

*Displaced Homemakers: Programs and  
Policy*

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**Displaced Homemakers:  
Programs and Policy**

**An Interim Report**

Interim reports are neither reviewed nor approved by the Technology Assessment Board.



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## Foreword

The problems of displaced adults have received increasing attention in the 1980s, as the social, technological, and economic changes have changed the worklives of millions of Americans. As Congress debates programs to provide training, re-employment assistance, and financial support to displaced people, it is useful to examine the problems and performance of existing Federal support for displaced adults.

In October 1983 OTA was asked to assess the reasons and future prospects for adult displacement, the performance of existing programs to serve displaced adults, and identify options to improve service and avoid displacement. As part of that study, the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources requested that OTA focus on problems of and programs for displaced homemakers as well as displaced workers. This interim report on displaced homemakers will be part of the overall assessment *Technology and Structural Unemployment: Reemploying Displaced Adults*.

Displaced homemakers are a large, often overlooked group of people, mostly women, who have lost their primary source of income. Many of these people have not worked in the commercial sense for many years, though they often have skills developed in homemaking, past work experience, or volunteer activities. However, the combination of little recent experience in paid work, little or no source of income and, often, falling self-esteem gives them significant handicaps in finding new jobs to support themselves and their families. In the Vocational Education Act of 1984, Congress added significantly to the funds available to serve displaced homemakers.

While the impact of new funding and emphasis on the problems of displaced homemakers cannot be fully judged yet, there are many issues Congress may wish to address as new programs develop. For example, even with the augmented Vocational Education programs, will adequate funding be directed specifically to displaced homemakers? Can displaced homemakers, who often have no source of income support, afford training? Do the programs that serve displaced homemakers meet their special needs (for example, job readiness counseling, peer group support, and training for nontraditional jobs)? Educational technology may play an important role in preparing displaced homemakers for paid jobs. The full report considers both the potential of technology to improve the work skills of displaced adults and the effect of technology on the kinds of jobs available in the U.S. economy.

The viewpoints of people in the private sector, State and local government, academia, and displaced homemakers' groups were sought in conducting this study. Several private and public organizations cooperated in providing information, data, and advice. OTA thanks the many people—advisory panel members, government officials, reviewers, and consultants—for their assistance. As with all OTA studies, the information, analyses, and findings of this report are solely those of OTA.



JOHN H. GIBBONS  
*Director*

## Technology and Structural Unemployment: Reemploying Displaced Workers Advisory Panel

Joseph Weizenbaum, *Chairman*  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Kathy Alessandro  
Downriver Community Conference

Paul Barton  
National Assessment of Educational  
Progress

Marc Bendick  
The Urban Institute

Paul Boyer  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Dennis Carey  
Hay Associates

Dick Greenwood  
International Association of Machinists and  
Aerospace Workers

Donald Hancock  
Vanderbilt University

Carol Hollenshead  
University of Michigan

Robert Karasek  
University of Southern California

Sar A. Levitan  
The George Washington University

Robert Machin  
Alliance Mortgage Co.

Jill Miller  
Displaced Homemakers Network

Iles Minoff  
Human Resources Development Institute

Ronnie Straw  
Communications Workers of America

Burdette G. Taylor  
IBM Corp.

Vi Traynor  
American Electronics Association

Elizabeth Useem  
University of Massachusetts

Gary Wuslich  
LTV Steel Co.

NOTE: The Advisory Panel provided advice and comment throughout the assessment, but the members do not necessarily approve, disapprove, or endorse the report for which OTA assumes full responsibility.

# OTA Project Staff—Technology and Structural Unemployment: Reemploying Displaced Adults

Lionel S. Johns, *Assistant Director, OTA  
Energy, Materials, and International Security Division*

Audrey Buyrn,  
*Industry, Technology, and Employment Program Manager*

Julie Fox Gorte, *Project Director*

Katherine Gillman, *Senior Analyst*

W. Wendell Fletcher, *Senior Analyst*

Bradley T. Shaw, *Analyst*

Deborah R. Cichon, *Analyst*

Paula M. Wolferseder, *Research Assistant*

Margaret Hilton, *Analyst*<sup>1</sup>

John A. Alic, *Senior Analyst*

Eric Basques, *Analyst*

Edna Saunders, *Administrative Assistant*

Andrea Amiri, *Secretary*

## **Individual Contractors**

Joel Fadem

John Hansen

Bernard Ingster

Howard Rosen

Anne Covalt, *Editor*

## **Contractors**

Human Resources Data Systems, Inc.

National Institute for Work and Learning

Norman D. Kurland & Associates

The Urban Institute

Industry and Trade Strategies

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<sup>1</sup> Analyst from August 1983 to September 1984