1,391,491 \$1,220,468 \$1,240,882	\$47,736,539	\$45,002,996	\$36,555,932	\$38,179,716	\$38,706,830	\$41,663,10
South Carolina \$13,502,936 \$16,723,308 \$8,163,435 \$9,726,336 \$11,936,257 \$ South Dakota \$815,418 \$890,691 \$986,630 \$1,477,871 \$1,283,809 Tennessee \$15,412,716 \$18,581,291 \$14,120,459 \$14,194,628 \$12,771,543 \$ Texas \$81,382,699 \$81,009,852 \$74,819,227 \$74,756,662 \$63,747,179 \$ Utah \$2,503,785 \$2,446,846 \$3,229,390 \$4,343,544 \$4,430,131 Vermont \$1,060,691 \$1,298,100 \$1,391,491 \$1,220,468 \$1,240,882	\$39,306,758	\$49,534,488	\$82,314,462	\$108,278,443	\$166,101,676	\$122,346,37
South Dakota \$815,418 \$890,691 \$986,630 \$1,477,871 \$1,283,809 Tennessee \$15,412,716 \$18,581,291 \$14,120,459 \$14,194,628 \$12,771,543 \$ Texas \$81,382,699 \$81,009,852 \$74,819,227 \$74,756,662 \$63,747,179 \$ Utah \$2,503,785 \$2,446,846 \$3,229,390 \$4,343,544 \$4,430,131 Vermont \$1,060,691 \$1,298,100 \$1,391,491 \$1,220,468 \$1,240,882	\$4,450,933	\$3,588,822	\$3,851,636	\$2,924,830	\$2,885,714	\$2,680,62
Tennessee\$15,412,716\$18,581,291\$14,120,459\$14,194,628\$12,771,543\$Texas\$81,382,699\$81,009,852\$74,819,227\$74,756,662\$63,747,179\$Utah\$2,503,785\$2,446,846\$3,229,390\$4,343,544\$4,430,131Vermont\$1,060,691\$1,298,100\$1,391,491\$1,220,468\$1,240,882	a \$13,502,936	\$16,723,308	\$8,163,435	\$9,726,336	\$11,936,257	\$11,995,90
Texas \$81,382,699 \$81,009,852 \$74,819,227 \$74,756,662 \$63,747,179 \$ Utah \$2,503,785 \$2,446,846 \$3,229,390 \$4,343,544 \$4,430,131 Vermont \$1,060,691 \$1,298,100 \$1,391,491 \$1,220,468 \$1,240,882	\$815,418	\$890,691	\$986,630	\$1,477,871	\$1,283,809	\$985,07
Utah \$2,503,785 \$2,446,846 \$3,229,390 \$4,343,544 \$4,430,131 Vermont \$1,060,691 \$1,298,100 \$1,391,491 \$1,220,468 \$1,240,882	\$15,412,716	\$18,581,291	\$14,120,459	\$14,194,628	\$12,771,543	\$13,927,45
Vermont \$1,060,691 \$1,298,100 \$1,391,491 \$1,220,468 \$1,240,882						\$59,784,45
						\$4,334,46
Virginia \$13,354,807 \$14,527,059 \$13,872,204 \$12,359,788 \$12,424,713 \$						\$1,306,79
	State Methods and a second		. , ,		. , ,	\$11,111,36
						\$68,485,60
						\$15,231,62
					. , ,	\$15,314,83
Wyoming \$999,905 \$1,299,464 \$1,204,056 \$1,921,722 \$1,663,175	\$999,905	φ1,299,464	\$1,204,056	\$1,921,722	\$1,003,175	\$1,285,54
Source: Employment and Training Administration	Stable Aller - Aller State and a state of the					

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