

*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.



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