

Children's Issues, Laws and Programs

Responding to Employment Challenges of At-Risk Youth

*Federal Programs and an
Advancement Framework*

Joanna Harman
Editor

NOVA

CHILDREN'S ISSUES, LAWS AND PROGRAMS

**RESPONDING TO EMPLOYMENT
CHALLENGES OF
AT-RISK YOUTH**

**FEDERAL PROGRAMS AND
AN ADVANCEMENT FRAMEWORK**

**JOANNA HARMAN
EDITOR**

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PREFACE

This book provides an overview of issues that have been raised by stakeholders about youth programs authorized under WIA. It also presents a research-based framework for efforts to increase the likelihood that youth at greater risk of negative outcomes will enter a career trajectory and prepare to become well-functioning, self-sufficient adults.

Chapter 1 - The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA, P.L. 105-220) is the primary federal law that provides job training and related services to unemployed and underemployed individuals, including vulnerable young people with barriers to employment. All youth job training programs and related services are authorized under Title I of WIA and administered by the Department of Labor (DOL). These programs include the WIA Youth Activities formula program, Job Corps, and YouthBuild. The Job Corps program was established in the 1960s and is the oldest federal job training and employment program (among recent programs) for young people. Under the pilot and demonstration authority in Title I, DOL has also carried out the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders program for both youth and adults. Although the programs have distinct activities and goals, each of them seeks to connect eligible youth to educational and employment opportunities, as well as leadership development and community service activities. WIA authorized funding through September 30, 2003; however, WIA programs continue to be funded through annual appropriation acts. Both the Senate and House of Representatives have taken steps toward reauthorizing WIA since the 108th Congress.

This report provides an overview of issues that have been raised by stakeholders about youth programs authorized under WIA. First, some policy makers have proposed consolidating these and other workforce programs to make them more efficient and less costly. Other stakeholders assert that at-risk youth and other groups with barriers to employment would be overlooked under such a consolidation. Another issue is the perceived lack of coordination between the workforce system and other systems that serve youth, such as the education system. Stakeholders have suggested that greater coordination can help meet the varied needs of youth, as intended by WIA. Members of Congress and others have also continued to inquire about the effectiveness of programs that serve youth in meeting their objectives and serving the most at-risk youth. To date, only an impact evaluation of Job Corps has been completed; however, DOL recently awarded a contract to a social policy research organization to conduct an impact evaluation of YouthBuild.

In addition to these broader issues, Congress is interested in issues specific to Youth Activities and Job Corps. Youth Activities provides funding for youth employment and

training services overseen by a state workforce investment board (WIB) and the governor, in coordination with local WIBs and community organizations. The program targets youth ages 14 through 21 who are low-income and have one or more barriers to employment. Since the start of the program, policy makers and others have considered the extent to which youth have had to prove their eligibility for the program. Some local workforce investment boards have reported challenges with documenting income and other eligibility criteria, and some proposals would establish different methods for determining eligibility. Further, stakeholders have raised issues about whether the program should focus more on out-of-school youth. Local workforce investment boards have reported challenges recruiting and retaining these youth. Related to this is the age of youth who ought to be eligible for the program. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA, P.L. 111-5) temporarily enabled youth ages 22 through 24 to access services under the program. Whether WIA ought to target these older youth, particularly in light of the possible cost of doing so, could be addressed in any reauthorization legislation. Congress has considered proposals to provide federal funding for states to operate Job Corps centers, as a state option, or to close centers. This is due to concerns that the program has had mixed performance outcomes, and that some centers are low performing.

Chapter 2 – In an increasingly global economy, and with retirement starting for the Baby Boomer generation, Congress has indicated a strong interest in ensuring that today's young people have the educational attainment and employment experience needed to become highly skilled workers, contributing taxpayers, and successful participants in civic life. Challenges in the economy and among certain youth populations, however, have heightened concern among policymakers that some young people may not be prepared to fill these roles.

The employment levels for youth under age 25 have declined markedly in recent years, including in the wake of the 2007-2009 recession. Certain young people—including high school dropouts, current and former foster youth, and other at-risk populations—face challenges in completing school and entering the workforce. While the United States has experienced a dramatic increase in secondary school attendance in the past several decades, approximately 9% of youth ages 18 through 24 have not attained a high school diploma or its equivalent. In addition, millions of young people are out of school and not working.

Since the 1930s, federal job training and employment programs and policies have sought to connect vulnerable youth to work and school. Generally, these young people have been defined as being at-risk because they are economically disadvantaged and have a barrier to employment. During the Great Depression, the focus was on employing young men who were idle through public works and other projects. The employment programs from this era included an educational component to encourage youth to obtain their high school diplomas. Beginning in the 1960s, the federal government began funding programs for low-income youth that address their multiple needs through job training, educational services, and supportive services.

Today's primary federal youth employment and job training programs are authorized under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA, P.L. 105-220), and are carried out by the Department of Labor's (DOL's) Employment and Training Administration (ETA). Although these programs are funded somewhat differently and have varying eligibility requirements, they generally have a common purpose—to provide youth with educational and employment opportunities and access to leadership development and community service activities. Many of the programs target the most vulnerable youth, including school dropouts, homeless youth,

and youth offenders. Based on funding and the number of youth served, the WIA Youth Activities (Youth) formula program and Job Corps are the largest. The Youth Activities program provides an array of job training and other services through what are known as local workforce investment boards. The program was funded at \$820.4 million in FY2014. Job Corps provides training in a number of trades at centers where youth reside, and received FY2014 appropriations of \$1.7 billion.

Another program, YouthBuild, engages youth in educational services and job training that focus on the construction trades. YouthBuild received FY2014 appropriations of \$77.5 million. Separately, WIA's pilot and demonstration authority has been used to carry out the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders program (RExO), which provides job training and other services to juvenile and adult offenders. The youth component was funded at \$43.9 million in FY2013 (FY2014 funding is not yet available). Finally, the Youth Opportunity Grant (YOG) program, which was funded until FY2003, was targeted to youth who lived in select high-poverty communities. In FY2003, the program received \$54.6 million.

Chapter 3 – How can programs advance the self-sufficiency and well-being of at-risk youth? This report attempts to answer this important question by presenting a research-based framework for efforts to help at-risk youth enter a career workforce trajectory and prepare to become well-functioning, self-sufficient adults. The framework presented is particularly relevant for youth who are or could be served by Administration for Children and Families (ACF) programs—especially homeless youth, youth in the foster care system, and teen parents—but it may also apply to other programs. The framework suggests the possibility of using evidence-informed interventions to address two primary areas: youths' resilience and human capital development. It suggests finding tailored solutions grounded in a trusting relationship between youth and program staff to help move youth toward both healthy functioning and economic self-sufficiency as they transition to adulthood.

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Chapter 1

VULNERABLE YOUTH: OVERVIEW OF ISSUES AFFECTING YOUTH PROGRAMS AUTHORIZED UNDER THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT (WIA)*

Adrienne L. Fernandes-Alcantara

SUMMARY

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA, P.L. 105-220) is the primary federal law that provides job training and related services to unemployed and underemployed individuals, including vulnerable young people with barriers to employment. All youth job training programs and related services are authorized under Title I of WIA and administered by the Department of Labor (DOL). These programs include the WIA Youth Activities formula program, Job Corps, and YouthBuild. The Job Corps program was established in the 1960s and is the oldest federal job training and employment program (among recent programs) for young people. Under the pilot and demonstration authority in Title I, DOL has also carried out the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders program for both youth and adults. Although the programs have distinct activities and goals, each of them seeks to connect eligible youth to educational and employment opportunities, as well as leadership development and community service activities. WIA authorized funding through September 30, 2003; however, WIA programs continue to be funded through annual appropriation acts. Both the Senate and House of Representatives have taken steps toward reauthorizing WIA since the 108th Congress.

This report provides an overview of issues that have been raised by stakeholders about youth programs authorized under WIA. First, some policy makers have proposed consolidating these and other workforce programs to make them more efficient and less costly. Other stakeholders assert that at-risk youth and other groups with barriers to employment would be overlooked under such a consolidation. Another issue is the perceived lack of coordination between the workforce system and other systems that serve youth, such as the education system. Stakeholders have suggested that greater coordination can help meet the varied needs of youth, as intended by WIA. Members of Congress and others have also continued to inquire about the effectiveness of programs

* This is an edited, reformatted and augmented version of a Congressional Research Service publication R42583, prepared for Members and Committees of Congress dated March 4, 2014.

that serve youth in meeting their objectives and serving the most at-risk youth. To date, only an impact evaluation of Job Corps has been completed; however, DOL recently awarded a contract to a social policy research organization to conduct an impact evaluation of YouthBuild.

In addition to these broader issues, Congress is interested in issues specific to Youth Activities and Job Corps. Youth Activities provides funding for youth employment and training services overseen by a state workforce investment board (WIB) and the governor, in coordination with local WIBs and community organizations. The program targets youth ages 14 through 21 who are low-income and have one or more barriers to employment. Since the start of the program, policy makers and others have considered the extent to which youth have had to prove their eligibility for the program. Some local workforce investment boards have reported challenges with documenting income and other eligibility criteria, and some proposals would establish different methods for determining eligibility. Further, stakeholders have raised issues about whether the program should focus more on out-of-school youth. Local workforce investment boards have reported challenges recruiting and retaining these youth. Related to this is the age of youth who ought to be eligible for the program. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA, P.L. 111-5) temporarily enabled youth ages 22 through 24 to access services under the program. Whether WIA ought to target these older youth, particularly in light of the possible cost of doing so, could be addressed in any reauthorization legislation. Congress has considered proposals to provide federal funding for states to operate Job Corps centers, as a state option, or to close centers. This is due to concerns that the program has had mixed performance outcomes, and that some centers are low performing.

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1930s, federal job training and employment programs and policies have sought to connect vulnerable youth to work and school. Generally, these young people have been defined as being vulnerable because they are low-income and have a barrier to employment, such as having dropped out of school or spent time in foster care. The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-220) is the most recent federal law to provide job training and related services to unemployed and underemployed individuals, including youth. WIA includes titles that authorize programs for job training and related services for adults, youth, and dislocated workers (Title I); adult education and literacy (Title II); employment services (Title III); and vocational rehabilitation (Title IV).

All youth job training programs and related services are authorized under Title I of WIA and are carried out by the Department of Labor (DOL). These programs include the WIA Youth Activities (Youth) formula program, Job Corps, and YouthBuild. Under the pilot and demonstration authority in Title I, DOL has carried out the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders program. Together, these programs make up the federal job training system for youth. Although the programs have distinct activities and purposes, each program seeks to connect youth to educational and employment opportunities, as well as leadership development and community service activities.

WIA authorized funding through September 30, 2003; however, WIA programs continue to be funded through annual appropriation acts. In the 112th Congress, policy makers had signaled that the law may be reauthorized in the near future. This report provides an overview of issues pertinent to the WIA youth programs, particularly Youth Activities and Job Corps. It

also discusses relevant provisions of two bills: (1) H.R. 803, which was reported by the House Education and Workforce Committee on March 6, 2013, and passed the House on March 15, 2013, and (2) Workforce Investment Act of 2013 (S. 1356), which was ordered reported by the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee on July 31, 2013.

YOUTH PROGRAMS AUTHORIZED UNDER TITLE I OF THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT

Job training and employment services for youth under WIA include:

- *WIA Youth Activities*, a formula program that includes employment and other services that are provided year-round;
- *Job Corps*, a program that provides job training and related services primarily at residential centers maintained by contractor organizations;
- *YouthBuild*, a competitive grant program that emphasizes job training and education in construction;
- *Reintegration of Ex-Offenders*, a demonstration program for juvenile and adult offenders that provides job training and other services and is authorized under WIA's pilot and demonstration authority; and
- *Youth Opportunity Grants (YOG)*, a multi-site demonstration program funded through FY2003 that created centers in low-income communities where youth could receive employment and other services.

Although WIA's authorization of appropriations expired at the end of FY2003, Congress continues to appropriate funds, including those for youth job training programs—except for the YOG program, which has not been funded since FY2003. Except for Job Corps, all of the programs are (or were) carried out by the Division of Youth Services in DOL's Employment and Training Administration (ETA), Office of Workforce Investment. Job Corps is administered by ETA's Office of Job Corps.

Table 1 summarizes key features of Youth Activities, Job Corps, YouthBuild, the youth component of the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders program, and Youth Opportunity Grants. Each of the programs has a similar purpose of connecting youth to educational and employment opportunities. All of the programs serve mostly low-income youth who have specific employment barriers. Unlike Youth Activities and Job Corps, students in YouthBuild must be high school dropouts. The youth component of the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders program focuses on youth offenders and those at risk of dropping out. Although each of the programs provides employment and educational services, these services are carried out differently and by distinct entities. For example, under the Youth Activities program local areas (local workforce investment boards, WIBs) must provide 10 specific elements, including mentoring and follow-up, to youth in the program. YouthBuild program participants engage in employment and other activities primarily related to housing and other types of construction work. Job Corps is the only one of the programs that provides residential services, where youth can live onsite and receive employment and educational services. The youth component of the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders program activities vary,

and can include mentoring, educational services, and reentry services for youth returning from a secure facility to the community.

The programs are also funded somewhat differently. DOL allocates funding for Youth Activities to states based on a formula, and states in turn distribute the funds to local WIBs. DOL enters into competitively awarded agreements with nonprofit and for-profit organizations to operate Job Corps centers. DOL also enters into cooperative agreements with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service to carry out Job Corps programs on USDA lands. YouthBuild and the youth component of the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders program competitively awards grants to nonprofit and other organizations and local communities.

Table 1. Features of Selected Youth Programs Authorized Under Title I of WIA

Key Feature	Youth Activities Formula Program	Job Corps	YouthBuild	Youth Offenders (Reintegration of Ex-Offenders)	Youth Opportunity Grants (no longer funded)
Purpose	To provide eligible youth with assistance in achieving academic and employment success through activities that improve educational and skill competencies and foster effective connections to employers; ensure ongoing adult mentoring opportunities for eligible youth; provide opportunities for training, continued supportive services, and participation in activities related to leadership, citizenship, and community service; and offer incentives for recognition and achievement to eligible youth.	To provide disadvantaged youth with the skills needed to obtain and hold a job, enter the Armed Forces, or enroll in advanced training or higher education.	To enable disadvantaged youth to obtain the education and employment skills necessary to achieve self-sufficiency; foster leadership skills; provide work and service opportunities; and expand the supply of permanent affordable housing for the homeless.	To support related initiatives that seek to assist youth offenders and youth at risk of dropping out; to reduce violence within persistently dangerous schools; and provide supports for youth at risk of involvement with the justice system.	To increase the long-term employment of youth who live in enterprise communities, empowerment zones, and high-poverty areas.

Key Feature	Youth Activities Formula Program	Job Corps	YouthBuild	Youth Offenders (Reintegration of Ex-Offenders)	Youth Opportunity Grants (no longer funded)
Target Population	Youth ages 14 through 21 who are low-income and have one or more of the following barriers: (1) deficient in basic literacy skills; (2) a school dropout; (3) homeless, a runaway, or a foster child; (4) pregnant or parenting; (5) an offender; or (6) require additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment. At least 30% of funds are to be used for out- of-school youth.	Youth ages 16 through 24 who are low-income and meet one or more of the following criteria: (1) basic skills deficient; (2) homeless, a runaway, or a foster child; (3) a parent; or (4) an individual who requires additional education, vocational training, or intensive counseling and related assistance in order to participate in regular schoolwork or to secure and maintain employment.	Youth ages 16 through 24 who are (1) members of low-income families, in foster care, offenders, disabled, the children of incarcerated parents, or migrants; and (2) are school dropouts.	Youth offenders, young adult offenders, and students in high-risk schools.	Youth ages 14 through 21 who reside in enterprise communities, empowerment zones, and high-poverty areas and who seek assistance.
Funding Mechanism	Funds are allocated by formula to state Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), based on a formula that accounts for a state's relative share of unemployment and economically disadvantaged youth. In turn, state boards reallocate, by formula, funding to local WIBs using certain factors. Local WIBs competitively contract with local entities, such as nonprofit organizations and community colleges, to provide services.	DOL enters into an agreement with a federal, state, or local agency; an area vocational education school or residential vocational school; or a private organization to operate Job Corps centers.	Grants are competitively awarded to community-based organizations, community action agencies, state or local youth service or conservation corps, and other organizations that provide the services directly.	Grants are competitively awarded to a variety of entities, including community-based organizations, school districts, and state departments of corrections.	Grants were competitively awarded on a one-time basis to 36 low-income communities that established one or more centers where youth could participate in activities and receive services.

Table 1. (Continued)

Types of Activities for Youth	Each local WIB must provide 10 “elements,” which include academic activities, summer employment opportunities, supportive services, follow-up services, and other activities.	Youth generally live at the Job Corps centers, which provide youth with a program of education, vocational training, work experience, recreational activities, physical rehabilitation and development, and counseling.	Grantees may carry out a number of activities, including education and employment activities, supervision in rehabilitating or constructing housing and facilities; adult mentoring; provision of wages or other benefits; and follow-up services.	Grantees provide a variety of activities, depending on the type of grant awarded. Such activities can include pre-release, mentoring, housing, case management, employment services, and violence prevention strategies.	Grantees carried out a number of activities, including education and workforce investment activities; and leadership development, citizenship, community service, and recreational activities.
Youth Served in the Program	232,563 youth exited the program (April 1, 2012-March 31, 2013)	91,298 (April 1, 2012-March 31, 2013) ^a	28,374 were enrolled (cumulative from October 1, 2007-March 31, 2013)	15,914 (April 1, 2012-March 31, 2013)	92,263 were enrolled (cumulative from FY2000-FY2005)
Authorized Funding	Such sums as necessary for FY1999-FY2003.	Such sums as necessary for FY1999-FY2003.	Such sums as necessary for FY2008-FY2012. ^b	Such sums as necessary for FY1999-FY2003.	Such sums as necessary for FY1999-FY2003.
FY2014 Funding (dollars in thousands)	\$820,430	\$1,688,155	\$77,534	\$43,910 (FY2013 funding)	Not applicable

Sources: Congressional Research Service, based on correspondence with the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, May 2012; Workforce Investment Act (P.L. 105-220), as amended; U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, “Workforce Investment Act; Final Rules,” 65 Federal Register, August 11, 2000; U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Workforce System Results for the Quarter Ending March 30, 2013 <http://www.doleta.gov/performance/results/#etaqr>, and U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Job Corps, “Student Outcomes/Who Job Corps Serves,” http://www.jobcorps.gov/AboutJobCorps/performance_planning.aspx; and U.S. Congress, House Committee on Rules, 113th Cong., 2nd sess., Committee Print 113-32 to the Senate Amendment to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (H.R. 3547), which was enacted as P.L. 113-76.

^a This number includes students who are enrolled in the program during this period, graduates who separated prior to April 1, 2013, and were receiving placement services; and former enrollees who separated prior to April 1, 2013, and were receiving placement services.

^b The YouthBuild Transfer Act (P.L. 109-281) codified the authorizing statute for the YouthBuild program under WIA and transferred the program from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to the Department of Labor. The program was reauthorized under WIA from FY2008 through FY2012. P.L. 109-281 retained the core parts of the program; however, it made several notable changes. For a detailed discussion of these changes, see U.S. Department of Labor, YouthBuild Transfer Act: Synopsis and Section-by-Section Analysis; YouthBuild Transfer Act: Side-by-Side Comparison, http://www.doleta.gov/reports/youthbuild_program.cfm.

OVERVIEW OF ISSUES

Congress has taken steps toward reauthorizing WIA since the 108th Congress.¹ Recent hearings and listening sessions have addressed multiple issues regarding the WIA youth programs. During the 111th Congress, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a series of listening sessions in April 2009 to address the positive aspects of WIA and to increase understanding of the issues that can be addressed as part of any reauthorization legislation. One of the listening sessions focused on the Youth Activities grant program. Youth advocates, researchers, and other stakeholders spoke about the ways the committee could consider refining the law to improve the program. The Senate HELP Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety subsequently conducted a hearing in July 2009 to discuss how WIA could be updated to help workers and employers meet the demands of a changing economy.² In October 2009, the House Education and Workforce Committee held a hearing on declining youth employment.³ During the 112th Congress, the House Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training held hearings on removing inefficiencies in job training programs and modernizing WIA on May 11, 2011, and October 4, 2011, respectively. The full committee held a hearing on a bill to reauthorize WIA, the Workforce Investment Improvement Act of 2012 (H.R. 4297), on April 17, 2012. The committee marked up and favorably reported the bill on June 7, 2012. Also during the 112th Congress, the Senate HELP Committee released discussion drafts in June 2011 of legislation to amend and reauthorize WIA, but it did not receive further action in that Congress.

In the 113th Congress, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce has ordered reported H.R. 803—the Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills Act (SKILLS Act). This bill was introduced on February 25, 2013, by Representative Virginia Foxx of North Carolina, the chair of the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training. A legislative hearing on H.R. 803 was held before the full Committee on Education and the Workforce on February 26, 2013. The committee ordered the bill reported by a vote of 23 to 0 on March 6, 2013. The House passed the bill on March 15, 2013, by a vote of 215 to 202.⁴ In the Senate, Senators Patty Murray, Lamar Alexander, Tom Harkin, and Johnny Isakson introduced the Workforce Investment Act of 2013 (S. 1356) on July 24, 2013. The Senate HELP Committee held a markup of S. 1356 on July 31, 2013, and ordered the bill reported by a vote of 18 to 3.⁵

Issues that have been raised as part of the WIA reauthorization process in Congress and elsewhere generally include the following:

- Some policy makers have proposed consolidating workforce programs for adults, dislocated workers, and youth. Under such a proposal, states would generally have greater ability to target funds to certain activities and populations.
- Advocates for consolidation say that it could make the programs more efficient and less costly. Other stakeholders assert that at-risk youth and other groups with barriers to employment could be overlooked if workforce programs were collectively funded. If youth programs were consolidated, Congress may wish to consider the role of one-stop centers and oversight bodies, such as youth councils, to help meet the needs of youth.

- Another issue is the perceived lack of coordination between the workforce system and other systems that serve youth, such as the education system. Stakeholders have suggested that greater coordination can help meet the varied needs of youth, as intended by WIA.
- Members of Congress and others have also continued to inquire about the effectiveness of youth workforce programs in meeting their objectives and serving the most at-risk youth. To date, only an impact evaluation of Job Corps has been completed; however, DOL recently awarded a contract to a social policy research organization to conduct an impact evaluation of YouthBuild.

In addition to these broader concerns, Congress is interested in issues specific to Youth Activities and Job Corps:

- Since the start of the Youth Activities program, as authorized under WIA, policy makers and others have discussed the extent to which youth should have to prove their eligibility for the program. State and local workforce officials have said that income eligibility requirements for the program may exclude some needy youth, and that obtaining proof of income can be challenging for some youth. Still, others assert that the requirements are necessary in order to ensure that vulnerable young people enroll in the program.
- A separate concern is how much of an emphasis the program should place on serving older youth. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA, P.L. 111-5) temporarily enabled youth ages 22 through 24 to access services under the Youth Activities program. Whether WIA ought to target these older youth, particularly in light of the possible cost of doing so, could be addressed in any reauthorization legislation.
- In addition, stakeholders have raised issues about the school status of youth in the Youth Activities program—specifically, whether the program should focus more on out-of-school youth, including those who are not working. Related to this is the age of youth who ought to be eligible for the program.
- Congress has considered proposals to provide federal funding for states to operate Job Corps centers, at state option, or to close centers. This is due to concerns that the program has had mixed performance outcomes, and that some centers are low performing.

CONSOLIDATION OF YOUTH WORKFORCE PROGRAMS

A 2011 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) identified existing federal workforce programs and found that many of the programs overlap because they provide a similar service.⁶ The report also stated that despite this overlap, “the services they provide and the populations they serve may differ in meaningful ways.” For example, the report discussed the similarities between the youth workforce programs and noted that they have varying models of carrying out program services (for further information about similarities and differences, see *Table 1*).