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Program Evaluation and  
Methodology Division

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The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy  
Chairman, Committee on Labor and Human  
Resources  
United States Senate

The Honorable Paul Simon  
United States Senate

Your February 5, 1993, letter asked us to provide information on federal programs that address the Hispanic high school dropout problem. You asked specifically about the so-called TRIO programs (Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Student Support Services). In gathering information on federal programs that address the Hispanic high school dropout problem, we sought to answer two questions:

1. Are programs available in areas with large Hispanic populations?
2. Are the data available on Hispanic program participation sufficient to support conclusions about the adequacy of coverage for Hispanics?<sup>1</sup>

To address these questions, we obtained and aggregated data collected by the Department of Education on program participants. We reviewed data from evaluation studies conducted or sponsored by the Department and interviewed members of the study teams. We did not, however, verify the data's accuracy and completeness. At the Department's headquarters in Washington, D.C., we interviewed officials of the Dropout Prevention Office, the Office of Postsecondary Education, and the Office of Policy and Planning. Our data on the geographic distribution of the

<sup>1</sup>You also asked us to report on two other issues: (1) the extent of the Hispanic high school dropout problem and (2) factors associated with Hispanics dropping out of school. As agreed with your offices, we will address these two issues in a separate report.

Hispanic population were drawn from the 1990 U.S. Census of Population.

### BACKGROUND

The existence of a Hispanic high school dropout problem has been evident for some time. Findings like those of the 1990 census, which reported that 32 percent of young Hispanic adults have not completed high school (almost four times the rate of non-Hispanic whites), have generated considerable concern over the problem, as well as interest in federal programs established to address it.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that the 32 percent figure includes everyone who has not completed high school, not just those who attended and then dropped out of a U.S. school. Thus, Hispanics who immigrated to the United States with less than a high school education but never attended a U.S. school are counted in the "high school dropout" total. It is difficult to estimate what the Hispanic dropout rate would be if only those who had actually attended U.S. schools were counted.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, there is evidence that the figure would be higher than the U.S. average. According to the Bureau of the Census, U.S.-born Hispanics ages 16 through 24 had a 1990 dropout rate of 20 percent, compared with 12 percent for U.S. students in general.

### FEDERAL EDUCATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

According to a 1992 survey administered by the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 129 federal programs (administered by 16 different federal departments and agencies) were in place to increase the high school graduation rate.<sup>3</sup> The list of 129 programs, however, includes many that are connected only tangentially to education, such as the Department of Agriculture's Food Stamps program and its Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children. We eliminated these programs from our review, along with programs such as Head Start that focus on preschool education, and postsecondary education programs except for those that focus on students at risk of dropping out. Sixteen programs remained.

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<sup>2</sup>Our forthcoming report will examine this issue in detail.

<sup>3</sup>Increasing the high school graduation rate to at least 90 percent is one of the national education goals adopted by the President and the nation's governors in 1989.

These 16 programs either address educational deficiencies of students at risk of dropping out of school or provide avenues for reentering school or obtaining a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, which indicates educational achievement comparable to that of a high school graduate. Table 1 shows the 16 programs, the federal agencies that administer them, their fiscal year 1993 appropriations, the population they target, and the program services they provide. Some programs target school-age youth, others serve either school-age or college-age youth, and still others target adults who have not completed high school.

Table 1: Information on 16 Federal Education Assistance Programs

Program	Federal agency	Fiscal year 1993 appropriation	Population targeted	Objective
School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program (SDDAP)	Education	\$37,530,000	At-risk students and dropouts from elementary and secondary schools	To help local education agencies demonstrate effective dropout prevention and reentry programs
Chapter 1 Neglected and Delinquent	Education	35,407,000	Institutionalized youths aged 15 to 21	To support institutional or correctional education programs
Chapter 1 Migrant Education	Education	302,773,000	Children (up to age 21) of migrant workers	To improve educational opportunities for children of migrant workers
Chapter 1 Basic Grants	Education	5,449,925,000	Disadvantaged students up to and including high school age	To improve basic academic skills such as reading and mathematics
Training for Disadvantaged Youth	Labor	696,682,000	Disadvantaged youths aged 14 to 21, 50 percent of whom must be out of school	To assess educational skills and provide training
Job Corps Centers	Labor	966,075,000	Severely disadvantaged youths aged 14 to 24	To provide residential education and training, which could include a GED
Talent Search	Education	65,142,000	Disadvantaged students and dropouts, aged 12 through 27	To provide information that will help students complete high school and pursue postsecondary education
Upward Bound	Education	157,660,000	Disadvantaged students aged 13 through 19	To motivate students and help them build skills to complete high school and pursue postsecondary education
American Conservation and Youth Corps	Corporation for National and Community Service	22,500,000	Youths who have not completed high school	To provide instruction and training to help participants earn a high school diploma or GED

Program	Federal agency	Fiscal year 1993 appropriation	Population targeted	Objective
Student Support Services	Education	\$131,183,000	Disadvantaged college students who are enrolled or accepted for enrollment	To enhance students' potential for successfully completing postsecondary education
School, College, and University Partnerships	Education	3,928,000	Low-income high school students, including those at risk of dropping out	To improve academic and employment skills and encourage pursuit of postsecondary education
Migrant High School Equivalency Program	Education	8,161,000	Adult migrant and seasonal farmworkers	To help migrant workers obtain a high school diploma
Adult Education Act State Program	Education	254,624,000	Illiterate adults and adults lacking a high school diploma	To teach basic skills and help adults obtain a GED
Workplace Literacy	Education	18,906,000	Adults lacking a high school diploma	To assist adults in completing their secondary education
Training for Disadvantaged Adults	Labor	1,045,021,000	Disadvantaged adults aged 22 and older	To provide basic skills training and help adults obtain a GED
Job Opportunities and Basic Skills	Health and Human Services	1,000,000,000	Recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children	To provide basic and remedial education, high school or equivalency education, or assistance for those with limited English proficiency

Sources: Department of Education; Congressional Research Service, High School Dropouts: Current Federal Programs (Washington, D.C.: April 20, 1993).

We concentrated our review on the four programs most clearly targeted on keeping students in school: the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program (SDDAP), which is the premier federal effort targeting dropout prevention and recovery, and the so-called TRIO programs (Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Student Support Services), which provide assistance to students in secondary and postsecondary schools.

We discuss SDDAP first, and then the TRIO programs. For each program, we in turn address our two evaluation questions. With regard to the question of availability of services, we begin by examining the geographical distribution of program sites. In discretionary programs such as SDDAP and TRIO, services are not necessarily available wherever there is a need; rather, they are available only where local organizations have successfully applied for federal grant support. Thus, Hispanic access to services depends in large part on how many grantees are located in the

states where Hispanics are concentrated. To answer our second evaluation question, we then examine data on participation in each program and their sufficiency to support conclusions about the adequacy of program coverage for Hispanics.

#### SCHOOL DROPOUT DEMONSTRATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

As the largest federal program targeting dropouts, SDDAP supports projects designed to demonstrate strategies for reducing the number of children who do not complete their elementary and secondary education. Authorized in 1988, the program provides federal assistance to local education agencies, community-based organizations, and educational partnerships.<sup>4</sup> Eligible for program participation are those who have dropped out of school, students at risk of dropping out, and students reentering school after dropping out.

#### Program Background

Projects funded under the program are to establish and demonstrate (1) effective programs to identify potential dropouts and prevent them from dropping out; (2) effective programs to identify and encourage children who have already dropped out to reenter school and complete their elementary and secondary education; (3) effective early intervention programs; and (4) model systems for collecting and reporting information to local school officials on the number, ages, and grade levels of children not completing their elementary and secondary education, as well as information on why the children dropped out of school.

Services provided through SDDAP programs have included academic skills instruction, counseling services, social support services, and vocational or career awareness services. Academic skills instruction included general educational development (GED) instruction, small group instruction, field trips, and extracurricular activities. Counseling and social support services included personal and family counseling, health services, and parenting classes for teenagers. Vocational or career awareness services included job counseling and job placement.

Grants for SDDAP projects were awarded in 1988, 1991, and 1992, with project periods of 3 to 4 years. A total of 89 grants were

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<sup>4</sup>The program was authorized under title VI, part A, sec. 6004, of the Augustus F. Hawkins-Robert T. Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvements Act of 1988 (20 U.S.C. sec. 3242).

awarded in 1988 (for projects that ended in 1991); another 65 grants were awarded in 1991; and 21 more were awarded in 1992. Thus, 86 projects were underway in 1992.<sup>5</sup>

Availability of SDDAP Projects in Areas With Large Hispanic Populations

Of the nation's 22.4 million Hispanics, about 87 percent reside in 10 states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, and Texas. We found that of the 86 projects ongoing in 1992, half were located in these 10 states. Table 2 shows the number of SDDAP projects located in each state and the size of the state's Hispanic population. These data suggest that a substantial number of program sites have the potential to serve Hispanic students and to provide information about approaches that may be effective in helping Hispanics to complete their education.

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<sup>5</sup>Data on projects operating in 1992 were the latest available at the time of our review.

Table 2: SDDAP Projects Ongoing in 1992 in the 10 States With the Largest Hispanic Populations

State	Number of SDDAP projects	Hispanic population, 1990	
		Number	Percent of total state population
California	8	7,687,938	34
Texas	5	4,339,905	19
New York	9	2,214,026	10
Florida	4	1,574,143	7
Illinois	6	904,446	4
New Jersey	1	739,861	3
Arizona	3	688,338	3
New Mexico	3	579,224	3
Colorado	1	424,302	2
Massachusetts	3	287,549	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>43<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>19,439,732<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>n.a.</b>

<sup>a</sup>Out of a national total of 86 projects.

<sup>b</sup>Out of a national total of 22.4 million Hispanics.

Sources: Department of Education, Bureau of the Census

Sufficiency of Program Data

Data were not sufficient to support conclusions about the adequacy of program coverage for Hispanics. No reliable data existed on the ethnicity/race of the project participants. Although grantees were required to gather and report data on numbers of participants served, program funding, and program services provided, they were not required to gather ethnicity/race data on program participants. Even when grantees chose to gather and report such data, the data were of questionable reliability, primarily because grantees collected information in different ways and sometimes used different definitions. Thus, neither the comparability nor the accuracy of the data can be ensured.

We did find informal evidence suggesting that Hispanics were included in a sizeable number of projects. Grantee estimates of numbers of students served by race suggested that for 28 out of the original 89 projects, 25 percent or more of the project participants were Hispanic.<sup>6</sup> For 12 projects, the estimated number of Hispanics equalled or exceeded 50 percent of the total. Our review of the summary descriptions of the projects operating in 1992 revealed that 15 of the 86 specifically mentioned an intent to serve Hispanic students. Others mentioned serving immigrants or bilingual students but did not specify a particular ethnic/racial group. The official in charge of the Department of Education's dropout prevention office estimated (based on his project knowledge and experience) that 22 of the current projects served Hispanic participants, and that Hispanics constituted at least 25 percent of the clients for 15 projects. Of these 15 projects, 13 were located in states with large Hispanic populations: Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, New Mexico, and Texas.

To answer the question of whether coverage of Hispanics is adequate clearly requires better data on participation than are now available. We would also need a different basis for judging adequacy than the one provided by the program's objective, which is not specific with respect to Hispanic participation. The SDDAP objective is to produce knowledge about strategies that reduce the number of children (Hispanics included) who drop out of school. Benefits to Hispanics from this program will depend on whether useful strategies are found.

A study now being conducted for the Department by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., to be completed in December 1995, should provide information about the knowledge gained from the SDDAP program concerning dropout strategies and their effects on students of various ethnic backgrounds. The study is designed to determine what kinds of students drop out, the reasons why students drop out, and the services that are most effective in keeping students from dropping out. It will include data on student ethnic background collected from participating students themselves.

#### TRIO PROGRAMS

The so-called TRIO programs--Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Student Support Services--were authorized under the Higher Education Act of 1965. While not exclusively targeting dropouts,

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<sup>6</sup>American Institutes for Research, Evaluation of Projects Funded by the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program: Final Report for the 1989-90 Descriptive Survey of All Projects (Palo Alto, Calif.: March 1992).



to pursue academic success and to complete their secondary and postsecondary education. Talent Search and Upward Bound are similar in their objectives (for example, encouraging students to complete their secondary education and beyond) and in their participant eligibility criteria (low-income students whose parents did not attend college). However, Talent Search activities center on information and referral, while Upward Bound provides skill-enhancing services. Student Support Services differs from the other two programs in that it concentrates on helping low-income or physically disabled college students complete their postsecondary education.

### Program Background

Talent Search identifies disadvantaged youths with potential for postsecondary education and encourages them to complete secondary school and enroll in postsecondary education programs, or to reenter such programs if they have dropped out. Project services reported in 1991 included assistance with the reentry process to high school or college and information on financial assistance, as well as financial and personal counseling, career exploration, and aptitude assessment.<sup>7</sup> Recipients of federal grants can include institutions of higher learning, public or private agencies, and in exceptional cases, secondary schools. Project participants must reside in the target area or attend a target school, have potential for education at the postsecondary level, be between the ages of 12 and 27, and be citizens or nationals of the United States or permanent U.S. residents. In each project, two thirds of the participants must be low-income persons (from families with incomes of less than 150 percent of the poverty level figure) who are potential first-generation college students--that is, individuals whose parents did not complete college.

The Upward Bound program is designed to generate among students the skills and motivation necessary for success in postsecondary education. Program activities include academic and counseling support and emphasize exposure to cultural events, academic programs, and careers that disadvantaged youths typically do not encounter. Recipients of federal program grants can include institutions of higher education, public and private agencies, and in exceptional cases, secondary schools. Project participants must be between the ages of 13 and 19 (or veterans) and be citizens or nationals of the United States or permanent U.S. residents. In each project, two thirds of the participants must be low-income persons; the other third must be either low-income persons or first-generation college students.

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<sup>7</sup>Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning, Annual Evaluation Report: Fiscal Year 1991.

The Student Support Services program is designed to assist disadvantaged college students to complete their postsecondary education through activities similar to those of the Upward Bound program. Recipients of federal program grants can include institutions of higher learning or higher education. Project participants must be low-income or physically handicapped individuals who are citizens or nationals of the United States or permanent U.S. residents. In each project, two thirds of the participants must be either low-income, first-generation college students or physically handicapped individuals.

Grants for Talent Search and Upward Bound projects are awarded for periods of 3 years; grants for Student Support Services are awarded for periods of up to 5 years. In fiscal year 1991, grants were awarded for a total of 1,354 TRIO projects: 177 Talent Search projects, 472 Upward Bound projects, and 705 Student Support Services projects.<sup>8</sup>

#### Availability of Projects in Areas With Large Hispanic Populations

To assess the TRIO programs' potential availability to the Hispanic population, we began by examining the geographic distribution of grantee institutions. We found that of the 1,354 TRIO projects funded in fiscal year 1991, nearly one third (415) were located in the 10 states that together account for about 87 percent of the U.S. Hispanic population.<sup>9</sup> Table 3 shows the number of TRIO projects located in these 10 states.

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<sup>8</sup>Data on projects funded in 1991 were the latest available from the Department of Education.

<sup>9</sup>The 87-percent concentration figure is based on all Hispanics, including undocumented aliens as well as citizens and legal residents. (Census data do not distinguish between legal residents and undocumented immigrants.) As previously noted, only citizens, nationals, and legal residents of the United States are eligible to participate in TRIO programs.

Table 3: TRIO Projects Funded in Fiscal Year 1991 in the 10 States With the Largest Hispanic Populations

State	Number of TRIO projects		
	Talent Search	Upward Bound	Student Support Services
California	10	35	36
Texas	11	31	34
New York	13	18	42
Florida	3	11	20
Illinois	7	15	27
New Jersey	4	10	11
Arizona	2	3	10
New Mexico	3	6	5
Colorado	1	7	11
Massachusetts	2	11	16
Total	56	147	212

Source: Department of Education

These numbers indicate that some program sites are available in all the states with the largest Hispanic populations and that the number of projects is at least roughly related to population size (Hispanic or other). To see how this potential for access was translated into actual participation in each state, we analyzed data on students who participated in the TRIO programs.

### Data on Hispanic Participation in TRIO Programs

TRIO program regulations require grantees to gather and report data annually on participants' ethnic/racial background (in addition to data such as numbers of participants served and program funding and services). The Department of Education provided us with participation data for the 1,354 TRIO projects funded in fiscal year 1991. Education officials cautioned us, however, that the reliability of these data cannot be guaranteed, again due to differences in grantees' data gathering and reporting methods.

According to Department of Education data, 400,221 people participated in the 1,354 TRIO projects. However, ethnicity/race data were not available for 2,135 participants. Of the participants for which ethnicity/race data were available, 78,349 were Hispanics, 134,520 were non-Hispanic blacks, and 147,856 were non-Hispanic whites. Table 4 shows the TRIO program participation rates, by ethnicity/race, for the programs funded in fiscal year 1991.

Table 4: TRIO Program Participation Rates for Projects Funded in Fiscal Year 1991, by Ethnicity/Race

TRIO project	Participation rate				
	Hispanic	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Asian <sup>a</sup>	Native American <sup>b</sup>
Talent Search	24.5%	31.9%	33.3%	5.1%	4.9%
Upward Bound	15.7	21.9	51.6	5.6	5.0
Student Support Services	14.9	45.9	29.9	4.5	3.1

<sup>a</sup>Includes Pacific Islanders.

<sup>b</sup>Includes American Indians and Alaskan Natives.

Source: Department of Education

TRIO projects in the 10 states with the largest Hispanic populations accounted for one third of the nationwide TRIO participants. In these 10 states, TRIO programs funded in fiscal year 1991 had a total of 134,697 participants: 63,796 in Talent Search, 12,527 in Upward Bound, and 58,374 in Student Support Services (excluding 1,184 participants for whom ethnicity/race data were not provided). In total, Hispanics made up about 34 percent of the project participants in the 10 states. Table 5 shows, by state, the number and percent of Hispanic project participants.

Table 5: Hispanic TRIO Project Participation in Projects Funded in Fiscal Year 1991 in 10 States With the Largest Hispanic Populations

State	TRIO program								
	Talent Search			Upward Bound			Student Support Services		
	Total	Hispanic	Hispanics as percent of total	Total	Hispanic	Hispanics as percent of total	Total	Hispanic	Hispanics as percent of total
California	17,146	6,198	36.1	3,005	1,388	46.2	9,068 <sup>a</sup>	3,211	35.4
Texas	13,935	9,113	65.4	2,553	1,356	53.5	12,711	5,888	46.3
New York	10,375	3,550	34.2	1,619	295	18.2	12,817	2,927	22.8
Florida	3,297	112	3.4	977	47	4.8	3,942	240	6.1
Illinois	7,538	1,529	20.3	1,277	74	5.8	6,271	1,066	17.0
New Jersey	3,928	1,158	29.5	956	152	15.9	2,743	568	20.7
Arizona	1,689	623	36.9	313	56	17.9	2,703	672	24.9
New Mexico	3,353	1,219	36.4	533	368	69.0	1,800	844	46.9
Colorado	1,059	523	49.4	515	305	59.2	2,333	735	31.5
Massachusetts	1,476	655	44.4	779	218	28.0	3,986	540	13.6
Total	63,796	24,680	38.7	12,527	4,259	34.0	58,374	16,691	28.6

<sup>a</sup>For an additional 1,184 participants, ethnicity/race data were not provided.

Source: Department of Education

These figures indicate that Hispanics comprised a substantial proportion of program participants overall in these states. However, there was considerable variation from state to state even among the states with the largest Hispanic populations. (We suspect that location played a role in this variation. In many of the eastern and midwestern states listed, Hispanics were concentrated in a few counties or metropolitan areas. TRIO

programs located in other areas would have little prospect of serving Hispanics.) Except in Florida, the percentage of program participants who were Hispanic equaled or exceeded the percentage of Hispanics in the general population (given in table 2). To judge whether participation was adequate, however, it would be necessary to know the percentage of Hispanics in the eligible population for each program.

#### Sufficiency of Program Data

We could not determine whether TRIO grantees' eligible Hispanic populations were receiving an equitable (or at least proportionate) share of project services. To answer this question, it would be necessary to have information about the ethnic/racial background and legal residency status of the young people in each grantee's service area. For example, one would need to know the proportion of Hispanic citizens, nationals, and legal residents between the ages of 13 and 19 in the population served by each Upward Bound project who were either low-income persons or first-generation college students. Although the Department of Education gathers data on TRIO project participation by ethnicity/race, it does not collect data on populations eligible for TRIO programs. We judge that reliable data on eligible populations would be difficult to obtain or even to approximate from standard data sources such as the census, which does not distinguish between legal residents and illegal immigrants.

#### SUMMARY AND OBSERVATIONS

Many federal programs are in place to address the high school dropout problem. We examined four key programs for high school and college students and found that whether they served a proportionate share of the Hispanic population could not be precisely determined. The fact that data on participants' ethnicity were unavailable (for SDDAP) or of unknown reliability (for TRIO) contributed to the difficulty of making this determination. Two other factors, each of them related to the design of these programs, are also worthy of note.

First, the design of these programs made it difficult to say what level of service to Hispanics would have been adequate or would have constituted a proportionate share. Each SDDAP project defined its own target population, which might reflect a special-needs group (such as black teenage mothers) rather than the general at-risk student population in its service area. It is reasonable to assume that every major at-risk group was targeted by at least several projects, but there is no reason to assume that aggregate participation across all projects mirrored the ethnic composition of the at-risk population in the nation as a whole. The conditions of eligibility for the TRIO programs made it very difficult to

estimate the size of the eligible population, and thus to determine whether Hispanics were served in proportion to their presence in that population. (Hispanics who are not legal residents or citizens are not part of the eligible population in any case.)

Second, the programs are designed to support worthy projects wherever they may be. This funding strategy is not well suited to providing representative coverage of ethnic groups, either nationally or within a state. Even if each project serves a representative cross section of eligible students in its service population, the aggregate results may not be representative if areas in which a particular minority is concentrated remain unserved or underserved. The Department recognizes this limitation and has especially encouraged applications from underserved areas. However, our data suggest that, at least in Florida, some areas with large Hispanic populations remain underserved.

We did not send this letter to the Department of Education for comment prior to publishing it. However, we did meet with Department officials and briefed them on our information, which they agreed was accurate after some minor correction. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please call me at (202) 512-2900 or Robert L. York, Director of Program Evaluation in Human Services Areas, at (202) 512-5885. Other major contributors to this report are listed in attachment A.



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