

Report to the Legislature

03 - 0136

MN Displaced Homemaker Program



MN Department of Economic Security
Workforce Services Branch
February 4, 2003

**MINNESOTA DISPLACED HOMEMAKER PROGRAM
2002/2003 LEGISLATIVE REPORT**

SUMMARY

The Minnesota Displaced Homemaker Program has a 26 year tradition of providing services to displaced homemakers in the State. The twelve programs are divided by geographical boundaries and serve all 87 counties. They provide holistic pre-employment services that empower participants to enter or re-enter the labor market to support themselves and their families after losing their main source of support through death, separation, divorce, disability of spouse or partner, or loss of other financial support. The program is administered by the Department of Economic Security.

This report examines two years of program activities and data from July 1, 2000 through June 30, 2002. The following findings reflect the activities of the Displaced Homemaker Program.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- ★ The Statewide program served a total of 3,105 persons.
- ★ Approximately 82% of the persons who received services were in the prime working age range of 25-54 years old.
- ★ Of the 3,105 served, 1,562 received career/education counseling.
- ★ Of the 1,670 completers, 602 (36%) found full or part-time employment.
- ★ Of the 1,670 completers, 357 (22%) were enrolled in education or training.
- ★ Seventy three percent of clients exited the program with a positive termination.
- ★ Participants had one or more dependents (72%), were unemployed or employed only part time (73%) with 49% on some type of assistance when entering the program.
- ★ Cost of services averaged \$1,076.00 per participant.
- ★ The collaboration and coordination among program providers continues to be a successful model for providing comprehensive services and maximizing resources. Collaborating partners include the Minnesota Workforce Centers, WIA, Community Based Organization, MNSCU, faith-based communities and other public and private organizations.

BACKGROUND

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

A ***DISPLACED HOMEMAKER*** is any individual who has primarily worked in the home for a minimum of two years caring for home and family, but due to separation, divorce, death, or disability of spouse or partner, or other loss of financial support, must support themselves and their families. Services are free to those who are income eligible.

Funding for the Displaced Homemaker Program (DHP) was obtained from the Legislature in 1977 and the first two pilot programs were opened in 1978/79. In response to the success and the need, two additional programs were authorized by the Legislature.

In 1982, the Legislature increased the marriage license and dissolution filing fees to fund an additional six programs.

For the next eight years, funding for the DH programs came from the dissolution and marriage license fees. In 1990, the funding source was changed to a general fund appropriation and two additional programs were started. By 1994, all 87 counties in Minnesota were provided with Displaced Homemaker services.

The funding for the twelve programs was changed in FY2002-2003 to approximately half TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) and half Workforce Development funds. Funding is currently \$1,827,000 per year of which \$1,670,000 is contracted out to programs.

The Department of Economic Security (MDES) is responsible for the statewide coordination and administration of the grant.

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM

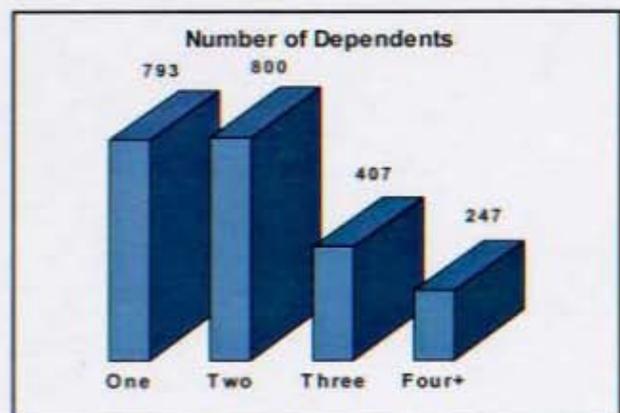
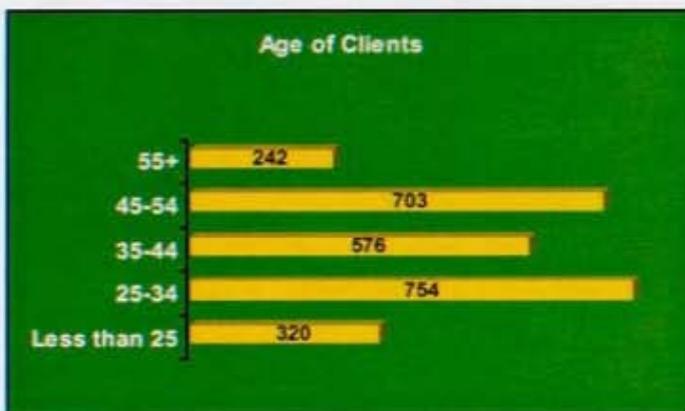
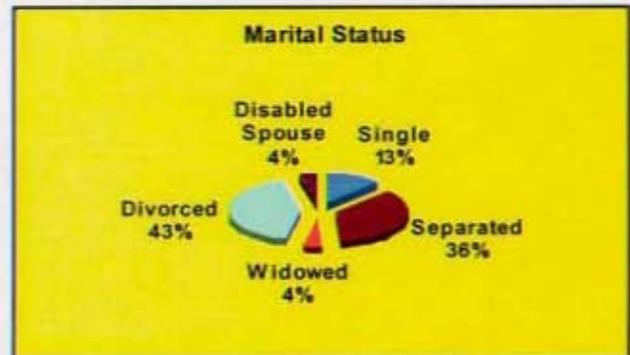
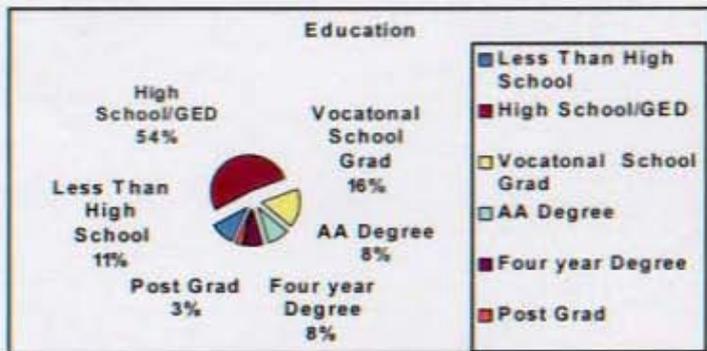
A displaced homemaker is defined as a person either female or male, who worked in the home for a minimum of two years caring for home and family but due to separation, divorce, death or disability of spouse, or loss of their main source of financial support, must now support self and family. Services are free for those who are income eligible and a sliding fee scale has been developed so those over income may also receive services.

The Displaced Homemaker Program (DHP) provides the transitional services and vocational preparation needed to assist displaced homemakers in moving to training or employment or remediating barriers to obtaining training or employment. Workshops, groups for support and networking, self-esteem building, one-to-one personal or vocational counseling, job seeking and keeping methods, employment support groups, and resume development are among the resources used to help participants build confidence, identify skills, and seek training or employment. Referrals to appropriate community resources for remedial education, child care, legal assistance, health issues and other identified barriers will be made depending on identified needs. Funding for mileage, work or school expenses or emergency needs is provided when available.

Displaced homemakers are usually older (30-55) individuals who have never been in the work force or have been out of the work force for a while and have multiple barriers to finding and keeping employment. They need assistance with personal development issues and “soft skills” before they can concentrate on getting and keeping a job. It’s difficult to look for a job when you’re worried about being evicted, having your utilities shut off, caring for a spouse or child with a disability, etc. These clients need more one on one labor intensive services and referrals than the average job seeker looking for another or different job.

Displaced homemakers have no or little work history, have no daycare in place, may be in the middle of the trauma of a divorce or grief of death, may have housing and transportation issues as well as issues of abuse, chemical dependency, child support or custody, mental and physical health, low marketable skills, self-esteem and ageism. Since most of our clients are not on public assistance because they were married and are not dislocated workers because they stayed at home caring for children and have no income of their own to pay for these services, they fall through “the cracks” and may have no other programs with comprehensive services to assist them in their struggle for economic stability.

CLIENT PROFILE



DISPLACED HOMEMAKER PROGRAMS - SERVICES

There are currently twelve displaced homemaker programs serving all 87 counties. Each program has a specific geographic area that is served. Five programs are independent non-profit agencies, five programs are housed in Community Action agencies and two are housed at technical colleges. The programs are an example of government services being outsourced to local independent agencies.

All twelve programs offer the core pre-employment services of vocational counseling, resume development, interviewing practice, job seeking methods, job retention skills, assistance in applying for remedial or higher education and referrals. Most of the programs also offer life skills workshops (decision making and goal setting, identifying your interests, skills, values and strengths, assertive communication, balancing work and family, self-esteem, conflict management, etc.), employment support groups, personal counseling, basic computer literacy training, and support and networking groups.

All of the services offered are based on the specific client's need at the time of enrollment. The programs try to offer seamless, wraparound services through their own programming and through the network of other agencies and programs that they coordinate with to assist the client in overcoming all their barriers. The agencies have formed partnerships with area churches and faith based services, Community Action Programs, County social service agencies, domestic abuse organizations, legal resources, local employers, mental health and chemical dependency programs, other local city and county resources, Technical Colleges, Workforce Centers, WSA's, and other agencies that provide services for those in need of economic stability. Many DH programs have agreements with MFIP providers that time spent working with the DH program by an MFIP client will count as time spent in job search. These relationships help provide the wrap around services for clients which prevent long term dependency on government programs and provide lasting benefits to the client and ultimately the local community.

The programs offer flexibility to clients by scheduling workshops and sessions with clients at night and on weekends, in their homes or other convenient meeting places. Services are customized for the client's needs. Counselors act as advocates for clients when necessary. All programs obtain additional resources through in-kind contributions such as meeting space in churches or public buildings, speakers from other agencies, informational interviewing from local businesses, etc. When available, support services are issued for transportation, child care or emergency needs.

In the past, the Legislature had appropriated funds for small training grants and job seeking support groups. This funding is no longer available. Unfortunately, with the down turn in the economy and the proliferation of layoffs, more displaced homemakers, who have little or no work history, feel they need to get additional training in order to compete with laid off workers who have a recent work history. The programs receive many requests for help with funds for training. However, there are no funds for this support service.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND ACTIVITIES

Program outcomes are tracked through data submitted to the Department of Economic Security. The data collected reflect all major activities and outcomes of clients. The program has a 75% positive outcome goal.

The Displaced Homemaker Program has established the following as positive outcomes for clients:

	<u>Number of Participants</u>	
	<u>FY 2001</u>	<u>FY 2002</u>
Employment (Full and part time)	302 (32%)	233 (32%)
Employment/Educ. Combined	38 (4%)	29 (4%)
Remedial Education	6 (.6%)	14 (2%)
Certificate Program	64 (7%)	65 (9%)
Degree Program	67 (7%)	74 (10%)
Active W/Another Program	37 (4%)	41 (6%)
Completed Program Objective	148 (16%)	95 (13%)

There are ten client activities that reflect the majority of the activities the client is engaged in during their enrollment in the program. What they do not reflect is the time spent in each area. The following are the activities and data for FY2001/2002:

	<u>Number of Participants</u>	
	<u>FY 2001</u>	<u>FY 2002</u>
Orientation	1584	1476
Career/Education Counseling	806	756
Pre-Employment Preparation	265	316
Personal Counseling	681	626
Life Skills Development	537	581
Referrals	475	473
Remedial Education	34	52
Assessment/Testing	474	469
Skills Training	324	206
Job Development/Placement	76	78

Since the program is a pre-employment program, job development and placement are usually referred to the Workforce Centers once a client has addressed the major barriers to employment.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The Displaced Homemaker Program is administered by the Department of Economic Security. The state coordinator is responsible for policy development, program guidelines and procedures, fiscal and programmatic compliance and ongoing review of agencies progress through site visits and analysis of reports.

EXAMPLES OF DHP COORDINATION

The first eight examples below receive soft-skills, career development training, job search and retention skills on-site from a Displaced Homemaker Program(DHP).

- * Damiano Center's Opportunities Cooking Program provides job training skills in the cooking industry
- * Flex Work provides computer skills training
- * Safe Haven Shelter-Homeless shelter
- * Women's Transitional Housing
- * Community Action Agency
- * Life House-a shelter for 18+ teen moms
- * Family Resource Centers
- * Public Housing sites

A DH program provides life skills and job seeking workshops, support groups and advocacy for additional services to the next two examples below.

- * Listening Ear Crisis Center for victims of domestic abuse
- * WRAP - an organization serving victims of domestic abuse in five counties

- * Three Technical Colleges in western Minnesota receive workshops and support groups and twice a year at each site a Dress of Success workshop from a DH program. An educational CD was also cooperatively developed.

- * Work with MFIP providers so shared clients can count time spent working with DH as time spent in job search.

- * Coordinate with Community Action Agencies to access their financial counselors who work with DH clients to clear up credit problems and establish budgets, and also with the HUD personnel to assist clients facing foreclosure and those hoping to purchase housing.

- * Work with DH eligible inmates in the County jails to help them establish a plan for housing, transportation, jobs, etc. when they are released.
- * Hold monthly life skills and job seeking skills workshops at local HRA hi-rises.
- * Maintain offices at the Workforce Centers and attend their regular staff meetings.
- * Participating on the Planning Committee for Fathers and Families Network in MN.
- * Working collaboratively with USLink and CLC Customized Training on a mentoring program.
- * Participate in joint staff meetings with the Female Offender's Probation Team and the Domestic Violence Team of Probation Officers and Social Workers.

A Story of Success

Marie had grown up in Philadelphia, where she met and married a young military man stationed there who was originally from Minnesota. When his tour of duty was over, she returned to Minnesota with him where she became a full time homemaker going about the business of raising five children. Some of those children were still in their teens when her husband, who had never shown any sign of heart trouble, had a massive heart attack and died in her arms.

When Marie was first referred to the Displaced Homemaker Program she was extremely distressed and in a downward spiral emotionally. Through attendance at the Support Groups and Workshops as well as the one to one counseling provided by the Displaced Homemaker staff, Marie was gradually able to recover.

Staff assisted Marie with putting together a resume designed to focus on her transferable skills since she had not worked outside the home while raising her children. Marie practiced her interviewing skills with staff and was hired for two different jobs, both of which were part time and paid no benefits. Marie was able to get Minnesota Care for medical coverage. Finally after working half time at a museum and half time at the local hospital, Marie was hired on a full time basis in the housekeeping department at the hospital. Marie was able to leave her other part time job because she was now receiving full benefits. Advocacy for service, referrals to additional services and staff support assisted Marie in achieving her goal of economic self-sufficiency.

